

## **Chapter Nine**

### **The King After God's Own Heart: Second Samuel, First Chronicles**

Since the books of 2 Samuel and I Chronicles cover the same period of time, even though from quite distinct viewpoints, and though they do not follow one another in the biblical order, they may be studied as one book. They both center upon the story of one man--David, the king after God's own heart.

Second Samuel falls into four simple divisions: (1) chapters 1-5 trace David's road from king over the tribe of Judah only, to total dominion over the 12 tribes of Israel seven years later; (2) chapters 6-10 highlight the themes of worship and victory--those two things that always go together in the Christian life; (3) chapters 11-20 record David's failure and God's forgiveness and the results of both in David's life; (4) chapters 21-24 comprise an appendix which sets forth certain important lessons learned by King David in the course of his reign.

In focusing thus upon the life of David there are two ways that we may view him. First, it is perfectly proper to see him as a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, for Jesus Himself used this analogy. David was not only the forerunner and ancestor of Jesus according to the flesh, but in his reign he is a picture of the reign of Christ during the millennium. David went through a long time when he was rejected, persecuted and harassed; but during that time of exile he gathered men around him who later, after he was king, became his commanders and generals. Thus David pictures Christ in His rejection--forsaken by the world but gathering in secret those who will be His commanders, generals and captains when He comes to reign in power and glory over the earth.

Second, David is also a picture of each individual believer; and it is only as we read these histories from that point of view that the books come alive and glow with truth for us. "These things...were written," Paul says, "for our instruction" (I Cor. 10:11), that we might understand ourselves as we see events worked out in the lives of these characters in the Old Testament.

The story of David portrays what happens in a Christian's life as he follows God into the place of dominion and reigning. Every Christian is offered a kingdom, just as David was offered a kingdom. That kingdom is the believer's own life and it is exactly like the kingdom of Israel. There are enemies threatening it from the outside and there are enemies threatening it from within, just as there were enemy nations outside the boundaries of Israel and there were enemy tribes living amongst the people within the land. The enemies from without are representative for us of the world and the direct attacks of the devil upon us. The enemies within represent those internal enemies of the flesh that threaten to undermine and overthrow the dominion that God intends us to have as we learn to reign in life by Jesus Christ. We do not call them Ammonites, Jebusites, Perrizites, etc., as they are called in the Old Testament, rather we call them jealousy, envy, lust, bitterness, resentment, worry, anxiety, etc. But they are the same enemies and proceed in the same ways.

What an accurate picture all this is! David, in I Samuel 13:14 is called "a man after [God's] own heart"; but King Saul, the first king of Israel, is labeled "the king like the nations around." Thus, as we have seen in I Samuel, Saul represents the man of the flesh who tries in his own way to please God by good-intentioned, highly sincere but basically disobedient efforts to be religious. For him everything falls apart. We learn from Saul that the Christian life is not to be a shabby imitation of the life of Jesus Christ. It must be the real thing, with Christ Himself living His life in us. But as Saul is the picture of the flesh and its attempt to imitate reality, David is the picture of the man after God's own heart, the believer in whom the Spirit of God dwells and who is open to the instruction of the Spirit and is led by the Spirit.

## FROM EXILE TO THE THRONE

Second Samuel opens with a second account of the death of Saul, the man of the flesh. David learns of Saul's and Jonathan's death from a passing Amalekite who boasts that he slew King Saul, took his crown from off his head, and brought it to David (2 Sam. 1:10). When we recall that an Amalekite is a descendant of Esau and one with whom God has said He is at war "from generation to generation" (Exod. 17:16), we can regard his tale as essentially a fabrication, for it differs in considerable degree from the account of the death of Saul in I Samuel. Without a doubt he found the dead body of the king and attempted to despoil it and use it for his own advancement. The whole story affords an accurate picture of how the flesh can steal away our crown and seek to turn it to its own glory. David however honors Saul as the Lord's anointed, and gives the Amalekite the ultimate penalty.

In a song of great beauty and power, David, ever the man of faith, extols both Saul and Jonathan as men used of God despite their weaknesses. The song closes with an eloquent expression of David's sense of loss at the death of his dear friend Jonathan (1:26).

