

- **In These Days**

- As COVID-19 continues to plague our state, country, and world we want to set our hearts to respond to the Lord and to press into Him. The Lord has sovereignly given His church various passages to focus upon in this season to help us position our hearts in understanding and to respond as intercessors.
- I want to encourage you all to press into this passage in this season. Ask the Holy Spirit to increase your understanding and draw you nearer to Jesus through it. In this passage specifically, Jesus is showing us how to set our hearts as intercessors.

- **2 Chronicles 7:11-14**

- The Overview
  - Authorship – Jewish historians and scholars are very confident in the authorship of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles being the Priest and Scribe, Ezra. Ezra wrote these books after the Jews returned to their land from the captivity of Babylon.
  - The Context - While the books of Samuel/Kings address the hardhearted Israelites experiencing exile and captivity, Chronicles seeks to inspire hope and faith in God to position to move forward in the Lord. While Samuel/Kings needed to show the people that the nation's troubles were the result of their sinful disobedience rather than God's abandonment of His people, Chronicles wanted to encourage the Israelites and help them turn back to wholehearted love.

In this particular portion of the book, King Solomon has finished the temple that His father David had set his heart upon building. This temple married the 24/7 worship and prayer of David with the sacrificial system given by God to Moses. Upon its completion and dedication the Lord comes to Solomon in person to give him instructions of how to position themselves in the temple in light of His loving disciplinary leadership.

- **Verse by Verse Commentary**

- Understanding the Setting (2 Chron. 7:11)

***“Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord, and the kings house; and Solomon successfully accomplished all that came into his heart to make in the house of the Lord and in his own house.”***

- Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord – This is a summary statement of the previous chapters 3-6. It took Solomon 7 years to build the temple and he planned that it culminated in a 7 day feast of dedication leading straight into the feast of tabernacles held on the 7<sup>th</sup> month for 7 days. The number 7 represents completion in biblical thought and the feast of tabernacles is the final feast of the Lord in the biblical calendar. The feast of tabernacles remembered how God dwelt with Israel in the desert, and a celebration of the future promise that God would again and eternally dwell on the earth from Jerusalem, thus completing the promises given by God. (Lev. 23:33-44; Chron. 7:8-10; Zec. 14:16-17; Rev. 21:1-3)
- All that came into his heart – It was Solomon’s father, David, who had the great desire to build the temple and to combine 24/7 meditative singing and worship in the tent of David with the intentional intercession of the sacrificial system of the temple of Moses. The temple that Solomon built was considered one of the great wonders of the ancient world. (2 Sam. 7:5-13; Ps. 132:1-18)
- The Lord Appears to Solomon (2 Chron. 7:12)

***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.”***

- Then the Lord appeared – This is sometime well after the God descended upon the finished temple in thick glory and after its dedication. It is unclear how long after the dedication of the temple that the Lord appeared to Solomon to bring him instructions of how to respond in Judgment. Some scholars believe it was possibly years. This was the second time the Lord appeared to Solomon in the night. (1 Kings 3:1-15)
- I have heard your prayer – The Lord is referencing the prayer that Solomon made before him as he dedicated the temple. The biblical idea of God hearing our prayers means He is responding to them. God has spoken in times past saying that He refuses to hear certain prayers from certain people. This does not mean He does not physically hear us; He always physically hears. When He says He refuses to hear, He is talking about refusing to act or respond. When He tells Solomon, He heard his prayer, that means He is responding to it. (2 Chron. 6:19-42; Is. 1:15, 38:5, 65:24; Jer. 7:16; Zec. 10:6; Luke 1:13; Acts 10:31)
- I have chosen this place – We must not make lightly of this idea, especially as we move into the next part of this passage. The place that God chooses to dwell and hear us from is the place of perpetual adoration

and sacrifice or worship. It was also God's idea from the beginning that there be physical places dedicated and set aside for the purpose of adoration and worship. (Lev. 6:12; 2 Chron. 29:25; Heb. 8:5)

