

The Compass

Week 28

OT Readings: 1 Chron. 7:1 - 21:30

NT Readings: Acts 27:1 – Rom. 3:8

Things to Watch for in Your Readings this Week

Old Testament

- Chronicles is a “re-telling” of the story from the author’s post-exilic perspective. See “How to Read Chronicles” for an understanding of the author’s emphases and why.¹
- The genealogies will end with chapter 9.² Chapters 10-21 will tell the story of David and his monarchy. Notice the emphasis given to the ark, temple and proper worship (see below).

New Testament

- Paul’s travel to Rome is adventuresome reading and gives us insight into the 1st century world. God’s hand is evident in all of it. Notice how Paul is ever mindful of the opportunities around him to bear witness to the reality of Jesus, no matter the circumstances or situation. Acts ends as it begins - with a focus on King Jesus and His kingdom (28:23, 30-31).³
- Wow, Romans! Some consider this to be not just the pinnacle of Paul’s articulation of the gospel, but the most important book of the Bible. Some avoid it as being too difficult, others see it as a theological gold mine. Of all of the NT writings, this one requires some background and careful thought. Don’t back away! Jump in and let Paul lead you into a deeper understanding of God, His historical purposes and His great heart. Be careful not to “piecemeal” this book; it flows together as a cohesive letter to the Roman believers.⁴

Highlight of the Week: Who is God?

Rom. 1:18-2:11. Nearly all of us have at one time or another asked a very important and fair question, “What happens to those who have never heard the message?” While Paul is not attempting to answer this question here, he helps all the same. 1:18-23 establishes a principle: knowledge brings responsibility. God evaluates persons on what they know and what they do with what they know. How one responds to truth reveals the heart; and the heart is where God looks to evaluate each person (1 Sam. 16:7). Actions are the outcome of an internal decision to be seekers or rejecters of truth. 1:18 is insightful, “...men who (continually) suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” (NAU) This “suppression” is a deliberate, an actively pursued state of mind and heart to reject God’s truth, “push the truth away from themselves.” (NLT)

God is active in every person’s life on the planet. The Holy Spirit is at work to woo and reveal truth to everyone, without partiality (Rom. 2:11). And He is incredibly patient! He longs for all to respond to Him and come to the place of repentance, “the kindness of God leads us to repentance” (Rom. 2:4). There are many stories of people in remote places or in the strongholds of other religions (e.g., Islam), who with honest hearts began to seek God. God revealed Himself to them, often in supernatural ways. Missionaries have discovered “redemptive analogies” in every culture. These are God’s “calling cards” placed there in hopes that people will respond to them and to Him.⁵

Application: “What about me? How does this apply?”

1 Chron. 13-16. As you read these chapters pay special attention to the theme of seeking God that runs throughout.⁶ These chapters parallel the 2 Sam. 6 account of moving the ark; here we find the “why” behind the original failure which led to the death of Uzzah – they did “seek God.” Notice how the Chronicler inserts two stories of David’s care to *seek God* before attacking the Philistines (14:8-17). Notice what happened when David did. Did David learn his lesson? Chapters 14-16 seem to say yes.

So what does this have to do with us? David’s failure in moving the ark originally was an issue of the heart. It was an act of presumption, of pride; he thought he knew better than God.⁷ How do we live our lives? Do we live presuming on God or is our heart attitude one of openness to His voice, direction and leadership? This is not about troubling God with every minute detail of my daily schedule, “God, should I brush my teeth, now or later?”

It is about my attitude of availability to Him in every moment and every circumstance. How can I know if I really “fear the Lord?” Here are some thoughts.

How do I handle “disruptions” in my day? Do I become frustrated or am I open to the God-opportunities in my path? Do I leave home for the day with an expectation of what God *will* do as I seek to play my part in it or is God simply an addendum, an appendage, Whom I will call upon *when and if* I think I need Him? Bottom line, *who* orders and determines the course of my life?

Re-read **Acts 27:23**. How did Paul see his life? His circumstances? How did it shape his responses?

