

a lesson:

## ON THE BOOKS OF I & II CHRONICLES

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## I. INTRODUCTION TO CHRONICLES

Like SAMUEL and KINGS, CHRONICLES was also one Book in The Hebrew Bible, but divided into two Books in The Septuagint. The Hebrew title for CHRONICLES is “events of the days.” Saint Jerome said that I and II CHRONICLES are “the chronicle of the whole of sacred history,” at least of The Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> Dillard and Longman observe that “CHRONICLES is one of two Books in The Bible to cover all of human history from creation to the author’s day,” which is at or some time soon after the release of the Jews from their Babylonian captivity by King Cyrus.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, we find that I CHRONICLES records the generations of mankind starting with Adam to the sons of Israel and ends with the close of King David’s reign. II CHRONICLES begins with the reign of King Solomon and ends with King Cyrus of Persia in “586 BC... releasing the Jews from their exile in Babylon.”<sup>3</sup> This last event in II CHRONICLES set the stage for the return of a faithful remnant of Jews to The Promised Land under Ezra and Nehemiah, which is recorded in The Books which bear their names.

Howard states that CHRONICLES was written “...to retell the story of GOD’s people for an audience late in their history, several decades after the [Babylonian] Exile, with special emphasis on the Davidic Covenant, the proper place of worship, and the certainty of GOD’s punishment.”<sup>4</sup> This being the case, and the importance given by Ezra and Nehemiah to keeping the returning remnant of the people free of Gentile blood featured so prominently in EZRA and NEHEMIAH, it is logical that we find the geneologies of Israel and Judah in I CHRONICLES 1-9. The final editing of These Books is thus likely some time at the close of or shortly after the Babylonian exile. Howard notes that the events in I and II CHRONICLES “...cover the monarchies in Israel and Judah, beginning with Saul and David in the eleventh century BC and ending... in the mid-sixth century BC.”<sup>5</sup> I CHRONICLES 9:1 notes that the kings of Israel and Judah “...were carried away to Babylon for their transgression.”<sup>6</sup> Dillard and

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<sup>1</sup> 1, Dillard & Longman, CHRONICLES, introductory comments, page 169, paragraph 1.

<sup>2</sup> 1, Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> 2, Howard, CHRONICLES, Date of The Events, page 235.

<sup>4</sup> 2, Howard, CHRONICLES, Purpose, page 236.

<sup>5</sup> 2, Howard, CHRONICLES, Date of The Events, page 235.

<sup>6</sup> 3, KJV, I CHRONICLES 9:1.

Longman offer this logical division of CHRONICLES into three sections: “The Genealogies (I CHRON. 1-9); The United Monarchy (I CHRON. 10– II CHRON. 9); The Post Schism Kingdoms [of Israel and Judah] (II CHRON. 10-36).”<sup>7</sup>

## II. A HEART SET UPON THE LORD SEEN IN I CHRONICLES 16:8-12

After the completion of genealogies in I CHRONICLES 9, the remainder of I CHRONICLES might just as well be titled “The Book of King David.” Indeed, King David is the standard by which GOD judged all the subsequent kings of both Israel and Judah. The LORD gave David success in all his endeavors as His servant human king over Israel all the days of his reign, even though David was certainly a notable sinner as much as a great leader. But rather than look for a historical snapshot of the acts of King David, it may be more profitable to look for a spiritual snapshot of the heart of this man. I CHRONICLES 15 records that David had The Ark of The LORD brought into Jerusalem, and that he danced in joy before the people and before The Almighty – much to the dismay of his wife Michal the daughter of Saul - as it was brought into the city.

I CHRONICLES 16 then records how David had set up a tent for The Ark, at which David and the people offered burnt offerings and peace offerings to The LORD. David then blessed the people in GOD’s Name, seeing to it that all the people had portions of the peace offerings to eat and drink. David then appointed from among the Levites men to minister to The LORD before The Ark to offer up to Him prayer, praise, thanks and joyful music for all the great mercies bestowed upon Israel. Such a ruler who had so great a love for The Creator and the people placed under his governance shows what uprightness and tenderness David’s heart was made of – a heart that is set first on seeking The LORD. This is David the imperfect man of whom the prophet Samuel foresaw in I SAMUEL 13:14, “...The LORD hath sought Him a man after His own heart...!”<sup>8</sup> This is a picture of a human heart being remade after the Image of our Lord JESUS CHRIST – a heart upon which The Law of GOD is written - over which Saint Paul rejoiced in II CORINTHIANS 3:3, “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be

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<sup>7</sup> 1, Dillard & Longman, CHRONICLES, Literary Structure and Theological Message, titles of 3 sections into which they divide I and II CHRONICLES, page 172-177.

