

1st Chronicles: Rebuilding the House of God



We are continuing down Route 66 and will be exiting to 1st Chronicles this morning. This will be our thirteenth stop down Route 66 as we go from the garden of ruin to a future city of restoration.

As I prepared this lesson, I was reminded of the trip that my wife and I took almost nine years ago. Because of your generosity, we were able to go to England. We then drove to Scotland where I got to stand on Finlaystone Farm. This is the very place where the great Scottish reformer, John Knox, served the Cunningham family the very first protestant communion on Scottish soil. I got to stand under the very Yew tree where my family and John Knox stood as he served my family communion. My family likes to say that we did most of the work for the Protestant Reformation, and then John Knox showed up and got all the credit. Tracing my family tree and getting to be on Scottish soil reminded me, and gave me a depth of understanding I didn't have, of who I really am. From a historical perspective, my family was used of God to play an important part in restoring the Church of Jesus Christ through the doctrine of true grace.

My wife and I were standing in the queen's residence in Edinburgh. During the days of the reformation, the queen was Catholic. There was a war, literally, between Catholic thought and Protestant thought. There was a time when people held that proper belief was worth dying for. We had finished the tour of the main residence and we went into the chapel. Much of the chapel was still in ruins from the Protestant Reformation, and when the tour guide was telling us about the chapel, he pointed out the damage,

which was obvious. But then, he slid this comment in. We can thank the Cunningham's for the destruction of this beautiful chapel during the Protestant Reformation. I had assent come over me. About that time, I took an elbow to the rib and my lovely wife leaned over and said, "We can thank your family for this." But I have to be honest, inside I was thinking, *yes, yes, yes!* I hope you understand that. I cannot tell you how honored I am to be of a lineage that believes it is important to stand for the truth of the gospel.

There have been so many times when I was preaching through the Bible, or just being in a conversation, and I just can't hush. I just cannot skip it. I have got to say it, I have to proclaim it, and I have to teach it. Sometimes my wife will say, "You just can't be quiet, can you? You just can't leave the hard things alone, can you?" And before I can answer, she will remind me, "That is just who you are." It is who I am.

I thought of that because it matters that you know who you are. The reason is because eventually, you will live out in conduct what you really believe about who you are. And that is what the writer of Chronicles believes. How do I know that? Notice that the first nine chapters are all about family trees.

Now if we don't even like our family tree, we are sure not going to like somebody else's family tree. I know how many do not like genealogy, so we are going to start our text in chapter 9. We will look at verses 1 and 2 and then we are going to turn to the end of 2nd Chronicles and read the last two verses in chapter 36. Chronicles was originally one book in the Hebrew Bible. You also need to know that in the Hebrew Bible, Chronicles was not where it is in our English Bible, it was at the end. Our English arrangers put Chronicles in the historical books, right after 1st and 2nd Kings. Because of that, many people reading through the Bible will read 1st and 2nd Kings, jump into 1st and 2nd Chronicles, and then realize it is Israel's history again. So they get bored with it and skip it, or read it on auto-pilot, so to speak, and never notice that Chronicles is radically different from Kings.

We are studying 1st Chronicles in this lesson. But to understand this title, "Rebuilding the House of God," we have to look at 1st Chronicles 9:1-2 and 2nd Chronicles 36:22-23. (Remember, it was originally one book.) Remember, when 1st Kings opens up, they build the house of God, and then 2nd Kings ends with the house of God being burned. 2nd Chronicles is about rebuilding the burned down house of God. Please listen intently to the verses in our text.

Scripture

1st Chronicles 9:1:

"So all Israel was recorded in genealogies, and these are written in the books of the Kings of Israel. And Judah was taken into exile in Babylon because of their breach of the faith."

Notice that ALL Israel was recorded in genealogies. Why did Judah go into exile? They blew it. They had a conditional covenant with God that if they obeyed, they would be blessed. If they disobeyed, they would be cursed. They disobeyed and God cursed them; they went into exile. They were captured by the Babylonians, just like their Northern Kingdom was captured by the Assyrians.