David's first act after the death of Saul was to inquire of the Lord where he should establish his residence as king of Judah; God directed him to the city of Hebron ("fellowship"). Here David was anointed as king by his own tribe of Judah (2:4) and with true nobility of character he commends the men of Jabesh-Gilead for having recovered and buried the body of Saul. However, kingship over all 12 tribes was not to be easily gained, for Abner, the cousin of Saul and his leading general, took Ishbosheth, the 40-year-old son of Saul, and anointed him king over all Israel outside of Judah. This act precipitated warfare between David and the house of Saul, which broke out in immediate conflict between Abner and Joab, David's nephew and general over the fighting men of Judah. Both these men were strong and powerful leaders and remained rivals throughout their careers. In the first encounter, Abner killed Asahel, Joab's brother and Joab was never to rest until his vengeance was satisfied by Abner's death.

The warfare between David and the house of Saul continued for the duration of seven years. Matters were brought to a crisis by a quarrel that broke out between Abner and King Ishbosheth, the son of Saul. Abner felt that he was unjustly charged with taking to himself a concubine of Saul's and in anger he swore to transfer his loyalty to David and thus to carry out what he felt all along was God's purpose: to make David king over all Israel. But when Joab, David's general, learned that Abner, his hated rival, was about to become David's supporter, Joab lured Abner into a private conversation at the gate of Hebron and there slew him (3:30). King David promptly denied all complicity with this murder, openly praised Abner to the people, and followed his bier to the grave. This greatly pleased the people, and David steadily won his way into that respect and love which is the greatest support for the power of a king.

Chapter 4 recounts the bloody story of the murder of Ishbosheth by two men of the tribe of Benjamin. They brought the head of Ishbosheth to David in Hebron, thinking to gain his approval but he met them with the same treatment he had given the Amalekite who brought the news of Saul's death. Their immediate death at the hands of David's men demonstrated again David's unwillingness to make use of subterfuge and injustice to secure the ends appointed by God. Nevertheless, with the death of Abner and Ishbosheth, the warfare with the house of Saul is ended and the way is now clear for David to be king over all of Israel. In our lives, this depicts the time when we come at last to the full truth of the cross and what that cross has done in putting to death the old man within us, thus bringing an end to the reign of the flesh, as pictured by the house of Saul. When at last it breaks upon our astonished minds that God really means it when He says He has separated us from the life of Adam and linked us to the life of Jesus Christ, and thus our old man no longer has any right to live, then we are standing right in the same place David was when he saw the opportunity to ascend to the throne over all the united land of Israel.

The elders of all the tribes gathered at Hebron and there publicly acknowledged David as king over the entire land (5:1-3). His first act was to attack the city of Jerusalem, the home of the Jebusites, and by forcing an entrance through a secret water tunnel he gained control of the site and made it his capital. Following this, he built a magnificent house of cedar in Jerusalem with the aid of Hiram the king of Tyre. Here in 2 Samuel 5:13-16, a note of weakness interjects, for we learn of further wives and concubines which David added to his family and from which were born many sons and daughters. His growing power as king was immediately

manifest in a double victory over the Philistine armies.

## **WORSHIP AND VICTORY**

With the borders of land secure and a standing army of 30,000 men, David felt the time had come to bring the Ark back from its long resting place in the city of Keriath-jearim, here called Baal-Judah. David built a new ox cart and set the Ark in the middle of it and started back to the city of Jerusalem with the people singing and rejoicing around the Ark (6:5). It was a time of enthusiastic, utterly sincere, and complete dedication and devotion to God. But then a terrible thing happened: as the Ark was going down the road the cart hit a rut and trembled and shook so that it looked as though the Ark was about to fall off the cart. A man named Uzzah, standing by the cart, reached out his hand to steady it and the moment his hand touched the Ark the lightning of God struck him dead. David was nonplused and fearful, not knowing what to do.

Of course, it cast a pall of tragedy over this whole scene, and the rejoicing and merrymaking was abruptly stopped. David was so sick at heart that he turned the ox cart aside and put the Ark of God in the house of Obed-Edom. Then he returned to Jerusalem, bitter and resentful against the Lord for doing such a thing.

