

David's Hope

Originally one book, Chronicles was divided into two in the fifteenth



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century. Scholars recognize these writings date about six hundred years after King David's reign when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 BC.

Much of Israel's sacred books were codified during Israel's exile because their leaders were concerned the people would lose the promises of God and the laws and religious demands of their covenant relationship with God. It is all too common that faith in God can be swallowed up and become a tool of popular ideologies and politics. Solomon's temple was the impressive emblem of Israel's relationship with God and the center of all they believed.

Even in our day, when people claim the United States is a "Christian" nation, the truth is we have substituted traditions, organizations, and popular thinking for the church as the body of Christ in this world. Israel needed to relearn the meaning of their covenant relationship with God, represented by Solomon's temple. Chronicles shows how Israel was reconnecting with their faith heritage by remembering their past.

David wanted to build the temple, "had planned to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, for the footstool of our God ... and he made preparations for building," but God denied David's dream because "he was a warrior who shed blood" (v. 3). Most fathers have hopes and dreams for their children, but a son or daughter's choices and life may go a different direction. David was the king that led Israel's armies, conquered their enemies, and built Israel as a nation. He could find great satisfaction in the fact that his son would complete the dream of a nation that the world recognize as unique in their beliefs and ethical behavior.

That last idea is absolutely key for Solomon's success and Israel's

future: God will bless Solomon, "establish his kingdom forever if he continues resolute in keeping (God's) commandments and ordinances" (v. 7). The people must "observe and search out all the commandments of the Lord your God; that you may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children after you forever" (v. 8). God understands our many possibilities for spiritual and moral failure, yet God offered blessings to Israel in Solomon's day, just as he does for us today.

However, God's promise is dependent on obedience to the Torah, the law of God. In our day God's promise is built on our trust in God and our Savior as we live by the ultimate law of grace. Every generation of God's people faces the same choices and temptations, but we have a longer history and record of biblical truth as our foundation for living. Amazing how much freedom God gives us! But, like ancient Israel, we seem to need a regular refresher course on what it means to be God's children.

But, at the risk of sounding repetitious, isn't that normal for all children? We must hear again and again God's call to faithfulness. God is at the center of this remarkable story, Solomon is the gifted administrator, and the people are the team that produces an impressive place to worship God.

Notice that there is more here that putting bricks and mortar together. There is organization of priests and Levites to serve in God's temple, to lead the people in meaningful worship and keep God's promises ever before the nation. Unlike most ancient religions, Israel's faith shaped morals, traditions, daily living, and relationships. Look back at verse 9 for the key to living a life blessed by God: "you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve him with a single mind and willing heart; for the Lord searches every mind, and understands every plan and thought ... if you seek him, he will be found ... but if you forsake him, he will abandon you forever."

David knew the darkness of failure and the hope of God's forgiveness. Solomon would accomplish great things and fail in some ways as well. The history of Israel repeats this cycle. We are no different, but we have a greater understanding of God through his Son. How will we choose to live based on God's promises and grace?

The Apostle Paul, a trained scholar of Israel's history and Old Testament law, gives us a sound answer: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised us faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another" (Hebrews 10:23-25).

We should not be surprised that the same spiritual truths appear in both the Old and New Testament, for God is the same as is his love and grace. David was denied his dream of building God's temple, but he found joy in the idea that his son Solomon would finish the task and Israel was in God's hands. Hope has present application and future promise. David knew the awful consequences of sin, but he also knew the restorative power of God's love and grace. David died knowing God would keep his promise and Solomon would build the temple.

Exiled Israel, reading the history and promises of God in Chronicles, was discovering hope as they were allowed to go home at last to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. But, would the hopeful future become a repeat of their tragic past?

Like Solomon, we are aware of God's promises and his call for us to be a different kind of people who will love him and live out his grace. Will we trust God in these difficult times ... share his love with our lost world ... and open our lives to become the temple of God's Spirit? The challenges are real and obstacles are expected, but the promises of God are ever before us. Like David, we have hope in God.