- House of sacrifice – When Jesus came into the temple in His day, that was made in place of the temple of Solomon, Jesus called it, His house of prayer. The various functions of this temple laid out in 2 Chron. 5-7, along with other passages, makes it clear that prayer and sacrifices of worship are two sides of the same coin. (Is. 16:5; 56:7; Amo. 9:11; Mat. 21:13)
- God Declares His Intentions to Bring National Judgments of Loving Correction (2 Chron. 7:13)

***“When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people,***

- When I – Notice it's not “if” but “when”. National judgments that God will bring upon His people in order to lovingly correct them and cause them to turn from their sin are assumed here. In other words, God tells Solomon that national judgments are a given. The surety that nations would need events like this to bring them back to wholeheartedness is hard to miss. (Deu. 4:26, 31:28; Eze. 14:1-23; Lk. 13:1-9; Rev. 11:6)
- Shut up heaven and there is no rain – The Lord gives Solomon 3 different judgements that are sure to come at some point. These three judgments are in alignment with the idea of God causing the heavens and earth to bear witness against us concerning our sinfulness. The first is withholding rain. God makes it clear that if there is a lack of rain upon a land or region that it is His doing. (Deu. 11:17, 28:24; 1 Ki. 17:1; Jer. 14:1-7; Amo. 4:7; Hag. 1:9-11)
- I command locusts to devour – The second judgment that God tells Solomon will come is locusts to devour. Currently there is an unprecedented locust invasion spreading across the horn of Africa and the Middle East. Locusts are now considered the most destructive creature in the world. It is also of note that God refers to invading armies symbolically as locusts. (Ex. 10:4-6; Ps. 78:46, 105:34; Jeo. 1:4-7, 2:25; Rev. 9:3-10)
- I send pestilence – The third judgment is God will bring to cause repentance in the land is pestilence. There are 3 Hebrew words used to speak of disease or sickness. You can find them all together just a chapter earlier in 2 Chron. 6:28. Solomon refers to pestilence (deber) and plague (nega) and sickness (machaleh) in the land. The Hebrew words “nega”

and “machaleh” both speak of all sorts of sickness caused by various things. The Hebrew word “deber”, translated pestilence, is used only to speak of a supernatural judgment of disease that is sent by God to turn a nation. This word is used 47 times in the OT and every time it is used, it speaks of Gods judgment to turn people back to Him. (Ex. 5:3, 9:3, Lev. 26:25; 2 Sam. 24:13-15; Jer. 24:10; Eze. 38:22)

- God gives us 6 progressive encouragements or instructions on how to respond in National Judgments (2 Chron. 7:14a)

***If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways,***

- If My People – The first instruction He gives us is to come to Him from the identity of belonging to Him or being His. Not too long ago, I was singing this verse in a prayer meeting and I remember being struck with the truth that He is calling His people to repent because they are His. Most of the time when judgment comes, our natural thought is we need to repent so we can be His again, and that He is bringing judgment because we are no longer His. This perspective changes everything concerning the position of our heart and mind that we are praying or interacting from. We are constantly exhorted to position ourselves as beloved sons and daughters of God when He brings us discipline and judgment. The starting place for all prayer and interaction with God must be from the place of securely knowing that He calls us His. (Is. 43:1; Eze. 16:8; 2 Tim. 2:19; Heb. 8:8-10, 12:5-8)
- Called by My Name – The second step in this progression is to understand that because we are His we have a new identity. We are called by His name or identity rather than our own name. This means we are under His leadership, His standards, and His ways. Just as a bride takes on the new identity of her husband’s name, and everything that comes along with it, so too we who are the bride of Christ take on His name. (Is. 43:7, 63:19; Jer. 7:11, 15:16; Dan. 9:19)
- Will Humble themselves – The third step is to recognize our complete need for Him and subject ourselves to God by positioning our hearts in total dependence upon Him. In light of the context of this verse we are to accept the discipline of the Lord by humbling ourselves under His hand of discipline or judgment. Poverty of spirit is the first thing highlighted by Jesus in the SOTM and the only way forward in the kingdom of God. Jesus declared that He chose to humble Himself in total need to His Father because of the intimacy that He desired to have with Him. (Job. 5:10-11; Pro. 16:18; Ps. 51:17, 138:6; Is. 57:15, 66:1-2; Jer. 3:3; Mat. 5:3; Jhn.