Now note verse 2, this is crucial:

"Now the first to dwell again in their possessions in their cities were Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the temple servants."

Did you catch that? "The first to dwell again," and then he names the groups that were dwelling again in the land. This tells us the captivity is over. Chronicles was written about a hundred years after Kings was written. That is why it is different.

2nd Chronicles 36:22-23:

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in

writing: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him. Let him go up.'"

Whoa, did you hear that? The Lord moved on the heart of a pagan king to build God a house in Judah. Is this cool or is this cool!

I have two children, three grandsons, and a daughter-in-law who we think of as our daughter. She is that good. She is a keeper. One of my grandson's name is Crider Wayne. He is the firstborn. Crider reminds him of his mother's side, and Wayne reminds him of his father's side. Our middle grandson is Findley Knox. What a surprise! My son and his wife announced they had named him from our story and our family tree. They named him Finley after our ancestral farm, Finlaystone, and Knox after the great Scottish reformer, John Knox. Talk about a name that will remind you of who you are; that name should. Then our third grandson is named Garnett Levi. Garnett is named after his great-grandpa, and Levi is after a spiritual descendent of a family that was used of God. Those names were carefully chosen, not by a grandmother and a grandfather, but by their mom and dad. The reason is because they wanted their children to know who they are. It is important to know who you are if you are a Cunningham. There are just certain things we don't take lightly as Cunningham's.

Return From Exile

The writer of Chronicles believed in the importance of identity to the point that he bored most of us to death, but he took great pride as he began this motivational message to a group of exiles who were no longer exiles. They are now free and they are back in the Promised Land. But remember, they had been in exile so long that most of them had never been there before. They had only heard of their homeland. They had heard of Jerusalem and the Temple. They had heard of the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey, but they had never experienced it with their own eyes. Now, King

Cyrus believes the God of Heaven, the LORD, Israel's God, gave him all the kingdoms of the world and has brought him to this moment in world history for him to rise up and build God a house in Jerusalem, in Judah. He said hey, if you are one of His people, you are free. You are free to go. He believed God wanted him to build a house. He decided if he let God's people go back to the land they would probably want to build the Temple again. Now, did you put that together? The way he accomplished building God's house was to set God's people free. The chronicler understands that they are not building the house of God yet. They are not building God's house because they don't really know who they are. It had not dawned on them yet. Because they don't know who they are, they don't really know what they are supposed to be doing with their lives. Now that is the message.

- **Genealogy of Israel**

The chronicler wants us to know who we are, so we will know what to do with our lives. The people of Israel have been in captivity, so the chronicler spends the first nine chapters tracing their genealogy of all the way back to the first Adam. Then he goes forward, reminding them of Abraham, the father of their nation. Then he traces them to Israel who had twelve sons, which became the twelve tribes. He points out one of these tribes called Judah. Judah took the place of Reuben because of Reuben's sin, and they became the ruling tribe. From that tribe came King David.

There is a depth to the genealogy, and there is a breadth to the genealogy. When tracing their genealogy back, he shows how the line of kingship was developed. But he reminded them that there were other people involved in this family also, so it wasn't just deep, it was wide. Did you catch that? It is not just about you. You can trace your lineage, but at the same time, others in your tree are tracing their lineage, so we are all a part of something bigger than ourselves. We are all in this together. Can I just ask you this? Do you really know who you are?

Now, in this genealogy, the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Levi are prominent. From the tribe of Judah, come the kings. From the tribe of

Levi, come the priests. If we are going to rebuild the Temple, we have to be able to trace the lineage of the priesthood. So this whole book of history is using Israel's past to get them ready to do what God has ordained them to do under the hand of King Cyrus.

