

*Things Omitted: The Importance of Chronicles for
Preaching and Teaching*

Austin Graduate School of Theology Sermon Seminar,
May 23–26, 2016

Part 3: Preaching the Idealized Portraits of David and Solomon

I. Introduction.

- A. Most in the past thought Chronicles dealt uniquely with the temple, priesthood and worship, because of the Chronicler's obvious attention to these.
- B. The unifying motif of Chronicles is not the temple and worship, but rather Davidic kingship and the covenant with David.
- C. The temple and its worship are one aspect of that covenant.

II. David, the royal standard.

- A. All kings of Judah are subsequently judged by this standard: David is the king who sought the Lord.
- B. I will deal with this in three movements: David as the originator of righteous kingship and temple worship; Solomon as the originator of the temple; and the kings which followed as examples of how they did, or did not fulfill the ideal.
- C. David as the originator of the temple and righteous kingship.
 - 1. 1 Chronicles 11–12: David unites all Israel; the mighty men of all the tribes come and declare loyalty to him; all Israel agrees with David and brings up the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem.
 - 2. David's sins or lapses in Judgment in chapters 13–14 are glossed over by the Chronicler.
 - a) Uzzah's sin in handling the ark is blamed on Uzzah, not David.
 - b) The period the ark remained at the household of Obed-Edom in chapter 14 is used by the Chronicler to exalt David diplomatically, militarily, and in terms of his own family.
 - c) The end result: David commands the Levites to carry the ark successfully into Jerusalem, as they should have done in the first place.

3. The most glaring omission of David's sin is that of the affair with Bathsheba, although the entire framework of the Ammonite war is retained.
4. Two instances where David is culpable in Chronicles:
 - a) David not allowed to build the temple, because he was a "man of blood" (1 Chron. 22:8), a curious evaluation, considering the Lord himself commissioned some of the battles.
 - b) 1 Chronicles 20, where David conducts the unauthorized census of Israel. In 2 Samuel 24, God tempts David to do the census; in 1 Chronicles, it is Satan who tempts him: the Devil made him do it!
 - c) The census narrative was necessary, because the site on which God stopped the plague was the site of the temple.

III. Solomon, the temple builder.

A. Introduction.

1. The temple, its organization, and worship all were planned by David in Chronicles, so primacy of place goes to him.
2. But many scholars have noticed that 2/3 of Chronicles is devoted to the two, almost sinless, kings. David and Solomon are together the kings of Israel's Golden Age.

B. Chronicler presents Solomon as a king without blemishes.

1. Gone are the court intrigues of 1 Kings 1 and 2, his marriage to foreign wives, and worship on high places.
2. Gone is his idolatry, forced labor of Israelites, and payment of the cities of *Kabûl* ("worthless") to Hiram of Tyre.
3. Gone is the fracturing of the kingdom, begun in his reign, and the revolt of the North (the revolt is blamed on Jeroboam, who took advantage of Rehoboam while he was "young and tender"!).
4. Most of 2 Chronicles 1–9 deals with the building and dedication of the temple, as opposed to 1 Kings 3–10, which dealt with Solomon's amazing wisdom, manifest in many ways.

IV. Messianism and Eschatology in Chronicles.

A. Preliminary conclusions:

1. Chronicles uses Samuel and Kings as 50% of its source material.
2. Almost everything negative about David, and everything negative about Solomon, has been expunged.
3. David and Solomon are together the twin ideal monarchs of Israel.

