

# God's Message to Us in Second Chronicles

Halifax, NS

29 April 2018, 2:00 PM

## Introduction

Today in our sermon series on *God's Message to Us in Every Book of the Bible*, we have come to Second Chronicles.

- Second Chronicles covers the time from the ascension of King Solomon (1015 BC) to the overthrow of the house of David and the exile.
  - So Second Chronicles covers roughly the same period as First and Second Kings, except that Second Chronicles reaches to a later time than Kings by mentioning the decree of Cyrus the Persian (in 536 BC) to rebuild the temple
  - It is also pretty clear that Kings was written first, and that Chronicles was probably written by Ezra to encourage the people when they were rebuilding the temple in obedience to Cyrus' decree.
    - For those who are not familiar with the history about that, it was Babylon that destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and took the Jews into captivity...
    - But Babylon fell to Persia and then King Cyrus of Persia sent the Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple—the history of that rebuilding is what we will be looking at over the next two weeks when we study the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.
- But all this is quite relevant to today's subject of God's message to us in 2 Chronicles.
  - 2 Chronicles differs from Kings in that Kings is focused on how Israel and Judah brought judgment upon themselves that led to the exile...
    - where 2 Chronicles focuses especially on the way God restores His people when they return to Him, looking in faith to the temple where God's way of salvation by sacrifice was revealed.
  - So 2 Chronicles continues what 1 Chronicles began...
    - Perhaps you will remember that it too focused on the ark of the covenant and the plans for building the temple.

We might say that the overall theme of 2 Chronicles is God's readiness to restore His people through the blood of the Covenant.

- For Israel, the blood of the Covenant was through the sacrifices at the temple,
  - but for us now that Jesus has come,
    - it is through His one sacrifice that was made 2000 years ago.
  - Understand of course that the blood shed at the temple by thousands of sacrifices was a shadow of the sacrifice that Christ would make.
    - The people knew that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away their sins, but they trusted in God to provide the sacrifice that would take away their sins...
    - And now we know that that sacrifice was God's Son.
- Second Chronicles has a key paragraph (not every book does, but it does) that captures the essence of the whole book... this readiness of God to restore His people through the blood of the covenant.

- Let's begin by looking at this paragraph—
  - 2 Chronicles 7:12-16.
  - Solomon has just finished dedicating the temple and then God appears to him—something He did twice in Solomon's life:

Hear what He says, 2 Chronicles 7:12-16:

**2 Chron 7:12-16: Then the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. <sup>13</sup> When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, <sup>14</sup> if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. <sup>15</sup> Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer *made* in this place. <sup>16</sup> For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually."**

Consider what we learn from this!

**I. First of all, we learn that God is always ready to restore us when we come to Him through Jesus Christ.**

- A. You see that that is what is at the heart of this paragraph.
1. Verse 14 is often quoted on its own—if **My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.**
    - It is a wonderful verse that gets right to what Hebrews 11 tells us is the essence of faith—believing that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.
  2. If we have been proud, living as if we are God, living as if His commandments do not matter, as if we can get along fine without Him...
    - and we humble ourselves and call on His name and pray and seek His face and turn from our wicked ways,
    - He will hear us and He will forgive us and He will heal our land.

TRANS> It is a wonderful truth for us to understand as His people, but we also need to understand what is around this verse...

- a couple of things that are sometimes ignored by Christians who quote this verse today.

**B. Notice that it is God who sends the trouble—as a chastisement for sin.**

1. Look at verse 13 and you can see this—
  - He says, **"When I shut up the heaven and there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among the people..."**
  - Things like that do not happen apart from the hand of God.
    - Sometimes He sends such things against His people to test them—but very often it is because of their sin—because they have not been looking to Him.
    - But always, it is a sovereign act of His will and we need to accept that.

2. Solomon fully recognised this in the prayer of dedication that he prayed in chapter 6 where he mentions various reasons that people would come to God in prayer at the temple.
  - In fact, he goes into even more detail, talking about everything from personal sin (6:22), to defeat in battle (6:24), to droughts (6:26), to famines (6:28), and he even mentions foreigners who come and look to God for mercy (6:32).
3. So we too need to see that we are dependent on God.
  - We need to do as Solomon anticipates that people will do when we have sinned and trouble comes—we need to humble ourselves and pray for mercy.

TRANS> But there is something even more important than that.

