

Through the Bible at 30,000 Feet
2 Chronicles | *Out of Darkness & Into Marvelous Light*
North Center | December 5, 2021
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2 Chronicles 36:15–23

Intro: when I was in high school, I remember the first time I went over to my friend Monty's house, and I saw the neck of a bass guitar hanging on his bedroom wall. So I asked him about it. And he told me the story about the time he came home from a trip when he received the call that his house was on fire. By the time he got home, everything had been destroyed. The only thing he was able to salvage from the fire was the top of his guitar.

This is the scene that we read about at the end of **2 Chronicles**.

As a result of their rebellion against God, the people of Judah had been living in exile in Babylon for 70 years. Now they were returning home – to a city that was destroyed and to a Temple that had been burned. Many of these people had either been born in Babylon or they had been very young when they had been taken captive. So the book of Chronicles was written to remind them of who they were (as a people) and to point them forward to what God was calling them to do.

1 Chronicles (the *first* half)

- The story of God's chosen family – from *Adam* to the *Son of David*.
- The story takes us from the Garden of *Eden* to the anticipation of the *Temple* being built.

2 Chronicles (the *second* half)

- The story of God's chosen family – from *Solomon* to the *exile* to the *return*.
- **Chapters 1–9** | The reign of Solomon
- **Chapters 10–36** | The reign of all the other kings in Judah
 - Although most of the kings turn out to be wicked, there are a number of kings who teach us what it means to live for God even when it's not easy.
 - For example:
 - (14) Asa teaches us what it means to get rid of temptations in our lives ¹
 - (19) Jehoshaphat shows us the importance of est. godly leadership ²
 - (24) Joash reminds us that God is calling children to love & obey Him ³
 - This boy is 7 when he becomes the king of Judah 😊
 - (29) Hezekiah teaches us about the importance of worship ⁴
 - (33) Manasseh helps us see what God will do with a sinner who repents ⁵
 - (34) Josiah teaches us of the central importance of God's Word ⁶

¹ 14:2–7

² 19:4–11

³ 24:1–4

⁴ Chapters 29–30

⁵ 33:9–12

⁶ 34:14–33

As powerful as these stories are, they are uncommon in the history of Judah.

As a whole, Judah's history is a dark and destructive history of a people who had rejected God's Word and God's messengers – which is why, when we get to the final chapter of **2 Chronicles**, we see the kingdom *divided*, Jerusalem *destroyed*, the Temple *burned* and *plundered*, and God's people either *killed* or taken *captive* to foreign countries.

2 Chronicles gives us a 30,000-foot summary of Judah's history, and there are at least **three lessons** we learn about God from these seven verses (**15–21**):

1. **God's heart is full of compassion for His people (36:15–16).**
 - For all their rebellion, He could have just wiped them out years ago.
 - But, instead, He continues to warn them of the consequences of their actions:
 - He sends messengers (*angels?*) to warn them
 - He gives them His words to warn them
 - He raises up prophets to warn them

The apostle Peter wrote about this compassion in one of his letters. He writes,

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness,
but is *longsuffering* toward us, not willing that any should perish
but that all should come to repentance.”

~ 2 Peter 3:9

Judah's history teaches us about the compassion & the longsuffering of God toward His people. He is so patient with us. He is so kind toward us.

- This is **one of my biggest goals as a dad.**
 - I want my boys to treasure the patience of their heavenly Father because they saw a glimpse of it in their dad.
2. **God is sovereign over the consequences of our sin (36:17, 21)**
 - Many people hate the thought that God is in control over the destruction in the world – as I once did.
 - But the older I get, the more I have come to treasure this truth as one of the greatest realities in universe.
 - If I know that God is the one behind the devastation in my life, then I know that:
 - It is just (because I know that God is just)⁷
 - It is right (because I know that God always does what is right)⁸
 - It is for my good (because He works all things for my good)⁹

⁷ Luke 18:7; 1 John 1:9.

⁸ Gen 18:25; Deut 32:4.

⁹ Rom 8:28.

- If Satan is ultimately behind the destruction & devastation in my life, then I don't have any of these promises.
 - He is not just or good or compassionate or kind, and he doesn't care anything about my future. His only aim is to "devour" me (**1 Peter 1:8**).
- I didn't like it **when my dad disciplined me**, but if I needed to be disciplined, I would rather he do it than anybody else – because I knew my dad's heart toward me.

3. **God Himself suffers when He deals with our sin.**

- It was **His** people who were killed or taken captive (**17**)
- It was **His** place that was destroyed and then burned (**19**)

And then 500 years later, God would deal with our sin by crucifying His Son.¹⁰

"Wait a minute. What do you mean *God crucified His Son*? It was the **Romans** who crucified Him. And it was the **Jews** who wanted Him to be crucified. And it was **Satan** who entered in Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus. **It's their fault**. Don't go blaming the cross on God."