Although David was afraid of the Lord because of this event, the truth was that it was David's fault that Uzzah had died. In the book of Leviticus there were very specific and detailed instructions on how the Ark was to be moved. Only the Levites were to touch it. It was David's fault that the Levites had not been asked to move the Ark. He was presumptuous enough to assume that God was so strongly for him that he could get away with almost anything. David had to learn the lesson that sincerity in serving God is never enough. Things must be done God's way in accomplishing God's will.

Perhaps you have had some similar experience. You may have had some favorite project which you felt, in the earnestness of your heart, would be a wonderful thing to glorify God, and you set about it, determined to bring it to pass. But God failed to bless the project and the whole thing crumbled to pieces. The death of Uzzah stands as a constant testimony that it is not God's responsibility to carry out our program; it is rather our responsibility to be in such a relationship to Him that He may carry out His program.

After three months, during which the Ark brought great blessing to the house of Obed-Edom, David had recovered to the point where he was ready to bring the Ark into Jerusalem, borne properly upon the shoulders of the Levites. As he danced in joy before the Ark he drew the contempt of his wife Michal, the daughter of Saul, who looked out at him from her window. But David was able to ignore her reproach, for he knew that what he had done was proper and right before the God of Israel.

Before David brought the Ark back to Jerusalem he had brought the Tabernacle from Gibeon for the Ark to rest in. But now he found himself concerned that he himself was dwelling in a beautiful house of cedar, while the Ark rested in a lowly tent (7:1,2). It came into his heart to build a magnificent house for the Ark of God. When Nathan the prophet heard of this he encouraged David to fulfill his desire. But God sent a message to Nathan saying that it was not His will for David to build the Temple, since he was a man of war; only a man of peace could properly build the Temple of God. Surely this anticipates the New Testament truth that Jesus Christ alone, the Prince of Peace, is capable of erecting the Temple of God among humanity. Though God had rejected his plan to build the Temple, David, evidently learning the lesson of Uzzah, humbly accepted the divine will, and in a prayer of great beauty and humility praised God for His glorious leadership over himself and the nation, and accepted the reversal of his own plans with grace and patience (7: 18-29).

The rest of this major section gives itself to an account of David's consolidation of his kingdom, conquering many of Israel's ancient enemies on every side, including Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Amalekites, and even the Syrians, far to the north.

A beautiful interlude is recounted of David's search for any remaining sons of Jonathan (chap. 10). Upon finding one named Mephibosheth, who had been lamed by a fall on the terrible day when Saul and Jonathan fell in battle, David brought him to Jerusalem, set him at his own table, and treated him as his own son. Thus he remembered his covenant with Jonathan to "show the kindness of the Lord" to his descendants. In all this he appears afresh as a man after God's own heart.

## DAVID'S FAILURE, GOD'S FORGIVENESS

The next part of the story of David can be told in three simple sentences: he saw; he inquired; he took. It is the story of his tragic downfall and the entrance of sudden and terrible sin into David's life.

Walking on the roof of his house (when he should have been in battle), David saw a beautiful woman taking a bath. He sent and inquired about her, and then he took her. In those three statements we have a graphic tracing of the process of temptation. All temptation begins, first with a simple desire. There is nothing wrong with the desire, for it is awakened in us because we are human beings. It may be along any avenue, but whenever it appears it must be properly dealt with. Either it is to be put away, or it is to be formed into a proper intent. David saw the beautiful woman, desired her, and then began to work out a way by which he could take her, even though he knew it was wrong. This was followed immediately by an act of adultery, and David, "a man after God's own heart" is thus involved in deep sin.

When the act was accomplished he refused to face the music, as many of us do. Instead of openly confessing and acknowledging the wrong and trying to make it right, he committed another sin to cover it up. This is often the process of sin. Commit one sin and you must commit another to cover that one up, and 10 more to cover up the second. So when David found out that Bathsheba was pregnant, he sent for Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, and tried to trick him into Lying with his wife, thus covering up David's double-dealing. But Uriah, in simple faithfulness to his duty and to God, confounded David. The matter ended finally in the murder of Uriah at the hands of the Ammonites. Joab, David's ruthless general, became a conspirator with David in the plot, and Uriah was placed at the forefront of battle. Though slain by the Ammonites, it was really David who was the murderer. So, suddenly and appallingly, there breaks into David's life the double sin of adultery and murder.

