

Introduction:

- A. The books of the Hebrew Bible—the Old Testament—aren't arranged in the same way as in our Christian Bible. The last book in the Hebrew Bible is not Malachi, but Chronicles. As we've learned, Chronicles is the retelling of the history of Israel's kings for the remnant of the Jews who had returned from captivity.

We've been studying how the beginning of 2 Chronicles describes how Solomon built and dedicated the temple but the book ends with the graphic description of Jerusalem's defeat and the destruction of the temple: **2 Chron 36:15-16**... Israel was conquered by the Babylonians. Those who weren't killed were carried far away to captivity. Seventy years passed and then the king of Persia came to power. That brings us to the last verse in the Hebrew Bible: **2 Chron. 36:23** : *"This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up, and may the LORD their God be with them.'"* Chronicles is written after that happened. Why?

- B. It is a poignant way for the Bible to end. Not unlike Jesus' Great Commission: *"All authority has been given to me... Go into all the world and preach the gospel..."* Not unlike the ending of the New Testament: *"Come, Lord Jesus!"* In my study this week I happened on a website about the Hebrew scriptures. A Rabbi Clinton from Ottawa, Canada, has a short summary of the purpose of Chronicles. He says, *"The purpose of the whole book, from beginning to end, is to honor the house of King David.... The book ends with a description of the destruction of the nation and the city that David had built. In a sense it was the partial undoing of much of his life's work.... We know, of course, that the destruction of the first Temple was not the end of King David's story - as we still await our redemption through his descendent."* <http://www.torah.org/learning/basics/primer/torah/bible.html>

C. That is exactly why Chronicles was written—to stir a longing in God’s people for their “redemption through his descendent.” We believe that Jesus is the “stone the builders rejected.” Jesus is the Messiah, the Lord, the Son of David and Son of God.

D. Turn to **2 Chron 7**. This is what happened right after Solomon prayed to dedicate the temple. **It is a picture given to us to make us glad because Jesus Christ, our great King, has built a temple filled with the glory of God. And we are that temple!**

I. BE GLAD! CHRIST HAS BUILT US TO BE HIS “HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS” (6:32-33)

A. In **6:32-33** Solomon prayed... So God promised in **Is 56**,
*“And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord
to minister to him,*

*to love the name of the Lord,
and to be his servants,*

*all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it
and who hold fast to my covenant—*

*these I will bring to my holy mountain
and give them joy in my house of prayer.*

That’s us! We are those “foreigners who have bound themselves to the LORD” and been given “joy in God’s house of prayer.”

B. A key part of our congregation’s identity as Home is we are a people of prayer. We talk to our Father and he listens. He supplies all our needs and delights us with his love and generosity. So we pray for those who are not yet in his family. We pray that God will open doors for us to show and share Christ’s love with them. We pray for their needs. We offer our prayers to our Father as our gift to them, especially when they’re in trouble.

Illus.: I recently read a remarkable book, *Deep Down Dark*, by Hector Tobar, about the 33 Chilean miners buried for over three months back in 2010. They were trapped a large space, including a room they called The Refuge. The first 17 days they were completely cut off. They had no

idea if anyone would come for them; if anyone even believed they were alive. It was beyond terrifying. What could they do? Who should be in charge? Let me read a paragraph:

After the accident on August 5, when it was clear they were trapped, José whispered into Mario's ear: "God is the only way out of this." Now Mario has issued his angry call to prayer, and with all the surprised and amused miners around and inside the Refuge still staring at him, he turns to José and says: "Don José, we know you are a Christian man, and we need you to lead us in prayer. Will you?" From this moment forward Henríquez will be known as "the Pastor" to his fellow miners because as soon as he opens his mouth and begins to talk it's clear that he knows how to speak of God and to God.

When people are in trouble—when they've "reached the end of their hoarded resources"—we can offer to pray for them and with them. God will listen and help, because God wants people to know his love through Christ. **That ought to make us very glad to be his people.**

Look at **7:1-3a**... Here's the scene: all Israel stands outside the temple. Nearby is the great altar where sacrifices were offered—lambs and bulls. Some were called burnt offerings and they were for the forgiveness of sins. Others were called peace or fellowship offerings, and those would be partially burned and they rest eaten, a meal symbolizing fellowship with God. Normally, of course, the priests lit the fires but here, suddenly, fire fell from heaven and consumed the sacrifices. *Whoosh!* Out of the clear blue sky. My preacher uncle would call it *ash in a flash*.