<sup>8</sup> 3, KJV, I SAMUEL 13:14.

the Epistle of CHRIST ministered by us, written not with ink, but with The Spirit of The living GOD; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart!”<sup>9</sup>

It is next in I CHRONICLES 16:8-36 that King David publicly offers up his own psalm of praise to The Almighty, painting in words the content of his heart. For in I CHRONICLES 16:8-12 he cries out, “Give thanks unto The LORD, call upon His Name, make known His deeds among the people. Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him, talk ye of all His wondrous works. Glory ye in His holy Name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek The LORD. Seek The LORD and His strength, seek His face continually. Remember His marvellous works that He hath done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth!”<sup>10</sup> So Matthew Henry expounds here on David’s psalm, “...Let GOD be glorified in our praises; let His honour be the centre in which all the lines [of our lives] meet. Let us glorify Him by our thanksgivings (Give thanks to The Lord), by our prayers (Call on His Name, v. 8), by our songs (Sing psalms unto Him), by our discourse--Talk of all His wondrous works, v. 9.”<sup>11</sup> This is the joy of the soul saved in CHRIST JESUS of which Saint Clement of Alexandria speaks, “The spiritual man gives thanks always for all things to GOD – by righteous hearing and Divine reading, by true investigation, by holy oblation, and by blessed prayer. Always lauding, hymning, blessing and praising – such a soul is never separated from GOD at any time!”<sup>12</sup>

David goes on in I CHRONICLES 16 to reveal why his heart is so set upon The LORD. He calls upon men to sing out in thankful joy that GOD’s righteous judgements rule throughout all the world. He calls upon Israel to keep the Covenant with The Almighty, that they might continue to possess The Promised Land. He brings to remembrance how GOD preserved His people throughout all their trials and afflictions. He calls upon Israel, the men of all nations and all of creation to lift up praise to the glory of The LORD. He reminds men that only The LORD is GOD, and that He alone made all things. He describes the nature of GOD: glory, honour, strength and holiness. He calls Israel and all men to give praise, glory and worship to The Creator of The Universe. He recalls to men that GOD is thus to be feared in reverence, and to confess that He alone

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<sup>9</sup> 3, KJV, II CORINTHIANS 3:3.

<sup>10</sup> 3, KJV, I CHRONICLES 16:8-12.

<sup>11</sup> 4, Matthew Henry, I CHRONICLES 16:7-36, David’s Psalm of Praise, 1.

<sup>12</sup> 5, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, entry for “Prayer,” I. Admonitions on and descriptions of prayer, 3<sup>rd</sup> entry for Clement of Alexandria, page 528.

reigns and judges over all things. He declares that GOD is so great that even the seas, fields and trees sing out in praise and worship before The Almighty. Therefore David declares that all men are to give thanks to The LORD for His benevolent goodness and His never ending covenantal mercy. He declares that GOD alone is the salvation of men, so that when we are distressed, we are to call out to The LORD alone. He calls GOD's people to bless and praise The Name of The LORD GOD forever and ever!

### III. A CALL TO HUMBLE REPENTANCE SEEN IN II CHRONICLES 7:14

To repeat Howard's observation, CHRONICLES was written "...to retell the story of GOD's people for an audience late in their history, several decades after the [Babylonian] Exile, with special emphasis on the Davidic Covenant, the proper place of worship, and the certainty of GOD's punishment."<sup>13</sup> When King Solomon had completed the building of The Temple of GOD, he had it consecrated, prayed for The Almighty's mercy and blessing upon Israel there and lead the people in worship of The LORD. It is then that The Almighty appeared to Solomon in answer to his prayers on behalf of the nation, declaring to him these frightful words, "...I have heard thy prayer...!"<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the faithfulness of The Almighty's covenantal promises of blessings and curses may be seen in II CHRONICLES 7:14 and the following verses, "If My people, which are called by My Name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."<sup>15</sup>