Many have wondered how the man who is called "a man after God's own heart" could ever merit such a title after being guilty of such a sin. But if you want to see what God meant when he called David "a man after his own heart," look at what happens in David's life when God sent Nathan the prophet to him. Nathan told the king a parable, which caught him completely off guard; and when the king responded in righteous anger, Nathan charged him with having committed the sin he had just condemned. Immediately, David acknowledged and faced his sin; he no longer tried to justify it, but confessed his total wrong in this matter. It was at this point that David wrote Psalm 51. Many have turned to this psalm in times of guilt and self-condemnation, and have found in David's experience the grace to handle their own sin properly before God, and to know also the washing away of stain and ugliness in the ever-flowing stream of God's mercy.

Chapters 12 through 20 record the results of David's sin as they unfolded in his life. When Nathan the prophet came to David, he told him, "Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your companion, and he shall lie with your wives in broad daylight' " (12:11). This was to be literally fulfilled by Absalom, David's own son. Nathan had further said to the king, "However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die" (v. 14).

So it proved to be. The first result was that the baby born of this illegitimate union died, even though David pled with the Lord in a pathetic, poignant passage which reflects the tearing of his heart by grief. Then the predicted results in David's home, his family, and his kingdom began to appear.

Chapter 13 tells the dark story of Amnon, David's son, who sinned against his own sister, Tamar. This resulted in a black hatred born in Absalom, also David's son, against Amnon. In David's family, among his own sons, was spread a bitter spirit of rebellion and evil created by David's personal failure. The story of Amnon and his quarrel with Absalom, and finally the murder of Absalom at the hand of Joab, shows King David to be utterly helpless. He cannot even rebuke his own son, for Amnon simply follows in David's footsteps.

We are told next of the uprising of Absalom (chap. 15). This handsome, brilliant, gifted son of David fomented rebellion throughout the whole kingdom and secretly worked against his father in attempting to take

the throne for himself. He was so successful that David, along with all his court, finally had to leave the city, fleeing as an exile. Weeping, David left the city, barefoot and with his head covered as symbolic of his penitent heart. He acknowledged the fact that these evil circumstances were the result of his own folly. But even in his humiliation and shame he had the presence of mind to send Abiathar and Zadok back into the city; he told his friend Hushai that he could serve him better by remaining behind, rather than accompanying him in his exile.

Further ignominy was added to the fleeing king when Zeba, Mephibosheth's servant, met him with the false information that Mephibosheth had remained in Jerusalem with the expectation of seeing the house of Saul restored by Absalom (16:1-3). Also Shimei the Benjaminite and a relative of Saul openly mocked and cursed King David. But when Abishai, Joab's brother, sought permission to kill Shimei, David, with great magnanimity of spirit, restrained him, remarking that perhaps the Lord had sent Shimei to humble David even further (16:5-12). Thus he showed himself, even in his humiliation, as a man after God's own heart.

Meanwhile, back at Jerusalem, Hushai had won the confidence of Absalom and was invited to act as one of his counselors. Ahithophel, formerly David's advisor, suggested to Absalom that he immediately pursue and kill his father. Hushai was able to turn Absalom from such counsel and advised him rather to wait until he could gather a large army from all of Israel and then go up against the king. In suggesting this, he was seeking to give David time to gather men.

Eventually the two forces came to battle in the forest of Ephraim, and a mighty conflict ensued, resulting in the death of over 20,000 men. When Absalom saw that his forces were defeated he tried to escape on a mule through the forest. He was caught in a branch of a tree and left hanging by the head in midair. When Joab heard of this, he immediately went to the spot and, taking three darts, thrust them into Absalom's heart, directly contravening the orders of David who had commanded his men to spare Absalom's life. When the news of Absalom's death was brought to David he was crushed with sorrow and cried, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you" (18:33).

So distraught was David that Joab ultimately reproved him for his mourning and warned him that he was in danger of losing the support of his fighting men by apparently loving his rebel son above all his loyal supporters.