- C. The most important thing that is revealed here is that we need to pray in Jesus' name.
- Our prayers are heard only when we come in Jesus' name.
1. Now you will say to me, “Wait a minute, how does Chronicles show us that we must pray in Jesus' name?
    - “Jesus had not even come yet when Chronicles was written.
    - “How can you say that it teaches us to pray in Jesus' name?”
  2. I can say that because the temple represents Jesus who was sacrificed for us.
    - By praying toward the temple, the people of the Old Covenant were recognising that God was propitious to them through the blood of the covenant—that blood that was to be shed by Jesus Christ.
    - The name of Jesus is not just the word “Jesus” but it is all that is revealed about Him.
      - A person can say Jesus' name—the sound of it—and not know Him at all as the One who was crucified for the forgiveness of His people's sins.
      - His name is not a magic incantation or charm, any more than the temple was some kind of magic place.
    - The point of the temple was that God hears His people when they look to the sacrifice that He has appointed for the remission of their sins...
      - Then it was the sacrifices at the temple that anticipated Jesus.
      - Now it is Jesus Himself
  3. Now you can see why Solomon in his prayer and God in His response keep emphasising looking to the temple.
    - a. Solomon kept saying things like he does in 6:21 about praying toward the temple: **“And may You hear the supplications of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and when You hear, forgive.”**
      - And in verse 22: **“If anyone sins against his neighbor, and is forced to take an oath, and comes *and* takes an oath before Your altar in this temple, then hear from heaven, and act, and judge...”**
      - He says the equivalent over and over—that when they pray toward the temple, that God would hear them.

- b. And if you look at the paragraph I read in chapter 7, you can see that the Lord echoes this emphasis on praying toward the temple in His response to Solomon:
- In 7:12, He says: **I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice.**
  - Then He gives the well-known promise that if we humble ourselves and seek Him, He will heal and restore... but then He speaks again about the temple in verses 15 & 16:
    - He says (7:15-16): **“Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place. <sup>16</sup> For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.”**
  - God’s name is where the appointed sacrifice for sin is—forever!
    - The appointed sacrifice was at the temple and now it has all been brought together in the person of Christ who was crucified and who, before going to the cross, declared that His blood was the blood of the new covenant for the remission of sin.
    - He also declared in John that whatever we ask in His name will be done for us...

D. And let me add that it is only through Jesus that we can be forgiven.

1. Of course that is stressed in the New Testament—and directly stated—that there is no other name given among men by which we must be saved,
  - and that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one comes to the Father but through Him,
  - and as Hebrews says, that there is no way into the holiest but by the blood of Jesus.
2. But Jesus alone is also stressed in 2 Chronicles...
  - You see all the efforts to build the temple in the first place—according to the plan of God—as we saw last week...
    - In 2 Chron. we see Solomon diligently following those plans in chapter 2-5.
  - But you also see Jesus alone in that 2 Chronicles almost completely ignores Israel... the ten tribes that separated from Judah.
    - And why?
      - Because Israel had forsaken the temple.
      - Second Chronicles has little interest in Israel because they rejected the temple where mercy is found.
    - But Israel is mentioned later on when some of them come to Jerusalem for the Passover.
      - That is right in line with the theme of 2 Chronicles.
      - God was not only ready to show mercy to Judah when they turned to the temple in repentance, but also to the people of Israel!
        - Jesus welcomes all sinners who come to God in His name!

TRANS> And now let us move on in Chronicles and...

**II. See how the LORD shows one example after another of how ready He is to restore us when we humble ourselves and seek Him in Jesus' name.**

- Second Chronicles has example after example of God's people being restored because they humbled themselves and sought the Lord and prayed.
- Let's go through a few of them for our encouragement.

A. Let's begin with Solomon's son, Rehoboam.

1. You may remember that it was under King Rehoboam that the ten tribes of Israel separated under the leadership of King Jeroboam.
    - Rehoboam was David's grandson, and when the rebellion first happened, God would not allow Rehoboam to go to war with the ten tribes.
    - So Rehoboam, instead of going to war, was able to establish himself as king over Judah without the ten tribes, but look what he did.
      - **2 Chron 12:1: Now it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom and had strengthened himself, that he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel along with him.**
  2. God responds to this with chastisement, just as he promised David He would if David's sons forsook him...
    - Look at 2 Chron 12:2-4: **And it happened in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the LORD, with twelve hundred chariots, sixty thousand horsemen, and people without number who came with him out of Egypt—the Lubim and the Sukkiim and the Ethiopians. 4 And he took the fortified cities of Judah and came to Jerusalem.**
    - This is exactly the kind of situation that Solomon spoke of in his prayer—that when the people disobeyed and God raised up enemies against them...
      - that when that happened and they humbled themselves and prayed toward the temple—prayed in Jesus name—that the LORD would hear.
    - And you remember the promise of God in answer to that prayer in 7:14: **“if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”**
- Note that the first thing mentioned in 7:14 is that they humble themselves...
3. And humility is exactly what happens with Rehoboam and the people.
    - Look at 2 Chron 12:5:
      - A preacher named Shemaiah comes: **2 Chron 12:5: Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah, who were gathered together in Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them, “Thus says the LORD: ‘You have forsaken Me, and therefore I also have left you in the hand of Shishak.’”**
    - And they respond by humbling themselves:
      - **2 Chron 12:6: So the leaders of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, “The LORD is righteous.” 7 Now when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, “They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them, but I will**