Further in II CHRONICLES 7 we have GOD pronouncing once again His Covenantal promises of blessing and warnings of cursing. GOD vowed to Solomon in II CHRONICLES 7:17-18 that, "...if thou wilt walk before Me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee... Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel."<sup>16</sup> But The Almighty immediately thereafter warned Solomon in II CHRONICLES 7:19-20: "But if ye turn away, and forsake My

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<sup>13</sup> 2, Howard, CHRONICLES, Purpose, page 236.

<sup>14</sup> 3, KJV, II CHRONICLES 7:12.

<sup>15</sup> 3, KJV, II CHRONICLES 7:14.

<sup>16</sup> 3, KJV, II CHRONICLES 7:17-18.

statutes and My commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them; Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of My land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for My Name, will I cast out of My sight...!”<sup>17</sup>

What then does The LORD require of men and of nations who are in covenant with Him and call themselves by His Name? Covenantal faithfulness: earnest faith, true repentance from sin and turning to a new life centered on GOD. II CHRONICLES 7:14 in particular addresses these Divine requirements. Wycliffe comments that “...GOD’s requirement for national blessing, whether in Solomon’s time, in Ezra’s, or in our own [is that] those who believe must forsake their sins, turn from the life that is centered in self, and yield to GOD’s Word and will.”<sup>18</sup> If the people of GOD – suffering for their offenses against The Creator - do these three things as II CHRONICLES 7 declares, then GOD promises to send His Covenantal mercy and restore His blessings. But if men will not turn from their sins before The King of The Universe, then they bring upon their own heads the promised Covenantal judgements and curses; a people can not receive The Almighty’s national healing which flows from His great love and mercy unless there is first adequate repentance in the hearts of men. Here Saint Cyprian speaks of GOD’s great love and mercy to the sinful man who, repenting of his offenses before The Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, is made clean again in his heart before The Creator: “The Lord’s loving kindness, no less than His mercy, is great in respect of our salvation... This gift of His mercy he confers upon us – by overcoming death in the trophy of The Cross, by redeeming the believer with the price of His Blood. [Therefore,] Those sins that have been previously committed are purged by The Blood and sanctification of CHRIST.”<sup>19</sup>

Matthew Henry makes the same observations here: “GOD expects that His people who are called by His Name, if they have dishonoured His Name by their iniquity, should honour... [His Name] by accepting the punishment of their iniquity. They must be humble themselves under His hand, must pray for the removal of the judgment, must seek

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<sup>17</sup> 3, KJV, II CHRONICLES 7:19-20.

<sup>18</sup> 6, Wycliffe, II CHRONICLES 7:14, page 397.

<sup>19</sup> 5, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, entry for “Blood of CHRIST,”<sup>2nd</sup>, <sup>3rd</sup> and <sup>4th</sup> entries for Cyprian, page 79.

the face and favour of GOD; and yet all this will not do unless they turn from their wicked ways, and return to the GOD from whom they have revolted. National mercy is then promised, that God will forgive their sin, which brought the judgment upon them, and then heal their land, redress all their grievances. [For GOD's] pardoning mercy makes way for [His] healing mercy..."<sup>20</sup> In II CHRONICLES 7:14 GOD sets the prerequisites for His forgiveness of national sins of a people which in fact calls for men first as individuals to have a humble and penitent heart before Him. The LORD expects the sinner to cry out as did David when he was convicted of his sin as in PSALM 51:9-12, "[O LORD,] Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O GOD; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit!"<sup>21</sup>

#### IV. EXHORTATION TO PERSONAL AND NATIONAL REPENTANCE

Shall a nation drench the soil of its land with the innocent blood of tens of millions of its unborn children, and then rest secure under Heaven because it dares to print "In GOD We Trust" on its money? GOD forbid! Will a people defile the sacramental institutions of holy matrimony in fornication, adultery and sodomy, and then presume to call upon The Name of The Lord JESUS CHRIST for His blessings without first offering up true repentance and turning from sin? GOD forbid! Dare men place their idols of the world, the flesh and the devil upon the throne of their hearts, and then come before The Throne of JEHOVAH to seek His protection and deliverance from the afflictions of their own abominations? GOD forbid! Does the Christian man come before The Communion Table to receive The Great Gifts of the sign and seal of salvation in the Body and Blood of our Lord JESUS CHRIST in full knowledge that he does so unworthily, doubting that in doing so, he receives The holy Elements to the condemnation and not to the justification of his very soul? GOD forbid!