4. David is the initiator, and Solomon the executor, of temple building and organization.
 5. The Chronicler is not concerned with temple matters alone, but with the totality of the covenant with David.
- B. Why are David and Solomon's sins whitewashed in Chronicles?
1. Partially this is due to the difference in historical setting between the Deuteronomist and the Chronicler.
 - a) For the Deuteronomist, it was important to establish why they had ended up in exile: every one of their kings had led them down the path to destruction, particularly due to idolatry.
 - b) It is not the Chronicler's concern to assign guilt.
 - (1) He is writing in an age of restoration, not a time of war and exile.
 - (2) It is a time of loss of independence and antagonistic neighbors.
 - (3) The Chronicler re-writes the history of the monarchy, particularly David and Solomon, as it should have been.
 - (4) David and Solomon are patterns and models for the road ahead.
 2. Messianism and eschatology are linked in Chronicles.
 - a) If they sought the Lord as David and Solomon did, Israel might be restored.
 - b) The Lord was not yet done with the Davidic kingship.
 - (1) Chronicles is the account of all the kings of Judah, who are all evaluated relative to whether they sought the Lord.
 - (2) 2 Chron 13:5: God had given the kingship forever to David and his sons.
 - (3) The Chronicler is the banner bearer of Davidic messianism in the post-exilic era.
 - c) Chronicles is both historical and eschatological:
 - (1) Looks to the past and re-presents the history of Judean kingship;
 - (2) Reframes the history for the sake of the community of Judah in the fifth century;
 - (3) Idealizes the past for the sake of the messianic community of the future.

Sermon on David and Solomon

A Sermon Idea for 3rd hour by Mark Shipp

I. The ideal portraits of David and Solomon in Chronicles.

A. The statue of David in Florence, Italy.

1. Flawless marble, heroic size and portrayal of his perfect body.
2. All intended to portray something larger than life, more than human.

B. Egyptian and Assyrian Kings in wall sculptures: much larger than others around them and depicted in heroic, triumphant poses.

C. This is the view of David and Solomon we get in Chronicles: flawless, ideal, heroic.

1. Not the same as the portrait we get in Samuel and Kings: they were great in many ways, but also possessing tragic flaws.
2. David has exactly two flaws in Chronicles:
 - a) He was a “man of blood” (i.e., “warfare”), therefore was not suitable to build the temple.
 - b) He performed an unauthorized census (which was not really his fault—the Devil made him do it), which was necessary to report in any event because it is also the narrative which reveals the site of the temple.
 - c) Gone are the accounts of murder and adultery, family troubles, civil war, and intrigue.
3. Solomon is the ideal temple builder. Chronicles reveals no flaw whatsoever.
 - a) He is the exemplar of temple builder, organizer, and worshipper.
 - b) Gone are the accounts of idolatry, marriage to many foreign wives, oppression of North Israelites, and civil war.

D. Why are David and Solomon portrayed in this fashion in Chronicles?

II. David and Solomon (2 Chronicles 28).

A. David was the ideal king because he was

1. A great leader and commander of men (v. 1).
2. Attentive to the worship of God and holy objects and spaces (v. 2).
3. Elect of God, and his household, forever (v. 4).
4. The provider of the blueprint (!) and other plans for the building of the temple and its furnishings (vv. 11–19), and plans for the divisions of the priests and Levites (v. 21).

5. Which makes him not only the architect of the temple, but the originator of its worship.

B. Solomon was the ideal king because he

1. was the builder of the temple (vv. 6 and 10).
2. sought the Lord, as David commanded him (v. 9).
3. was elect by God to succeed David (vv. 5 and 7).
4. God was with him (v. 20).
5. Solomon is significant because he perfectly fulfilled David's plans for building the temple and organized its worship.
 - a) Most of the stories about his greatness from 1 Kings 1–11 are missing.
 - b) Even accounts of his great wisdom are collapsed into one arena of wisdom: wisdom in building the temple.

C. What the accounts of David and Solomon in Chronicles are intended to be.

1. Not true-to life pictures of flesh and blood humans with flaws and foibles.
2. These are portrayals of heroes of the past who show the way forward to the future.
 - a) Perhaps this is why the genealogies end at the return from exile: the new Israel, again in the promised land, awaiting the building of the temple, initiation of worship, awaiting a new David and Solomon to bring in the kingdom.
 - b) The images of David and Solomon are not as they were, but as they should have been: models of Davidic kingship to come, models of the ideal Messiah from the line of David, to restore the kingdom of God in the world.
3. The accounts in Chronicles of David and Solomon must be heard on two levels: the historical level—where David and Solomon planned for the building of the temple; and the eschatological level—where an ideal king in the line of David ushers in the kingdom.