The section ends with the account of the return of David in triumph to Jerusalem. Again he showed magnanimity to the now remorseful Shimei, who formerly had cursed him, and was gracious again to Mephibosheth, who explained that David had been deceived by Mephibosheth's servant. David's return, however, was marred by the rebellion of Sheba, a Benjaminite, who sought to exploit the situation by leading a breakaway rebellion from David's authority. Abishai and Joab were sent to suppress the outbreak and on their way they met Amasa, formerly Absalom's commander, at Gibeon. Joab, knowing that David had offered to make Amasa commander in his place, treacherously greeted Amasa with an apparently friendly kiss, but instead stabbed him with his sword and left his body wallowing in blood on the highway. The strange ferocity of this man, coupled with his loyalty to David, was manifested clearly in this bloody deed.

The insurrection ended when a woman in the city where Sheba had taken refuge convinced the townspeople to save their city from siege by beheading Sheba and throwing his head over the wall to Joab. Thus, through much humiliation, shame and bloodshed David was restored to his position as king, and the affairs of the kingdom were once again set in order.

## **THE EPILOGUE**

The epilogue to 2 Samuel, chapters 21 through 24, gathers up, though not in chronological order, some of the events and lessons which David experienced through his 40-year reign. The first is the story of the Gibeonites whom Saul had attacked, contrary to the covenant which Joshua had made with them when he first had conquered the land. The result of Saul's breach of faith was a continuing famine in that section of the country which could not be ended until expiation was made by handing over to the Gibeonites seven of Saul's sons or grandsons. The lesson of this incident is that the past must be reckoned with. If there are things in our past which can still be corrected, we have a responsibility before God to go back and set these things straight. Thus, in the account of David and the Gibeonites, a correction was made of something which occurred under

King Saul, and as Saul's heir to the throne, David had to set it straight.

Chapter 22 records one of David's most beautiful psalms. It appears again as Psalm 18. In it is found David's own recognition of the things that made for greatness in his kingdom. He acknowledged God as the source of all human strength and the One who alone can bring deliverance. He stated that what a man is to God, God will also be to that man. If one is open and honest and forthright with God, He will also be open and honest and forthright in return. But if a man insists on being crooked and perverse and deceitful, God will cause the circumstances of his life to deceive him. This reflects the same truth that Paul declares in Philippians 3:12, in which he says, in essence, about Christ, "what I am to Him, He will be to me."

The final chapter gives the account of David's third great sin as recorded in this book--his sin of numbering Israel" Many have wondered why God would view this as sin, since He Himself had commanded Moses to number the people, as recorded in the book of Numbers. But David's numbering was done from a quite different motive, as seen in the rebuke of Joab to the king. Apparently the king began to reckon on his military might and the numbers of the people rather than wholly on the grace and power of God. For his sin, David was given a choice of three possible punishments; wisely, he left the matter in the hands of the Lord. To indicate the seriousness of reliance on human strength, the angel of the Lord was sent among Israel for three days, and a pestilence took the lives of 70,000 men. The prophet Gad was sent to the king to tell him to erect an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, where the plague was stayed. This was later to be the site of the erection of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Thus 2 Samuel closes with the man after God's own heart turning from his sin to the worship of the living God.

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## **FIRST CHRONICLES**

It is clearly evident that I Chronicles was written after the return of Israel from their 70 years of captivity in Babylon. It was probably written by Ezra the priest, who also wrote the book which bears his name. Ezra was one of the great figures who returned with the captives to reestablish the Temple and the worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem.

Although I Chronicles covers much of the same period as 2 Samuel, it does so with a particular emphasis on the worship of Israel. This is evident in the opening chapters. The first nine chapters are given over to a long list of genealogies. This is not merely the stringing together of many names, but is a compilation of some of the most helpful material available to anyone working on the problem of biblical chronology. If we look at these names carefully and compare them with other accounts, we will see that God is selecting and rejecting, excluding and including and working toward an ultimate goal. These genealogies are given that we might see both the goal toward which the Lord works in human history, and the principle by which He includes or excludes events.

### **THE PROCESS OF SELECTION**

The genealogy begins in chapter 1 at the dawn of human history, listing the sons and descendants of Adam--Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel. We know that among the sons of Adam were Cain, Abel and Seth, but here Cain and Abel are excluded and there is no mention of them. The focus is upon the descendants of Seth, for from him eventually came the family of Abraham and the Israelites. Here is the principle of exclusion in evidence.