**grant them some deliverance. My wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. <sup>8</sup> Nevertheless they will be his servants, that they may distinguish My service from the service of the kingdoms of the nations.”**

- Praise be to our gracious God who restores us when we humble ourselves.
4. Learn from this...
- When we have done wrong, we have to come to the place where we admit it—which is not easy to do... we always want to justify ourselves.
  - We must come to the place where we acknowledge that the Lord has been righteous in punishing us, and put ourselves in His hands for mercy.
    - There may still be consequences that we must bear—Judah had to serve Shishak for a time—but God be praised that they were not destroyed.
    - They found mercy.

B. Let's go to King Asa next.

1. In God's promise to restore in 2 Chron 7:14, not only humbling is called for, but also seeking the LORD.
  - **“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”**
2. In the case of Asa, we are told repeatedly that he led the people to seek the LORD.
  - In 2 Chron 14:4, it says of Asa that: **“He commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to observe the law and the commandment.”**
  - And in 14:7, Asa says to Judah: **“Let us build these cities and make walls around *them*, and towers, gates, and bars, *while* the land *is* yet before us, because we have sought the LORD our God; we have sought *Him*, and He has given us rest on every side.”**
    - He recognises that God had blessed them because they have diligently sought Him.
3. And they keep on seeking Him when He tests them.
  - The LORD tests them by sending an army of a million well-armed Ethiopians against them, but in verse 11, it says:
    - **“And Asa cried out to the LORD his God, and said, “LORD, *it is* nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O LORD our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O LORD, You *are* our God; do not let man prevail against You!”**
  - And God does deliver over this great million-man army even though Judah only had a third as many!
4. And just to make sure we do not miss the point that God will be found by us if we seek Him, the LORD sends a prophet named Azariah...
  - 2 Chron 15:1-4: **Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. <sup>2</sup> And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him: “Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD *is* with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. <sup>3</sup> For a**

**long time Israel *has been* without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law; <sup>4</sup> but when in their trouble they turned to the LORD God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them.”**

- Do you seek the LORD—do you really seek Him?
    - Is it your desire to walk with Him? to do His will? to have Him near? to learn of Him? to have His help?
      - If it is, He will be found by you and by us as His people.
    - Don't you love it when you find Him?
      - It is a wonderful thing.
  - 5. And see what the people did in verse 12 & 13: **Then they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; <sup>13</sup> and whoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel was to be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.”**
    - If you are a member of this church, then you have entered into a covenant with the rest of us to seek the LORD,
      - And if anyone refuses to do this, they must be put out of the church.
      - The church does not have the power of the sword, but Christ has given the elders authority and duty to remove those who refuse to seek the Lord from membership and declare them to be outsiders.
  - 6. Sadly, however, we told that at the end of his life, Asa did *not* seek the LORD.
    - As king, he relied on Syria and was rebuked by Hanani the prophet,
      - And then in his personal life, he was diseased in his feet and sought the physicians instead of the LORD.
      - This is a warning to us that we must make sure that we continue to seek the LORD.
- C. Let's look next at Jehoshaphat—as an example of prayer toward the temple...
- Our promise in chapter 7:14 mentions seeking the Lord and praying... and that is what we find with Jehoshaphat.
  - 1. Jehoshaphat was a faithful king, overall.
    - We are told of how he reformed worship, of how he delighted in the Lord, and of how the LORD prospered him and made him very strong and powerful.
  - 2. And look at what King Jehoshaphat does when a great alliance is formed against his people.
    - The people of Moab and Ammon and Mt. Seir (Edom) form a coalition against him—
      - So what does Jehoshaphat do?
    - Look at chapter 20, beginning with verse 3:
      - **2 Chron 20:3-13: And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. <sup>4</sup> So Judah gathered together to ask *help* from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. <sup>5</sup> Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, <sup>6</sup> and said: “O**

LORD God of our fathers, *are* You not God in heaven, and do You *not* rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand *is there not* power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You? <sup>7</sup> *Are* You not our God, *who* drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? <sup>8</sup> And they dwell in it, and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your name, saying, <sup>9</sup> ‘If disaster comes upon us—sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine—we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name *is* in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save.’”

- Do you see how he recognises the temple? And then he prays:
- <sup>10</sup> “And now, here are the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir—whom You would not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them and did not destroy them— <sup>11</sup> here they are, rewarding us by coming to throw us out of Your possession which You have given us to inherit. <sup>12</sup> O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes *are* upon You.” <sup>13</sup> Now all Judah, with their little ones, their wives, and their children, stood before the LORD.”
- The LORD answers his prayer marvellously, such that Jehoshaphat and the armies of Judah do not even have to fight—their enemies turn on each other and destroy each other!
  - Remember what God promised in 2 Chron 7:15-16: “Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place. <sup>16</sup> For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.”