Building the Temple

When we studied Kings, in the midst of all those bad kings, we talked about Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha. 1st Kings records Israel's history from the perspective of the prophets. Chronicles hardly mentions the prophets because Chronicles isn't written from the perspective of a prophet, it is written from the perspective of a priest. The reason is because we are getting ready to build the house of God. But you cannot build the house of God if you don't know who you are. If you don't know who you are, you will just build your house. The king thought if he turned those people loose and set them free, the first thing they will want to do is build God's house. He set them free and the only thing they wanted to do was build their house.

Did anybody connect the dots? Our freedom was never designed by God to be about us, it was designed to be about Him. Because the Church in America today faces an identity crisis, most Christians are only concerned about their house. After they leave a worship service, most Christians never get connected with the body or never think about the body for the rest of the week. They spend all their time and resources on themselves and building their house. And wow, the net worth of Christians in America is rising rapidly because it is all about their house. I know you are into your kids, but that is your house. I know you are into your grandkids, but that is your house. I know you are worried about your neighbor, but that affects you too! The book of Chronicles is going to get our attention because the writer of Chronicles is trying to tell us that God wants us to know who we are. And if we really know who we are, it will not only be about our house, it will be about His house.

- **David Desires to Build the House of God**

But when you read Chronicles, you say now hold on, it is about David! Yes, but why is it about David? It is about David, because from the chroniclers

view point, everything David did was built around one thing; securing a place where the house of God can be built because David had a desire to build God's house. But notice how the book opens. I mean, Saul is hardly mentioned, except he is dead, praise the Lord; he wasn't the one that was supposed to be king! But we start with David sitting on the throne, and he wants to take Jerusalem. David wants to take the stronghold of the Jebusites, and he secures that city. We know why David wanted to take Jerusalem. It is because Jerusalem is where the house of the Lord is going to be built. And it never could have been built there if David had not taken the city. It will later be called the City of David, ultimately, talking about David's greater Son, Jesus.

- **The Ark of the Covenant**

After he takes the city, he is next consumed with bringing the Ark to Jerusalem, because the Ark of God symbolized the presence of God to David. Please get this picture. The reason the chronicler takes so much time talking about the Ark and its transportation to Jerusalem is because he wanted the people, who had returned from exile and were living in the land for the first time, to understand that you have to be consumed with the desire to want to be near the presence of God!

Now in the Old Testament, you actually brought God to where you were. But today, living on this side of the cross, we don't think that way. We don't think about bringing God to where we are and asking God to follow us and get in on what we are doing. We get up in the morning and say, "God, where are you today? I want to be where You are. I want to be involved in what You are doing!" So we join ourselves to Him if we are consumed with the thought of the presence of God. It was unthinkable for David to have a capitol city where he was going to rule the people and the presence of God not be there.

You know, there are some things we will never see the same way as some people see them. That is why it tears our hearts up as Christians that we now live in a country where the people who rule our country want to conveniently move God to the side, or take Him out completely. That

bothers us as a people, because we believe that there is a blessing that comes to a nation whose God is the Lord, amen!

And wow, David lost it for God when that Ark came into Jerusalem. There was singing, there was dancing; there was a celebration! What might look legalistic and fleshly under the law now gets full expression in David. It is not done externally; it is done as a matter of the heart. Once that Ark is secured in Jerusalem, David has a desire. He wants to build God a house. God won't let him build the house, but He does give him the promise that one of his sons will build the house. David realizes that one day Solomon will sit on the throne.

That still bothers me a little bit. It bothers me that the woman David wasn't supposed to be with gave birth to a child that died, and her husband died. God took that child. But the second child was named Solomon, which in the Hebrew was Jedidiah, meaning loved of God. Now hold it...the child that wasn't even really supposed to have been born, from a marriage that wasn't ever supposed to have taken place; that son, of all of David's sons, will be the son who will sit on the throne. Do you see my dilemma? I want to tell you what God impressed upon my heart. Grace looks really good when it is administered to me, but when it is administered to others, it doesn't look right. When I am receiving grace, PRAISE God, I don't get what I deserve! But when it's being given to somebody else, I want to say, now hold it God...but that is grace. That is grace!