III. Models of worship, building, and seeking.

A. The images of David and Solomon in Chronicles are models for us as well.

1. It is not always necessary to point out the flaws in our heroes.
2. If we are downtrodden and discouraged, it is not always helpful to hear that “Lincoln could be ugly to his wife.”
3. Stories of the heroes of the past can steel the nerve and strengthen the resolve.
4. Such was the sorry state of Israel under Persian rule that they needed stories of the great ones, the faithful ones, who sought the Lord and he was found by them.

B. These are also, in a sense, stories of Christ.

1. No other human could ever literally fulfill the demands of righteous kingship.
2. Only Christ fulfills the model of true worship, building the spiritual temple of the Lord, and seeking the Father's will in all things.
3. Since he has shown us the way, we also can worship in spirit and in truth, upbuild the body in love, and seek the Lord above all.
4. As with the Chronicler, we also await the true revealing of the anointed son of David, the spiritual temple of God, and the heavenly worship of the one who sits in David's seat, enthroned upon the cherubim.

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Part 4: The Restoration Passages in Chronicles

One of the Chronicler's main concerns is with the restoration of all Israel—politically, socially, and religiously—in the post-exilic age. The way the Chronicler promotes his concerns is by the re-telling of the biblical story from the death of Saul to the exile of Judah. The story of the kings of Judah is presented much like a medieval painting of the Passion Narrative: the characters are biblical, but their dress and ambience are medieval and out of sync with the era in which they lived. This “contemporizing historiography” served the valuable function of telling the ancient stories through the lens of modern concerns. In light of its concern for return, renewal and restoration, Chronicles should resonate strongly with those of us in the American Restoration tradition.

Return, Renewal, and Restoration

“Restore” or “restoration” are unusual words in Chronicles, although the concepts are prevalent. The verb *haddesh* (“renew,” “restore”) occurs three times in the book, all within the context of a reform movement: first, in 2 Chronicles

15:8, relative to Asa's repair of the altar of the Lord, and second, two occurrences which describe Josiah's restoration project on the temple (2 Chronicles 24:4 and 12). Another verb, *shuv*, literally means "to return," but often in Chronicles has the connotation of "repent" or "restore." First, in 2 Chron 6:24-26, 37-38, and 7:14, the temple dedication prayer, Solomon prays God might hear and forgive when the people of Israel *repent* of sin. In 2 Chron 11:4, Rehoboam attempted to *restore* the kingdom of Israel to Judah, to no avail. Note especially 2 Chron 15:4: "But when in their distress they *turned* to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found by them." Also note 2 Chron 24:19, where *shuv* is used in a causative sense: "Yet he sent prophets among them to *bring them back* to the LORD; these testified against them, but they would not give heed." See also 2 Chron 30:6, 9, 32:25, and 36:13.

One of the most common words for "restore" in Chronicles is *hazzeq*, meaning "to strengthen," "make strong (again)," "repair." It is always used of building/restoration projects, fortifications, or political entities (1 Chron 26:27, 29:12, 2 Chron 11:11-12, 17, 24:5, 12, 26:9, 29:3, 34, 32:5, 34:8, 10, 35:2).

Other words, translated "restore" or "repair," are less common in Chronicles, but help us get a picture of the Chronicler's concerns. One such word is *kûn*, "to establish," in the context of re-establishing or restoring worship (2 Chron 29:35

and 33:16).

While this is not an exhaustive survey, it is adequate to demonstrate the Chronicler's concern for "return, renewal, and restoration." The focus of this concern is "all Israel" as a community of worship, as a community under *Torah*, and as a unified community.

Israel as a Community of Worship

Some scholars of the past have subsumed all of the Chronicler's theological concerns into this one area: concern for temple and worship.¹ While this is an overstatement, there is no question that concerns for worship, temple, and the organization of the priests and Levites loom very large in Chronicles. This can be seen in the very beginning of the book in the genealogies (1 Chronicles 1–9) and also in the very first narrative (1 Chronicles 10). If amount of dedicated space in genealogies is indicative of importance, then Judah and Levi have pride of place in the genealogies. Other tribes have some genealogical entries, such as the Trans-Jordanian tribes (2 1/2 tribes east of the Jordan), which figure in chapter 5. Naphtali receives one verse (1 Chron 8:13). Judah and Levi, on the other hand, have two or three chapters each, underscoring the Chronicler's focus upon the twin