What country in the history of mankind has ever endured and been delivered by the hand of GOD which is full to overflowing with apostasy, iniquity and rebellion,

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<sup>20</sup> 4, Matthew Henry, II CHRONICLES 7:12-22, verse 14, II, 2, 3.

<sup>21</sup> 3, KJV, PSALM 51:9-12.



though they may have a Church on every street corner and call out continually, “The Temple of The LORD, The Temple of The LORD?” Has the haughty heart of man learned nothing from the sad but just ends of corrupt ancient Israel and Judah documented in Holy Scripture? Do the people of GOD think the Prophet wrote in vain in MICAH 6:8, “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth The LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD?”

<sup>22</sup> Do the sons of Adam think that the Apostle wrote in vain in GALATIANS 6:7, “Be not deceived; GOD is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap?”

<sup>23</sup> For of a truth, GOD is not mocked! He shall demand His due from all men! A people who carry on the mere superficial externalisms of piety in The Creator’s Name, but in fact live their daily lives as pagan abominators, have no claim on the blessings of Providence! Rather, by their own hands, they instead call down Divine wrath upon themselves! But praise be to The Almighty, He has not left us without the means of blessing, mercy and deliverance. The LORD is our Great Physician Who offers us a prescription for our salvation and healing!

#### V. GOD’S PRESCRIPTION: FAITH, REPENTANCE AND NEW LIFE IN HIM

First, there must be earnest faith: King David sang a song of faith and praise to The LORD in II SAMUEL 22:2-4, “...The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The GOD of my rock; in Him will I trust: He is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my Saviour; Thou savest me from violence.” <sup>24</sup>

Faith in GOD means trusting only in Him to deliver us from all the trials of life. Further, GALATIANS 2:16 declares, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of The Law, but by the faith of JESUS CHRIST, even we have believed in JESUS CHRIST...”

<sup>25</sup> The Saviour has set before us His saving work on The Cross on our behalf. And we are called to confess and believe what He has declared, that faith in Him justifies our

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<sup>22</sup> 3, KJV, MICAH 6:8.

<sup>23</sup> 3, KJV, GALATIANS 6:7.

<sup>24</sup> 3, KJV, II SAMUEL 22:2-3.

<sup>25</sup> 3, KJV, GALATIANS 2:16.

souls before His Throne in Heaven. And thus we read in EPHESIANS 2:8, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of GOD!”<sup>26</sup>

Second, there must be true repentance from sin: All men are by our fallen natures sinners before the holy and great LORD GOD. Therefore Job cried out before The Almighty in JOB 42:5-6, “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!”<sup>27</sup> Note also what The LORD directed Ezekiel to proclaim to Israel in EZEKIEL 14:6, “...Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.”<sup>28</sup> The heart of all sin is the setting up of idols in our hearts and abominations in our lives that separate us from The Creator. This is the heart of sin that requires our repentance. And when Saint Peter had preached JESUS The CHRIST crucified to the men of Israel in ACTS 2, “...they were pricked in their heart” and cried out “...what shall we do?”<sup>29</sup> Saint Peter answered in the next verse in ACTS 2:38, “...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in The Name of JESUS CHRIST for the remission of sins...!”<sup>30</sup> Our sins should cause us to abhor our offenses before GOD, prick us in our heart, and bring us to our knees in repentance at The Cross of The Redeemer JESUS CHRIST!

Third, there must be a new life centered on GOD: David sings of The Almighty’s workings of renewal of his penitent soul in PSALM 103:2-4, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s!”<sup>31</sup> So does The LORD renew His blessings upon His people when they believe and repent in lives centered on Him! Further, Saint John writes in I JOHN 1:3, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with

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<sup>26</sup> 3, KJV, EHPESIAHS 2:8.