- **Solomon will Succeed David**

But Chronicles isn't concerned about the person sitting on the throne. The reason is because no one will ever sit on that throne who will rule correctly until the real King comes, which is Jesus, amen! So the chronicler isn't talking about the person sitting on the throne. The chronicler is worried about the Temple, the house of God. Now David has a heart that wants to build that house, but he can't. Though David can't build it, he still wants it to be built. And he knows Solomon is going to sit on the throne will benefit from his kingship. Now watch this, this is good! You see Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are in the Bible, ultimately, to show us that Jesus is the

rightful King. But there is no one Old Testament king that can really portray Jesus in His true Kingship. So David is presented in Chronicles to show us that he is the warrior king who secured the victory and put the enemy down, so that his son Solomon could reign in his place. And because David had put the enemy down, Solomon reigns in his place and got to build the Temple! Solomon got to be a man of peace where David was a man of war. Both of those are fulfilled in Jesus Christ when He came. He was a Man of war who took on the enemy, and He defeated the enemy so that ultimately, He could establish a kingdom of peace! Wow...is that cool or is that cool?

Numbering Israel

Now, David wants to get all the materials and get everything laid out so that his young, inexperienced son will have no trouble transitioning to build the Temple. But something happens. In 1st Chronicles 21, Satan incites David to number the children of Israel. Joab stands up to David and said don't do it! Joab pleads with David; David, you know God told us not to trust in military might.

Scripture doesn't say so, but I believe he probably reminded him of Jericho. God had told him not to ever number the army. Do you remember the first military victory? (Catch this in the war room!) Hey, we are going to march around the city one time for six days. The seventh day, we are going to march around it seven times and then we are going to blow the trumpet. We are all going to shout and the walls are going to fall down! And it did, because that was God's plan. God's plan was devised so that man could not take credit for what happened. Israel could never boast about it! Yeah, we marched around the city. No, the only thing they could boast about was that God brought down the walls.

Do you remember Gideon? There were three hundred men; three groups of a hundred. You have got to love this; they had a pitcher with a candle and a trumpet, and they routed the Midianites! They cannot take credit for that. All the glory goes to God.

- **David's Punishment**

Now David is worried and wants to number the army because he has been incited by Satan, and he wants to see if he can take the enemy. He numbers them and seventy thousand people die. It does matter who rules because the decisions they make affect other people; seventy thousand people lost their lives because of David's sin. His sin with Bathsheba caused one man and a baby to die! In Chronicles, seventy thousand people die! The angel of the Lord is standing over the city of Jerusalem getting ready to slay everybody in the city when God says enough, and God stops the angel. When David realized what was going to happen, David says God, it was me, don't take this out on your people, it was me! It was too late... There was a plague and seventy thousand have already died, and now God told David, you better build an altar and make a sacrifice. God tells him to buy the threshing floor of Araunah. When he goes to buy the threshing floor of Araunah, Araunah comes out and tries to give it to him. David will not accept it as a gift. He bought it and made a sacrifice, and the plague stops.

Did you notice when we were in 2nd Samuel that it ends with God inciting David to go number Israel? I had a moral dilemma in 2nd Samuel, chapter 24. My dilemma is that God incited David to number Israel, and then God judges Israel for what He incited him to do and seventy thousand people died. I just have a problem with God inciting somebody to do something and then judging a man for doing what He incited him to do, to the death of seventy thousand people. Did any of you have a problem with that? Some of you probably thought God was going to strike me dead. Let me tell you why God didn't strike me dead. It is because God knows that I know Samuel was written in a time before God had fully, and finally, revealed Himself to humanity. That did not happen until a Person by the name of Jesus showed up and went to a cross. The Bible said that in the former times, God spoke through the prophets, but now He has spoken through His Son. This means that I, living on this side of the cross, have more revelation of God than Noah, Enoch, Adam, Moses, and Abraham had. You could name them all. They never had the full and final revelation of God, because that could not be revealed until Jesus. So if the

full and final revelation of God came in Jesus, what did these people have in the Old Testament? They had partial revelation. You must grasp hold of this. If not, we are going to disagree on some Scriptures. In the Old Testament, God progressively reveals Himself to His people. Which means the closer you get to the cross, the more they knew of God.