Difficult Question of the Week

1 Chron. 13-16. Q. “Why does the author of Chronicles spend so much time on the OT system of worship, e.g., ark, temple, Levites, etc.”

One of the noticeable differences between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles is the emphasis given to the “mechanics and mechanisms” of worship. Given the limited space available in the Bible maybe God could have made better use of it! ☺

Why does the author of Chronicles (or for that matter any Biblical author) choose to emphasize the things he does? Of course, we start with the fact that the Bible has “dual” authorship, the Holy Spirit and a human author. We can trust that the Holy Spirit’s concern for the overarching story was such that in later times God’s people could find in that story what they needed to walk with God.

Yet, there is the immediate situation and concern of the human author. Here is the principle: ***The Bible was not written to us, but for us.*** At first blush, this truth might feel a bit disconcerting. Yet every Biblical book is written to some human audience.⁸ Let’s use the author of Chronicles for an illustration. He is writing to the community of Jewish people who have returned to Judea and Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile. They are asking, “What now? How can we be sure that we will not repeat the errors of our forefathers who ended up in exile?” The author of Chronicles is re-telling their history to help them to answer that question, “We can avoid the sin of our fathers by coming to know God and worship Him in the way that He has asked in the OT Torah (law).” *That* specific concern shapes what he writes *to them*.⁹

Copyright June 2012 by Mike Huckins. **The Compass** is intended as an aid in the reading of the Bible; it is the property of the author and represents his views alone. While it follows *The One Year Bible* format, The Compass is not a publication of Tyndale. *The One Year Bible* is a copyrighted publication of Tyndale House Publishers.

¹ See Fee and Stuart, *How To Read the Bible Book by Book* for their chapter on Chronicles. A good OT Introduction or Handbook can help as well.

² What seems tedious and boring to us was an important preface to what this author had to say to those for whom he is retelling the story. The post-exilic community needed to hear that, “they have a divinely ordained past that ultimately goes back to the creation of the world.” (Fee and Stuart, *How To Read the Bible Book by Book*, 102.)

³ We want more, “what happens next??” but Luke has completed his purpose in telling the story. Jesus, the true King is now being proclaimed in the world’s center of power at Rome. The gospel is well on the way “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Tradition and NT evidence have it that Paul was released for this Acts 28 Roman house arrest and would travel again for a couple years. According to tradition he returned to Rome and was beheaded in the persecution under Emperor Nero (~ AD 64).

⁴ Some background reading will be essential to this book. Again, I recommend Fee and Stuart. Be aware! This book has been the subject of complex and detailed theological debates over the centuries. This means that there is more than one way to understand the details and implications of Paul’s thought. Don’t just assume you know or trust only one point of view. On the other hand, don’t despair! With some basics in mind, you *will* be able to follow Paul’s basic argument & thought flow. This is very important: Paul did not sit down to write a theological treatise. Rather, to write a letter of encouragement and instruction to the believers in Rome. Read 1:1-17 carefully. It tells *why* Paul wrote and identifies some of his primary concerns.

⁵ *Eternity in Their Hearts* by Don Richardson gives many examples. Bilquis Sheikh, raised in an Islamic country, tells of her encounter with God in *I Dared to Call Him Father*. God is appearing to many honest hearts in Islamic nations, through visions, dreams and personal encounters.

⁶ Especially 13:3 (“neglected = did not *seek*”), 14:10, 14 (David seeking God), 15:13 (did not seek when the ark was moved originally), 16:10-11.

⁷ What makes this so intense is that this very sin of presumption cost Saul the kingdom (1 Sam. 13). God must have been deeply concerned that David was about to follow in Saul’s footsteps. On Saul see 1 Chron. 10:13-14, “did not inquire of the Lord.”

⁸ I like to say that the Bible is this: “The Bible is God’s communication in human language written by someone to someone for some specific purpose in a particular historical situation.”

⁹ Of course, we can learn a great deal from what he writes to them – about God, how to love Him and do His will.