TRANS> Time would fail me to go into all the many examples.

- We see those who are humble and pray in Jesus’ name, and we see those who are proud and do not seek the LORD who is revealed at the temple.

D. But I must mention Hezekiah and Josiah.

1. These two kings of Judah are exemplary for turning and humbling themselves and seeking the LORD and for turning Judah from their wicked ways...
  - Both of these men restored biblical worship in Judah, even removing all the high places.
    - By this they made it clear that the only way to seek God is through the name of Jesus—there was no acceptable sacrifice for sin but at the temple where the blood of Jesus was represented.
    - Both of them excelled in what God promises to bless in 2 Chron 7:14: “**If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.**”
  - And both of these kings—first Hezekiah and later his grandson Josiah, also invited the people of Israel who had forsaken the LORD to come to the Passover in Jerusalem.
    - And some of the people of Israel humbled themselves and prayed and sought the face of the Lord and turned from their wicked ways and God heard them.



- We need to realise that many of the Israelites ended up joining with Judah—they did not all go astray with their wicked kings.
2. With both Hezekiah and Josiah, God did hear them when they turned to Him.
- After completely reforming worship, Hezekiah was faced with the threat of the huge, highly trained, Assyrian army that had been wiping out one city after another that as far as fortifications, were at least as good as Jerusalem.
  - But in 2 Chron 32:20-21 we are told why Jerusalem did not fall.
    - **Now because of this, King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, prayed and cried out to heaven. Then the LORD sent an angel who cut down every mighty man of valor, leader, and captain in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned shamefaced to his own land. And when he had gone into the temple of his god, some of his own offspring struck him down with the sword there.**
  - Yet, we are told that Hezekiah became proud after this... but look at what our merciful God when he humbled himself again!
    - **2 Chron 32:24-26: In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death, and he prayed to the LORD; and He spoke to him and gave him a sign. <sup>25</sup> But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor *shown* him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore wrath was looming over him and over Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>26</sup> Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.**
    - You can see again how committed the LORD is to answering us if only we will humble ourselves and cry out to Him?
- E. And now let me tell you about Manasseh, Hezekiah's son...
1. I must include him because he was one of the wickedest kings in Judah—
    - He even burned his children as sacrifices to false gods and built altars to these gods in the temple!
    - His sins led to the eventual overthrow of Jerusalem, as Kings tells us.

➤ But Chronicles tells us something that Kings does not tell us.
  2. It tells us that Manasseh humbled himself and turned to the LORD, and the LORD accepted him!
    - In 2 Chron 33:10-13 we see the promise of 2 Chron 7:14 fulfilled all over again: **And the LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen. <sup>11</sup> Therefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze *fetters*, and carried him off to Babylon. <sup>12</sup> Now when he was in affliction, he implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, <sup>13</sup> and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God.**
    - What a great encouragement we have even for those who have turned completely against God—
      - That if they will humble themselves and pray and seek the LORD, he will forgive their sin and restore them.

**Conclusion:** That is the message of Second Chronicles!

It was written to give us hope that in Jesus Christ, there is forgiveness for all who will call on His name.

- Look at how this book ends... I have already mentioned it to you...
  - Second Kings ended with Jehoiachin, the son of David, being maintained by the king of Babylon in exile?
    - God would not let him die because of His promise to David that a Saviour would come from him for the whole world.
    - That Jehoiachin was being sustained was a message of hope that God would preserve a lamp for David because Jesus was to come from David—do you remember that?
  - But 2 Chronicles ends, as you would expect, with something about the temple.
    - Babylon has destroyed the temple and the Jews are in exile.
    - Persia has conquered Babylon, so now the Jews are under Persia.
      - So what will the King of Persia do with them?
- We are told in the last two verses: **2 Chron 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, saying, <sup>23</sup> “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God *be* with him, and let him go up!”**
  - The promise of God to show mercy through the blood of the covenant had not failed, but the testimony or revelation of the promise at the temple had been taken away—it had been destroyed.
    - But now our gracious God restores that testimony of His mercy!
    - Cyrus, a pagan king, orders the temple at Jerusalem to be rebuilt!
- How our God delights to restore the light of the gospel when it has been removed from us because of our sin! How many churches is it gone from?
  - But God brings it back so we can know the truth that: **2 Chron 7:14-16: if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. <sup>15</sup> Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place. <sup>16</sup> For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.**
    - Do not be proud and foolish—humble yourself and seek the LORD through His Son—He delights to assure us that if we do, we will find Him!