Q. Do you remember what Jesus said to Pilate on the day that He was crucified?

A. Pilate reminds Jesus that he has the power to crucify Him, and Jesus responds by saying,

"You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above."¹¹
~ John 19:11

"Pilate, the power to crucify Me comes from God. Not you. Not the Romans. Not the Jews. Not sin. **God**."

The point is this: as our eyes move from the manger to the cross...

1. We see the *hand* of God
2. We see the *heart* of God
3. We see the *hurt* of God

And this was just as true when God's **people** and God's **place** were being destroyed (**2 Chr.**).

If this was your very first time reading the story of God's people, you might begin to think that this story is an absolute tragedy because (by the time you get to **36:21**) everything seems to be lost – and there's only two verses left.

¹⁰ Isaiah 53:10; John 3:16; Acts 4:27–28.

¹¹ This is why Jesus was praying to the Father (Matt. 26:39) about the cross, not to Pilate.

Illustration: The final pages...

Christmas time marks the anniversary of my love for reading. I hated reading when I was growing up, and I hated reading during my first couple years in college. But then, in 2007, I was home for Christmas break, and we got snowed in. And it was there on the living room couch that I fell in love with reading. One of the books that I read that Christmas was a fictional story about a woman who went through the holocaust.¹² She manages to escape from the concentration camp, but she and her daughter are being hunted down throughout the entire book. At the end of the book, the bad guy finally captures them. He takes the women back to the concentration where he plans to kill them.

And I remember my horror when I realized that their situation seemed absolutely hopeless and that there was only two pages left. I had fallen in love with these characters. I had spent hours investing my heart into their story, and now they were about to be killed right at the end of the story. With only two pages left, I couldn't see any way that this story was going to end well.

If you had never heard the story of God's people, this is how you might be feeling when you get to the last chapter in **2 Chronicles**.

- You have spent the last 14 books investing your heart *and your hope* into this story. You've followed God's people through all the miracles and promises and victories and failures and tears and ups & downs, and now you read that their land is destroyed and that all the people have either been killed or exiled...*and there's only two verses left*.
- You read **36:15–21**, and your heart begins to sink because everything looks hopeless.

But here is one of the most powerful truths that we learn from **2 Chronicles**:

- **“The story isn't over if the story isn't good.”**

We sing those words often here at North Center.

*“The story isn't over if the story isn't good.
[because] failure is never final when the Father is in the room.”*

The story of Judah's failure is tragic: so much devastation, so many tears... But their failure isn't the end of the story; their failure is *tragic*, but it isn't *final*. There are still two verses left, and those two verses are full of hope.

In these final two verses, we read that:

- God is still in control (**36:22**)
 - He is still at work in this situation, and His Word is still being fulfilled
- Even though they are exiled in a foreign land, “*all the kingdoms of the earth*” ultimately belong to God (**36:23**)

¹² Obsessed by Ted Dekker.

- There is no where you can go (physically or emotionally or mentally or spiritually) that is beyond the sovereign reach of God because He is the King of King of Kings. He owns it all.
- God is bringing His people back home (**36:22**)
- And the place of worship is going to be rebuilt (**36:22**)

And that's how the book of Chronicles ends... with hope!¹³

The good news of this book (*not just 2 Chronicles, but the entire Bible*) is that (*for God's chosen people*) **hope has the final word.**

Christmas is such a powerful reminder that the story of God's people never ends with darkness, but with light.

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,
Upon them a light has shined.”
~ **Isaiah 9:2**

That's the story of Christmas. Jesus said,

“I have come as a light into the world,
That whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.”
~ **John 12:46**

It can be so easy to be consumed by the darkness in the world and by the darkness in our lives (our sin, shame, regret, disappointment, loneliness, loss, struggles, pain, exhaustion, fear...) and forget that God hasn't finished writing our story yet.

One of the most famous verses in the entire OT is **Jeremiah 29:11**

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord,
plans for [peace] and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”
~ **Jeremiah 29:11**

Q. You may know that verse, but do you know the **CONTEXT** of it?

A. The prophet Jeremiah wrote it to the Jews who were still living in exile in Babylon to remind them that God wasn't finished writing their story. There was more to their story than failure and destruction and exile and darkness. Though their story feels dark in the moment, God has promised to give them a future and a hope.

I may not know what you are going through right now, but I do know that if you are a child of God, the future is full of hope and light *because of Jesus*.¹⁴

¹³ It **starts** with Adam & Seth (*which reminds us of all that was lost in the Garden of Eden*), and it **ends** with the return from exile and the anticipation of restoration.

¹⁴ Psalm 139:16; Phil. 1:6; Heb. 12:2; Eph. 3:20; Jer. 29:11; Psalm 16:11; Heb. 13:5.

On Christmas, we celebrate that Jesus has called us out of our darkness and into His marvelous light (**1 Peter 2:9**). From **Chronicles** to **Christmas** to the **Cross**, we are reminded that the story God is writing is a story of hope. And this hope has a Name: Jesus.

And as the music team makes their way to the front, we are going to close our worship gathering by singing of the hope we have in Jesus.