Then the line of Seth is traced down to Enoch and Noah. The three sons of Noah are listed as Shem, Ham and Japheth, but Ham and Japheth are dismissed with a brief word and attention is focused on the line of Shem. From Shem we trace on down to Abraham and his family. The constant narrowing process also excludes Ishmael, the son of Abraham, and Esau, the son of Isaac, and focuses on Jacob's 12 sons who became the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel.

The genealogy continues and selects the tribes of Judah and Levi--the king and the priestly lines. It traces the tribe of Judah down to David, to Solomon and then through the kings of the house of David to the Babylonian captivity. The tribe of Levi is traced down to Aaron, the first of the priests, and then to the priests who were prominent in the kingdom at the time of David.

In all these genealogies there are interspersed brief reasons for the selections which are made, and certain isolated incidents are reported. One is found in chapter 4:9, where we read, "Jabez was more honorable than his brother, and his mother named him Jabez saying, 'Because I bore him with pain' " (Jabez means "pain"). The reference goes on to recite the brief prayer of Jabez in which he asks God to enlarge his borders and keep him from harm. God granted him what he asked. This apparently minor incident reflects the principle God follows in His process of selectivity. Wherever God can find an obedient heart, that individual is included in the account. In the case of Jabez, his native disabilities were canceled out by his faith and he is immediately made an effectual instrument in the working of God through him in history. When God excludes a name, or turns from a line or family, it is always on the basis of repeated disobedience. This principle can be traced throughout the entire genealogical record.

Chapter 10 gives a brief account of the death of Saul, the first of Israel's kings. Verses 13 and 14 tell why Saul's kingship ended: "So Saul died for his trespass which he committed against the Lord, because of the word of the Lord which he did not keep; and also because he asked counsel of a medium, making inquiry of it."

## **GOD'S KING**

The rest of I Chronicles is about David. The book emphasizes that from the moment he was anointed king, David was God's king. His first act after coming to kingship in Israel was to take over the pagan stronghold of the Jebusites, the city of Jerusalem--God's city. This was the place where God had chosen to put His name among the tribes of Israel.

Beginning with chapter 11:10, the account names those who were loyal to David during his exile, and the things they did that made them mighty. These were men of faith and passion, and were attracted to David by the character he displayed. These mighty men who shared David's exile eventually became the leaders in his kingdom. It is a beautiful picture of the glory we are promised to share with the Lord Jesus when He establishes His kingdom of righteousness over all the earth.

A second emphasis of the book is on the Ark of God. In chapter 13 we are told that David went down to the city where the Ark was situated and took it upon a cart to bring it back to Jerusalem. Evidently David knew that the law commanded that the Ark be carried only by Levites, but in the exuberance of his joy and his zeal for God's cause he attempted to do it another way. The result was the immediate death of Uzzah, who touched the Ark to steady it when it appeared about to fall. There is no incident in the Old Testament that teaches more clearly the importance of a careful, precise obedience to what the Word of God says. It also teaches that God is able to care for His own cause. Many today, like Uzzah, are seeking to steady the Ark of God which they feel to be in danger, but it is quite apparent from this incident that God is quite able to defend His own cause.

When eventually David does bring the Ark into Jerusalem, borne by Levites, he placed it in the Tabernacle which he had previously brought up from the city of Gibeon. The restoration of the Ark to the Tabernacle was an occasion of great rejoicing and we have recorded in chapter 16 the great psalm sung on this momentous occasion. It is made up of parts of psalms 105, 96 and 106. It is a great declaration of the government of God, the majesty of God which draws forth the worship of His people, and a great expression of gratitude to God for what He is in Himself.

The account in chapter 17 of David's desire to build a Temple in place of the Tabernacle and God's rejection of that plan, with David's subsequent prayer of praise and worship, is almost identical to the account in 2 Samuel. Likewise, the story of David's victories over the nations surrounding Israel is, with slight variations, identical with 2 Samuel 8. These stories are beautifully descriptive of what happens in our hearts when Christ is crowned as King. There is immediately a subjugation of the dark enemies of our soul that created so much havoc in our lives.

