

Mar. 11, 2018

## Lesson 2: There Is No God Like You

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 6: 12-21

### **Context:**

In our next lesson on acknowledging God we jump from the book of Genesis to the monarchy of the Israelite narrative. The book of Chronicles is a massive history book of God's plan and purpose for Israel. Originally, Chronicles was a single book, but was divided by Greek translators of the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> The content of 1 Chronicles focuses on genealogies from Adam to David, while 2 Chronicles focuses on the reign of Solomon all the way to the exile. Much of the book of Chronicles derives its content from other Old Testament books such as Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 King.<sup>2</sup> All of these books share in common that they appear to be written or edited by an author known as the Deuteronomistic Historian as there are similarities within the different accounts.<sup>3</sup> If a comparison is made between the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, there are both similarities and differences.

The most distinguishing part of 2 Chronicles is the focus on the Temple and its worship.<sup>4</sup> The beginning chapter of 2 Chronicles begins with Solomon becoming king. The second chapter immediately moves to Solomon preparing and building the Temple. Chapter five culminates the Temple being finished and six describes how Solomon dedicates and organizes a massive assembly to celebrate the occasion. After the Ark of the Covenant enters in, the Israelite assembly at the Temple gathers to hear Solomon's prayer. Upon a platform, Solomon dedicates the Temple by naming God as the one God of Israel who is in covenant with them. He names his father and thanks God for fulfilling the promise to have the Temple built and to always have a descendant upon the throne.

After Solomon give thanks, he also notes the dichotomy that God cannot be contained in this place, but that this place represents the prayers and the spirit of the people there. It is a plea for God to remember them and forgive them even when they fail. The Temple is to be a place of prayer, a holy site that reminds the people of the grandeur of God and the mighty power of God's covenant with them.

### **Application:**

When reading this passage, I was struck by how powerful this scene must have been for the people of Israel and for Solomon himself. The Temple had been a dream since the reign of David. However, God gave David different instructions yet promised that David's family would continue to rule and build the Temple. So when Solomon finally built this grand Temple, all would have ecstatic. The dedication of the Temple would have symbolized God's faithfulness from generation to generation, family to family. Likewise, we remember that God is with our families from generation to

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<sup>1</sup> Steven S. Tuell, "First and Second Chronicles," Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (John Knox Press: Louisville, KY 2001), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 5.

generation. There is continuity with God.

As I read this passage, I could not help but think of the feelings I felt this past June as I was ordained as an Elder in the Alabama – West Florida Conference. When I was ordained with Bishop laying his hands upon me, my eyes were full of tears as were those of my family, the church I served, and clergy of the AWF Conference. The tears were a mixture of joy, sorrow, and gratitude as we all thought about a saint who was there in spirit. There was a remembrance of my father who too was ordained almost thirty - one years ago in that same church. I distinctly remember after standing up from the altar rail and my future senior pastor smiling as tears came down his face, hugging me with the words: “This is a great day.” No other words needed to be said. God was at work with my father and ministry and God would be at work with me. God is faithful from generation to generation.

The other thing we glean from this passage is that God cannot be contained. God cannot be contained in one place or time. To think we have a control on where or how God works greatly limits our understanding of worship and also the power of God. Of course there are beautiful churches with incredible spaces. Both traditional and contemporary worship services have specific orders of worship and designed environments. Much like The Temple, they can be places that are powerful and worshipful. However, there are other things that come with those places and even those acts of worship. Are all people being included in worship as participants? Do children and youth get to lead? Or are things done as if there is to be a product either like a traditional symphony concert at Carnegie music hall or a rock concert venue with just a little room for prayer here and there and maybe Holy Communion, if there’s time. Our places of worship and prayer are to always be reverent with openings for all people to lead and serve. It may mean from time to time that our places of worship and orders of worship change. God will be with us whether it’s in a rural church in a small little chapel or in the brand new sprawling church in the suburbs. And God will be with us as those places transition as well.

In this passage we are reminded that God’s work cannot be done with just one person or one building. Instead, God’s work is done with people from age to age with different gifts and in different places. How we can acknowledge God includes seeing that our God is constantly on the go and calls for us to listen to God’s Spirit as we go through life.

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