1. See, for example, Edward Curtis and Albert Madsen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles* (International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910), 7-17.

pillars of his theology: king and temple.²

The Chronicler is vitally interested in worship in Israel and in grounding that worship in God's covenant with David. His agenda in including the extensive genealogies at the beginning of his work is to connect post-exilic Judah—the Persian province of Yehud—with the nation of Israel and its covenants, especially the Davidic covenant, prior to the exile. To the Chronicler, the community, worship, and organization of Judah in the fifth century BC is continuous with pre-exilic Israel. It is important to him that the organization of Judah's priesthood and worship in post-exilic Judah—musicians, gatekeepers, and the complex system of Levitical orders—be grounded in and be legitimated by Israel's earliest temple traditions, involving Solomon and even more, David.

1 Chronicles 10, which begins the narrative part of the book, sets up the reason for the rejection and demise of Saul and God's choice of David. In a synoptic passage with 2 Samuel 31, Saul is killed on the field of battle against the Philistines. Of special interest is the last two verses (10:13-14), non-synoptic with 1 Samuel 31. The reason given for the rejection of Saul is because he was unfaithful and sought out a medium, but did not "seek the Lord," which sometimes

2. Judah in chapter 2 and 1/2 of 4, also the genealogy of David in chapter 3; Levi in chapter 6 and most of 9).

means in Chronicles to seek the presence of the Lord in the temple and at the ark of the covenant.

After the death of Saul, David is immediately anointed king over “all Israel” at Hebron. The balance of 1 Chronicles 11-12 are dedicated to a catalogue of David’s supporters: first his inner circle of “mighty men,” then warriors of every one of the tribes, north and south, come to David first at Ziklag, and then at Hebron to support him. The “all Israel” emphasis of the Chronicler cannot be missed—segments of all the tribes unanimously support David’s bid for the kingdom. Once David is anointed, his first order of business is to conquer the Jebusite city of Jerusalem and make it his own. This is a necessary precursor to bringing the ark of the covenant up from its lengthy stay at Kiriath-Jearim, where Saul had “neglected it,” because the ark was to be housed in a “tent” in Jerusalem (see 1 Chron 15:1). Chapters 13 and 15-16 deal with the subject of bringing the ark into Jerusalem and organizing Levitical worship. One can immediately see that the concerns of the Chronicler are not at all the same as that of the compiler of Samuel and Kings: David’s kingship is established and blessed because he “sought the Lord,”

particularly in matters of the cult, whereas Saul was rejected because he did not.³

Most of the balance of 1 Chronicles treats the subject of David's planning the construction of the temple, which his son Solomon was to carry out. Even the one sin the Chronicler allows David—numbering the people—was necessary because this account is the origin story of the temple site and the site of the altar of sacrifice:

Then the angel of the Lord commanded Gad to say to David that David should go up and rear an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. . . Then David said, "Here shall be the house of the Lord and here the altar of burnt offering for Israel (1 Chron 21:18, 22:1).

The first part of 2 Chronicles follows in the same manner. The first act of Solomon as king is to worship at the "high place that was at Gibeon; for the tent of meeting of God, which Moses the servant of the Lord had made in the wilderness, was there" (2 Chron 1:3).⁴ 2 Chronicles 2–7 and portions of chapters 1 and 8 describe the building of the temple, its dedication, and worship at the appropriate shrine.

God blessed Solomon because he "sought the Lord" like David (2 Chron 1:5).

How he mainly did that was through worship and sacrifice at the Lord's altar and

3. See Steven McKenzie, *1–2 Chronicles* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 120.

4. In 1 Chronicles 1 and 2, Solomon's first act is to worship the Lord in Gibeon. In 1 Kings 1 and 2, Solomon's first acts are to consolidate his power and to remove or marginalize his opponents. Thus, the Chronicler emphasizes Solomon's piety and faithfulness to God.

the ark of the covenant.