5:19-20; 1 Cor. 1:26-30, 3:18; Jam. 4:8-10)

- Pray – The next step in the progression is to pray or more specifically intercede or ask. The particular Hebrew word used here is used only to speak of the prayer of asking or interceding for the Lord to act on your behalf or on the behalf of others. In other words, singing worship songs or meditating upon His word, even though extremely important and necessary, is not what He is telling to do in response to His judgments. He is specifically telling us to intercede for ourselves and others to receive His judgments with repentance, and that when we do that, He would turn the judgment away from us and our nation and heal us. (Gen. 20:17; Num. 11:12, 21:7; Deu. 9:26; 1 Sam. 1:26-27; Ezz. 10:1; Jon. 2:1)
- Seek My Face – The fifth step is to seek or look to His face. In the beholding of who God is, life and light is found. Seeking the face of God biblically means seeking His person (who He is, what He is saying and doing), not trying to see His facial features. In His person we look to our divine source, glory, beauty, and life. In seeking and looking to His face, every worldly thing becomes less, and in His face lies the power and grace for us to be transformed and turn from our wicked ways (Ps. 14:2, 27:8, 69:32, 105:4; Is. 45:19; Jer. 29:12-13; Lam. 3:25-26; Hos. 5:15; Amo. 5:4-6; Mat. 7:8; 2 Cor. 3:18-4:6)
- Turn from Wicked Ways – Repentance or the turning away from wicked ways and things is non-negotiable. This is the sixth step and is a result of the doing the first five steps. The judgment came in the first place because of the need for repentance. If this step is not made, the judgment will increase and continue. The jealousy of God for us to love Him with all our hearts will not relent until we turn away from the things that steal and kill our affections for Him. (Pro. 28:13; Is. 55:6-7; Jer. 8:4-6; Ez. 18:27-32, 33:11-16; Lk. 15:8-32; Act. 3:19, 26:20)
- God promises to respond to us if we respond to Him rightly (2 Chron. 7:14b) ***then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and heal their land”***
  - I will Hear from Heaven – We covered this theme of God hearing in verse 12 of this passage. Biblically, hearing means action. God promises that if we do the progressive response of verse 13, He will act on our behalf to forgive and heal. God tells us that He will hear and act as the Lord who reigns over all things from heaven with all authority and power. (Gen. 14:19; 2 Chron. 20:6; Ps. 103:19, 115:3,16; Dan. 5:23; Mat. 28:18)
  - I will forgive their Sin, and Heal their Land – Even in the days of Solomon, well before the sacrifice of Jesus and the installation of the new covenant, forgiveness of sins was granted when people asked for

forgiveness and repented. Repentance comes as a result of beholding the face of God and forgiveness of sins comes before healing. In many passages, forgiveness of sins is tied to healing. God promises not just to stop the judgment that caused devastation. but to heal the devastation and restore it and heal it fully. (2 Kin. 20:5; Ps. 103:3; Is. 53:5; Jer. 33:6-7; Hos. 14:4; Mat. 9:2; Jam. 5:16)

- **Biblical Examples**

- We have multiple examples of individuals and nations who walked out this passage in reality. We can have absolute confidence that when judgment comes upon us or our nation, if we respond in the biblical way, our unchanging God will forgive and heal us and our nation as well. Here are some of my favorite examples.
  - Daniel – Daniel humbles himself and prays forgiveness on behalf of himself and his people. God responds by raising up King Cyrus to return Israel back to their land and also promises Daniel to ultimately forgive and restore his people eternally. (Dan. 9:1-27)
  - Jonah – Jonah was so confident in the truths of this passage that he refused to bring the word to the Assyrians in Nineveh to repent because he knew that if they did repent God would forgive them and heal their land. Ultimately, Jonah brings the word for them to repent and they do and God forgives the nation. (Book of Jonah)
  - Ahab – As wicked of a King as Ahab was, when God brought a word of judgment and repentance to him through Elijah, Ahab repented and God relented from the judgment and forgave him. (1 Kin. 21:27-29)
  - Amos – Amos the prophet was given a vision of a locust judgment and a judgment of fire. In both visions, Amos humbled himself and prayed on behalf of his people and God relented and did not bring the judgment. (Amos 7:1-6)