

January 1, 2023

“God Promises to Hear”
and Forgive
Lesson 1 of Unit

2 Chronicles 7:12-22

Intro

First and 2 Chronicles was originally one document, with ancient Jewish sources crediting Ezra and Nehemiah as the authors. That would have it written between 539 and 515 BC. However, there are some things within the text that suggest it was written later, 425 BC or later. Because of this, the writer is usually just referred to as “the Chronicler.”

Sections of the books of Chronicles are nearly or exactly identical to 1 and 2 Kings, obviously being used as a source for Chronicles. One of the key differences between Kings and Chronicles is the Davidic dynasty. Solomon's temple dedication prayer in 2 Chronicle 6 / I Kings 8 links three important things: the Davidic monarchy, the temple, and the land. The Jews returned from Babylon in 538, and the second temple as built in 516. But the Davidic monarchy had not been re-established yet. What was going to happen with this event and how God would continue to be faithful to Israel and keep His promises to them were key questions to Israel.

2 Chronicles 7:12-22

1. vs. 12: God tells Solomon here that He has heard Solomon's prayer (See 2 Chr. 6:14-42)

Part of Solomon's prayer is asking God to reside in the temple he has just built
God saying He has heard Solomon indicates He is about to answer that prayer
God choosing a “permanent home” in Jerusalem reinforces His promise to Israel
They would have this Promised Land as their home, and God would be with them
God also says that this place will be “a temple for sacrifices”
All sacrifices were to be made in the temple, the center of worship in Jerusalem
These sacrifices reaffirm the relationship between God and His people

For the exiles returns from captivity, this prayer/promise has great importance
The temple has been rebuilt; now it needs priests to offer the sacrifices
The offering of sacrifices assures the people that God has heard them as well
God doesn't need a temple to be present with His people
This process, however, is the established method in the Mosaic law

2. vs. 13: God here lists several punishments He used for the people going astray from Him

It's important to remember that not all hardships are punishments from God
There were several Godly but barren women in Scripture
Jesus noted that people who died either by murder or accident were not any more
ungodly than the rest of the people
These events God notes are reminders of specific situations, not universal practices
Any negative experience that happens to another should cause us to pray
For the one affected, and for our own relationship to be right with God

3. vs. 14: God refers to Israel as “my people” in vs. 13 and again here in vs. 14
 Using this phrase twice so close together shows emphasis
 There is (and should be) a close relationship between God and His people
 God also says that these people are “called by My name”
 This shows that God was their protector and their Lord
 The actions that God lists are necessary for the people to be renewed
 Humility acknowledges wrongs done to God and to other people
 Prayer here has two purposes
 In the context, it suggests prayer for forgiveness
 But prayer is also a means of maintaining/renewing relationship with God
 Seeking God’s face means seeking to know Him more and more deeply
 All these actions occur *before* turning from their wicked ways
 This suggests a process to follow towards righteousness
 Owning one’s sins
 Seeking to repair the relationship with God
 Learning more about God
 All these prepares a person to repent fully of sin in their life
- The second part of the this verse has God again hearing the people’s prayers
 When people act rightly, God hears them and responds
 He does two things that go together
 He forgives people’s sins
 He heals the land
 People’s ways of living affect both humanity and the land they live on
 God’s actions indicate he will reverse the effects of disease, famine, and drought
 He will “heal” both the people and the land
4. vs. 15: God here makes a promise to Israel
 If His people will be humble and pray, He will hear them “in this place”
 The temple is a “house of prayer” as well as a place for sacrifices
 For the people coming back from exile, this assures them that God keeps His promises
 The rebuilt temple will be a place where God will meet with / hear them
5. vs. 16: God makes the temple holy, not the prayers and sacrifices of the people
 God “chose and consecrated” the temple
 His presence there makes it holy
 His eyes and heart will “always be there”
 God is referring to the temple, but also to the people
 We are called “the temple of the living God” in 2 Tim. 1:14
 He will always be with His people who follow Him and revere Him
6. vs. 17: Walking is a biblical metaphor for the way a person lives their life
 God tells Solomon to “walk before me faithfully as David your father did”
 God is saying David walked in the right way in his life
 When he sinned, he humbled himself, prayed, sought God’s face,
 and turned away from his sin

7. vs. 18: God's promise here is that a descendant of David would always be on the throne
That promise is both unconditional and conditional
It's conditional in that God would preserve the dynasty despite human failings
It's conditional in that Solomon's idolatry caused the kingdom to split under his son

The Chronicler, writing hundreds of years after Solomon, is very aware of these things
The Davidic monarchy fell during the Babylonian exile
The land and the people had been restored; how could the monarchy?
God keeps this promise in Jesus, the Messiah
No one in the Chronicler's day could have seen how God would keep this promise

8. vs. 19-20a: God is speaking to the people here, as the Hebrew word for "you" is plural
It was singular in vs. 17-18, when God was speaking to Solomon
Worshipping other gods is a violation of the first two commandments
Doing this ensures that the people will "forsake the decrees and commands"
God says He will "uproot Israel from my land, which I have given them"
This likely serves two purposes
God allows them to pursue sin, which eventually calls for judgment
Removing the people from the land allows healing to begin in both

9. vs. 20b: God's people can leave the land; the temple cannot
God's rejection comes when the temple is destroyed in 586 BC
This signified God's presence leaving

10. vs. 20c-21: One consequence of exile is being taken forcibly away for an extended time
Another consequence is how that exile will be spoken of by non-Jews
The temple's destruction will be a "byword and an object of ridicule"
It will be well-known and spoken of as an example of terrific misfortune
Even foreigners will recognize God's hand in doing this
It isn't that God wasn't powerful enough to protect Israel
The Lord has "done such a thing to this land and to this temple"
It was God's hand that did this

11. vs. 22: The response in vs. 22 to the question in vs. 21 brings several things to light
First, it emphasizes Israel's ingratitude for their deliverance from Egypt
Israel's core identity is a nation that the Lord chose and freed from bondage
Worshipping and serving other gods is a *rejection* of what God had done

Second, the exiles use this as a basis of history-telling
This is what God did (delivered them from bondage)
This is who God is—holy and expecting holiness from His people

Application: This passage reminds us of the process of dealing with sin: remember our own responsibility, humble ourselves before God, and seek His face as we turn from evil. He will honor our repentance when we honor Him in this way.

This passage also reminds us that sin does not stop God's plans from moving forward. It didn't stop his plan to bring Jesus into the world when the Davidic line failed to avoid idolatry. Our sin won't stop God from accomplishing His will in this world. It will mean, however, that we may not get to play the part in His plan that He wanted us to have.

Prayer: Father God, thank You that You and see and hear us when we come to You, when we seek Your face. Please forgive and heal us. In Jesus' name, Amen.