The kings which follow Solomon in Judah are evaluated on the basis of their commitment to the restoration or advancement of the cult, the temple, and the proper consecration and ordination of the various priests and Levites. Abijah of Judah condemns Jeroboam of Israel because he did not install proper priests and Levites, descended from Aaron (2 Chron 13:8-12). Asa “sought the Lord,” like David and Solomon, and so removed idols from the land and repaired the altar of sacrifice (2 Chron 15). In one of the more interesting passages in Chronicles, Asa’s son Jehoshaphat sought the Lord through fasting and prayer during a war with the Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites. Jehoshaphat and all the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem bowed to the ground and worshipped. Then the Levites began to sing the psalmic refrain (*kî tôb kî l’olam hasdô*, “for he is good, for his loyalty is everlasting”). The Lord ambushed the warring parties and they were routed. Two of the great kings in Judah’s history—Josiah and Hezekiah—were idealized primarily because they renovated the temple and restored worship. Both re-instituted the Passover, one hundred years apart. About both kings the text says there was never one like it, before or after!

Israel as a Community Under *Torah*

Undergirding the Chronicler's theology of restoration of the cult is his "back to the Bible" movement, or concern for recovery of *Torah*, as exemplified in the good kings of Judah's past who "sought the Lord." To the Chronicler, David and Solomon are paradigmatic kings who sought the Lord in worship and in the *Torah*:

And [David] left Zadok the priest and his brethren the priests before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place that was at Gibeon, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD upon the altar of burnt offering continually morning and evening, according to all that is written in the law (*Torah*) of the LORD which he commanded Israel (1 Chron 16:39–40).

In David's initial setting up of worship in Jerusalem (which to the Chronicler began with David and the tent he set up for worship, rather than with Solomon),⁵ everything is done scrupulously according to the *Torah* of Moses. In a similar manner, Solomon also sought the Lord according to the *Torah*:

Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father what thou hast promised him, saying, 'There shall never fail you a man before me to sit upon the throne of Israel, if only your sons take heed to their way, to walk in my law (*Torah*) as you have walked before me' (2 Chron 6:16).

The "reforming" kings of Judah follow this same pattern, promoting the reading and keeping of the *Torah*. Asa, for example,

[C]ommanded Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law (*Torah*) and the commandment (2 Chron 14:4).

Jehoshaphat, likewise, assigned "princes and Levites" to teach the book of the *Torah* of the Lord in the cities of Judah. Jehoiada the priest, young king Joash's mentor, also was scrupulous to follow the *Torah* relative to temple organization (2

5. Simon de Vries, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (FOTL vol. 11; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 149–150. See also McKenzie, pp 142–146.

Chron 23:18). Amaziah, who was faithful (but not perfectly so), did not put the children of the murderers of his father to death, in keeping with the *Torah* of Moses.

It is not surprising that the two kings who most resemble David and Solomon in terms of faithful seeking of the Lord, Hezekiah and Josiah, also read and kept the precepts of the *Torah*.

Israel As a Unified Community

One of the Chronicler's main concerns is "all Israel," north and south, as a unified community. To the Chronicler, Israel was an ideal entity, a twelve tribe whole, in contrast with the fractured remnants which are his reality in the post-exilic age. This concern for the restoration of all Israel, and to demonstrate the continuity of the post-exilic community with pre-exilic Israel, is demonstrated already in the genealogies of 1 Chron 1-9. All tribes are given genealogical entries, even though in some cases they are vestigial (e.g., the genealogy of Naphtali). The returnees to Judah from Babylon in chapter 9 also include some from the northern tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh:

So all Israel was enrolled by genealogies; and these are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel. And Judah was taken into exile in Babylon because of their unfaithfulness. Now the first to dwell again in their possessions in their cities were Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the temple servants. And some of the people of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh dwelt in Jerusalem:

Note the repetition of "all Israel," and interestingly, "Israel" mentioned again in 1 Chron. 9:1-3. The returnees living in Jerusalem include half northern tribes

(Ephraim and Manasseh) and half southern tribes (Judah and Benjamin). To the Chronicler, Israel is a twelve tribe sacred community under *Torah*, and the restoration of this community must include everything which pertained to pre-exilic Israel.⁶

The phrase *kol yisra'el* (“all Israel”) occurs 43 times in the book of Chronicles. Following the genealogies, the balance of the book is replete with this phrase. After the death of Saul (1 Chron 10:6,13), David’s first act is to go with “all Israel,” to conquer the Jebusite city of Jerusalem. After Jerusalem was secured, David’s mighty men

gave him strong support in his kingdom, together with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel (1 Chron 11:4).