It is remarkable that the double sin of David in taking the wife of Uriah the Hittite and arranging for the murder of her husband is passed over in this book in total silence. The only reference to it is the fact that "David stayed at Jerusalem" (20:1). That sin was one which grew out of his own foolish willfulness as an individual. It had nothing to do with his reign as a king; therefore it is omitted from this book which centers on his kingship. But David's action in numbering Israel is recounted in detail, as representing an abrupt departure from the principle of dependence upon the strength and glory of God. As king, David desired to see the number of people that were available to him, and thus to glory in the physical strength of his realm.

A problem arises in any Christian circle when men begin to depend upon numbers. One of the great principles which runs through the Bible, from beginning to end, is that God never wins His battles by a majority. When we begin to think that the cause of Christ is losing out because the number of Christians is decreasing in proportion to the population of the world, we have succumbed to the false philosophy that God wins His battles by numbers. In many instances throughout the Bible we are taught that God does not rely upon numbers but upon quality. There is the story of Gideon, with God's deliberate reduction of the number of men supporting him from 32,000 to 300. There is also the story of David and Goliath, the deliverance of Israel by a single shepherd boy with a single sling and a single rock from the brook. There is the story of Samson, who slew the Philistines with nothing but the jawbone of a donkey. Thus, all through Chronicles, the same principle is repeated as we find the emphasis upon God's method of the development of quality rather than quantity.

As the result of David's departure from this principle, and because the whole nation looked to him as king, God's judgment was exceedingly severe. The prophet Gad was sent to David to give him the three choices of punishment. When the angel of the Lord came into the midst of the people pestilence raged throughout the nation. David saw the angel with his sword stretched out over the city of Jerusalem, ready to slay there also, and David pled with God saying, "It is my fault; why do you take vengeance upon these others? I am the one to blame" (see 21: 17). Then God instructed him to buy the cattle and the threshing floor of Ornan (spelled Araunah in I Samuel). On this spot David erected an altar and worshiped God. The altar was placed where the angel of God stayed his hand from judgment.

## **AUTHORITY OF THE TEMPLE**

Chapters 22-29 tell of David's passion for the building of the Temple. Because he understood that a nation without a Temple could never be a proper nation, he longed to see the Temple built. A people without the living God in their midst would never amount to much. Though David knew that Solomon his son had been appointed by God to be the actual builder of the Temple, yet in grace God allowed David to do everything for the Temple but to actually build it. It was David who drew the plans, designed the furniture, collected the materials and made all the arrangements for ritual and ceremony. He brought down cedars from Mount Hermon and Mount Lebanon from the north. He dug up the rock and quarried the stones. He gathered in great quantities of gold, silver and iron, and when it was all ready, David commanded the leaders of Israel to help Solomon in his task. In order to give Solomon the prestige and power necessary to this work, David made him a virtual co-ruler with himself.

Careful detail is given as to the work of the Levites in carrying out the work in the Temple, and special attention is paid to the ministry of music for the services within the Temple. David's musical skill had played a great part in his life, and his interest in these musical arrangements was most natural and delightful. David's concern for every detail of the building of the Temple is evident in his care for the workers who labored in its building, and for the cultivation of crops and the raising of cattle and all that pertained to the welfare of his people in carrying out their central activity--the worship of the living God.

Chapters 28 and 29 recount the final charge of David to his son Solomon and his impressive recital of reasons for God's refusal to allow him to do the building and his choice of Solomon for that task. David then gave to Solomon the pattern of the house with all its detail. Then, standing among the people, David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly, recognizing God's gracious gifts to them and the privilege of giving back to him the very best that men could give. He concluded with a great prayer for Solomon that God would preserve him in safety and grant him a perfect heart to fulfill the great work.



What is the ultimate message of I Chronicles? It is the supreme authority of the temple in our individual life. Central to all of life is the worship of the heart. Over the three great doors of the cathedral in Milan, Italy, are three inscriptions. Over the right hand door is carved a wreath of flowers and the inscription, "All that pleases is but for a moment." On the left hand door is a cross, and over it is written, "All that troubles is but for a moment." Over the main entrance are the words, "Nothing is important save that which is eternal."

This is the lesson of Chronicles, for it is in some sense the lesson of the whole Bible. "Whatever you do in word or deed [i.e. in the temple of the body], do all in the name of [by the authority and by the ability of] the Lord Jesus [King in His temple]' (Col. 3:17).

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