What did that fire tell them? That God accepted their sacrifices. No doubt about it. What sacrifice to we offer? The blood of Christ is our sacrifice for sin and our fellowship offering. So what is the result? **Heb. 10:14** says, "*For by one sacrifice he [Jesus] has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.*" So a few verses later he says, "*Therefore, brothers and sisters, ... let us*

draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings.” So here’s my point:

II. BE GLAD! CHRIST SECURES GOD’S FORGIVENESS AND FELLOWSHIP FOR US

A. There is nothing Christians celebrate more than our forgiveness and new life in Christ. Just listen to us:

*My sin—O the bliss of this glorious thought—
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Has been nailed to the cross and I bear it no more.
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!
It is well, with my soul,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

B. Jesus’ sacrifice is also our fellowship offering to God; our peace offering. Jesus himself is our feast. He brings us to God’s table. “*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.*” Jesus invites us to God’s banquet and gives us a foretaste even now of the wedding supper of the Lamb. There’s a wonderful hymn that sings,

*Elders, martyrs, all are falling down,
Prophets, patriarchs are gathering ‘round
What angels longed to see now man has found,
God and man at table are sat down,
God and man at table are sat down.*

C. Forgiven people are uniquely winsome. Guilt cripples people; blinds them; eats away at them like leprosy. Guilt is a slow death. It isn’t only the *feeling* of guilt, for some people are oblivious to their sin. It is actual guilt before God. When we repent of our sin and rest our hope in Jesus to forgive us and cleanse us, the Bible says we’re like lame leaping, blind seeing, lepers cleansed, and dead resurrected. **Our faith in Christ makes us glad, and glad people are like a breath of fresh air or a drink of cold water to others. One of the great joys of the church is “He has made me glad!”**

Another part of the scene there 2 Chron 7 is the invasion of God’s glory. V.1 says, “*the glory of the LORD filled the temple.*” The priests couldn’t enter and when the Israelites saw it, they fell down

in worship and praise. God’s glory appeared as a cloud, but this was no cumulus nor nimbus. It was a cloud weighty with holiness. It was as foreboding and fierce as fire, a cloud more alive than any person you’ve ever met because God’s Spirit was in it. No one had to tell the Israelites to bow down!

It’s hard to top that! But **John 1:14** says, “*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*” I wonder if John was remembering when he, Peter and James saw Christ “*transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.*”

But God’s story continued to unwrap. Fifty days after Christ’s death, on the Jewish Day of Pentecost, Jesus’ followers “*were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*” There’s a new temple! And God’s Spirit has invaded it in a far greater way than he did that day at the dedication of the temple.

III. BE GLAD! CHRIST FILLS US WITH GOD’S GLORY

- A. Fire from heaven would be unforgettable, but fire within is undeniable! The Holy Spirit fills every believer, just as God’s Spirit filled that temple. He brings the very nature and mind of Christ into our hearts. We *seem* so ordinary that it is hard to believe we are filled with God’s glory! Paul writes in **Col. 1:27** that the whole mystery of the Old Testament—all the plans and prophecies—is now clear and can be boiled down this glorious treasure: “*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*”
- B. That is why Jesus could say that *we are the light of the world*. There is more to us than meets the eye!

So there are the Israelites, heads pressed to the ground in awe, the sacrifices still smoldering from the heaven-sent fire, the cloud of God’s glory hovering over their new temple, and what do they do next? You’d think they’d have cried out in fear. But actually they

“worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, ‘He is good; his love endures forever.’” **There was something about the glory of God that excited their praise for the grace of God.**

IV. BE GLAD! CHRIST FREES US TO WORSHIP GOD FOR HIS GOODNESS AND LOVE

- A. This simple song seems to become sort of a national anthem for Israel. It comes up again later in this book and it is a theme in the Psalms. In fact, Ps. 136 begins, *“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His love endures forever.”* Twenty-five more times Israel names one of God’s great deeds and echoes each time, *“His love endures forever.”*
- B. Christians don’t worship because we have to. We worship and praise God because we are in awe of God’s goodness and enduring love. I cannot imagine Christians who do not sing. Christians huddling in a secret place for fear of their lives whisper their hymns, and often the most memorable thing about a great Christian gathering is the singing.
- C. The Bible’s songbook, the Psalms, says, *“He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him.”* [Ps 40:3] And Paul tells us, *“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.”*

Israel took seven days to celebrate the dedication of the temple and another seven to observe the ancient Feast of Tabernacles (temporary shelters) where they remembered again how their forefathers had lived when they wandered in the wilderness after the Exodus. Now their wandering was over. **They had homes and God was at home among them.** Remember that this story is told to those who came out of the exile—70 years of national homelessness due to their sin. What a good reminder for them to sing again, *“He is good; his love endures forever.”* God didn’t give up on them. And he doesn’t give up on us. God is *always* good to his people. Rom. 8 says, *“that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.”*

Look at **7:10**, “*On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people to their homes, joyful and glad in heart for the good things the Lord had done for David and Solomon and for his people Israel.*” How often has our King done that for us?!

V. CHRIST OUR KING SENDS US TO OUR HOMES JOYFUL AND GLAD IN HEART FOR THE GOOD THINGS THE LORD HAS DONE FOR US