<sup>27</sup> 3, KJV, JOB 42:5-6.

<sup>28</sup> 3, KJV, EZEKIEL 14:6.

<sup>29</sup> 3, KJV, ACTS 2:37.

<sup>30</sup> 3, KJV, ACTS 2:38.

<sup>31</sup> 3, KJV, PSALM 103:2-4.

His Son JESUS CHRIST.”<sup>32</sup> A life renewed in The Saviour brings a new life centered on GOD in personal fellowship with Him – and with other Christians – in this life! Further, TITUS 3:5 declares of the redeemed in CHRIST that “...according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the HOLY GHOST.”<sup>33</sup> When we as Christians believe, repent and turn wholly to GOD, He works in us to restore our souls to His righteousness, which yields the increasing fruits of righteousness!

## VI. IN CONCLUSION

The first theme of CHRONICLES then may be said to be the call to all men to have, as did David, a heart after the heart of The LORD – a heart set first upon GOD in all things. This theme of personal repentance may be seen in I CHRONICLES 16:8-12, “Give thanks unto The LORD, call upon His Name, make known His deeds among the people. Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him, talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in His holy Name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek The LORD. Seek The LORD and His strength, seek His face continually. Remember His marvellous works that He hath done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth!”<sup>34</sup> The heart that is the recipient of The Creator’s great love and mercy is a heart that is continually praising The LORD. Here is the proper path of piety for the man whose soul has been redeemed from darkness, despair and damnation by The very hand of GOD: that his heart be always glad in Him, singing praise and glory to His great Name and seeking His face continually! Let the heart men then sing out as did David’s heart as in PSALM 86:11-13, “Teach me Thy way, O LORD; I will walk in Thy truth: unite my heart to fear Thy Name. I will praise Thee, O Lord my GOD, with all my heart: and I will glorify Thy Name for evermore. For great is Thy mercy toward me: and Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell!”<sup>35</sup>

The second theme of CHRONICLES may be said to be a call to all men – as individuals and as nations – to humble repentance before The LORD when our hearts fall into sin and turn from Him. This theme of national repentance is clearly evident in II

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<sup>32</sup> 3, KJV, I JOHN 1:3.

<sup>33</sup> 3, KJV, TITUS 3:5.5

<sup>34</sup> 3, KJV, I CHRONICLES 16:8-12.

<sup>35</sup> 3, KJV, PSALM 86:11-13.

CHRONICLES 7:14: “If My people, which are called by My Name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”<sup>36</sup> For both individuals and nations, when we find ourselves having fallen away from The LORD, we lose GOD’s Covenantal mercy and blessings and reap His Covenantal judgements and cursing. The resulting suffering should drive us to our knees in humble penance before The Almighty. And indeed, this is no doubt one of the primary purposes and effects of Divine chastisement of GOD’s people when they fall away from The LORD. Rescue and restoration under the hand of GOD are always there for us by His everlasting Covenantal mercy, but requires on our part earnest faith, true repentance and a new life centered on Him. This is why David sings to The Almighty in PSALM 103:17-18, “But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them.”<sup>37</sup>

There remains one last obstacle: The Israelite Tabernacle is long gone. The Hebrew Temple is no more. How then can men today access the Covenantal mercy and grace of The LORD? TITUS 1:15 declares, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save sinners...”<sup>38</sup> For as GOD The Father is faithful, so also is GOD The Son. So we read in HEBREWS 13:8, “JESUS CHRIST the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever!”<sup>39</sup> This Divine mercy awaits all men and nations at The Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, ever ready to wash us and again make us clean, if we turn from our sin! For as Saint Paul declares in ROMANS 5:8-9, “But GOD commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him!”<sup>40</sup> In The Name of The Father, and The Son, and The Holy Ghost, AMEN.

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<sup>36</sup> 3, KJV, II CHRONICLES 7:14.

<sup>37</sup> 3, KJV, PSALM 103:17-18.

<sup>38</sup> 3, KJV, TITUS 1:15.

<sup>39</sup> 3, KJV, HEBREWS 13:8.

<sup>40</sup> 3, KJV, ROMANS 5:8-9.

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