Now, there was a time in Israel's history when God was sovereign over them. Because God was sovereign over them, they gave God the credit or the blame in whatever happened. So the children of Israel had no problem giving God credit for all the glory, but they also blamed God for all the bad. So when David sinned, an Israelite would have no problem saying the Lord incited David to sin because they just blamed it all on God. The reason was because they didn't have the full revelation of God. What we know that they didn't in the beginning is that God had an enemy, and his name is Satan. He was originally designed to be the tester of God's creation, but he sinned. When he sinned, instead of being the tester of God's creation, he became the tempter of God's creation. He wanted to show God just how bad man is. It was really David's enemy from within, not his enemy from without, that incited him to be scared and be fearful and go number the children of Israel, not God. Did that make sense? Did you get that?

- **God's Grace**

Now, I find it absolutely amazing that the very threshing floor that David bought was the very place where the house of God was supposed to be built (according to Chronicles). Whoa! This man has messed up two times, really big! He messed up really big with Bathsheba, and a man and their child lost their lives. But out of that came Solomon and I don't understand that, except to say it was grace. Now he sins really big again, seventy thousand men die, and he buys the very spot where the house of the Lord is going to be built, and the plague is stopped...wow! That is grace! The very act where Satan got victory over David and caused him to sin would be the spot David would buy, and where he would offer an animal that would atone for his sins. But ultimately, that would be the place, the city where God would build that house that would point forward to the day when the Lamb of God would come! That Lamb of God would step forward one day and when He died, He would offer a sacrifice that wouldn't just

atone for the sins of Israel, but would ultimately defeat Satan once and for all! WOW...that is grace!

Free to Build God's House

Now why is this all put together the way it is put together? It is to say that if you know who you are, then you should know what you ought to be doing. What you ought to be doing is building God's house, not just your house, amen? What is God's house? The New Testament clearly tells us that the house of God is the Church. It is not a place, it is not a building; it is people. That is what you and I ought to be building. If you looked at your time and resources, how much of it is about you and your kingdom, and how much is about God's kingdom and God's people?

Here is what I know to be true. When most people have a crisis, whether it is moral, spiritual, financial, or personal, they have an identity crisis. If you have ever had a crisis, did you not doubt who you were? You did, didn't you? When we doubt who we are we don't turn outward, we turn inward. It becomes all about us. And in building our little empire, we try to restore, to ourselves, a belief of who we are in self-worth. It is wrong. You are studying a Bible that says if David could be used of God to put a son on the throne and to buy the very land where the Temple would be built, and He could get over David's failure, then God is already over your failure, and you need to get over it. The reason some of us are not building the house of God is because we can't get over our past; we can't get over our failure. The book of Chronicles was written to tell you to quit living like a slave in the land. You have been put where you have been put by God, and you have been set free to build the house of God. Get over yourself!! Get over your failure!! I am telling you it is called grace! If we fully understand the grace of God, it will not cause us to sin more because there is forgiveness. It will cause us to sin less because there is power, and authority in the gospel of Jesus Christ to live a changed life, and ultimately, to live up to who we are! So we don't go around thriving on forgiveness, we go around thriving on freedom from sin...WOW! The reason is so we can build God's house.

Get over your failure, and then recognize the gift God has given you. Use that gift to be a part of something bigger than you, and that is a part of the body of Christ. God is not only sovereign over His people; He is sovereign over the nations. He wants the whole world to see His house. That is why His house isn't only in Jerusalem. It is in the United States, Canada, Brazil, England, and throughout the world, and He desires it to be in all the nations of the earth. Let's be used of God to build God's house.