After two chapters of detailing David’s supporters who came to him at Hebron, and earlier at Ziklag, we hear that “all Israel” came with one mind to make David king:

All these, men of war, arrayed in battle order, came to Hebron with full intent to make David king over all Israel; likewise all the rest of Israel were of a single mind to make David king (1 Chron 12:38).⁷

Once again, it is important to the Chronicler to establish that all Israel is supportive of David and is of one mind regarding his kingship.

At important junctures in the lives of David and Solomon, related to the ark of the covenant and the building of the temple, all Israel is unified in support of the

6. For the “all Israel” emphasis, see de Vries, pp. 146–148. Relative to the Chronicler’s concerns that all Israel, North and South, ought to be a single entity in both pre- and post-exilic Judah, see Roddy Braun, *1 Chronicles* (Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 14; Waco: Word Books, 1986), xxxv–xxxvii.

7. Braun, p. 171.

temple and its priesthood, the cult, and the ark (see 1 Chron 13:5–8, 15:3 and 28, 28:4 and 8, 29:21, 23, and 25, and many other passages). “All Israel” is critical to the Chronicler, for he is compiling his history in the post-exilic era in order to inspire the remnants of the the Judeans and North Israelites to seek the Lord together, with unity of purpose and identity.

Return, Restoration, and Renewal in Chronicles and Today

The Chronicler is concerned first of all with return (*shûv*) or repentance. Seeking the Lord in Chronicles most often entails putting away the false gods of the age and returning to the Lord with the whole heart. Part of this return to the Lord involves renewal of worship and the institutions which surround it, which through carelessness or idolatry fall into disrepair and disrepute. In the book of Chronicles, those who seek the Lord with their whole heart will renew and recommit to worship and prayer, will work to rediscover and rededicate themselves to the way of *Torah* (God’s righteous instruction), and will do so in unity of heart and purpose. Then God will honor his commitment for his people to be a light to the nations and for the seed of Abraham to fulfill its purpose envisioned so long ago (1 Chron 16:13).

In light of this paradigm for restoration, it is ironic that we, who have emphasized the restoration of biblical doctrine and practices, the unity of the Spirit, and the life of faith, have missed the most obvious model for restoration in the Bible. If the Chronicler’s vision of restoration includes Israel as a faithful,

worshipping community, a community which seeks to recover scripture, and the unity of God's people, nothing could be more pertinent to the ideals of Restorationism.

It is easy for the church in our day to assign the texts and themes of the Chronicler to the *marginalia* of life, where it is consigned under glass in the museum of ancient historical oddities. But we, like the Chronicler's community of old, have a tendency to forget the covenants and the promises of God. We, too, tend towards entropy in personal and corporate worship, to lose the Word even in the midst of being overwhelmed and inundated by words. We, too, are often the sadly fractured and disjointed community of faith in the world. Perhaps a fresh look at our own restoration roots and ideals might provoke us again to recover the surprising words of grace and judgment by the prophets and apostles. Perhaps recovery of our own *Torah* will lead us to examine again, in the crisis of identity the church now faces, the Chronicler's paradigm of return, renewal, and restoration.

Worship, *Tôrāh*, and Unity:
The Restoration of Israel in the Story of Asa
A Sermon Idea for the 3rd Hour by Mark Shipp

I. The Restoration ideal in 2016.

- A. *It has arguably fallen on hard times.*
- B. *Many churches ask whether there is any need to restore anything.*
- C. *It has been many years since I have heard a sermon or a class on restoration.*
- D. *Yet, one of our most important theological distinctives is the notion that the church should restore biblical faith, ecclesiology, and practice based on the Scriptures, and to proclaim our essential unity based upon these.*
- E. *What is there about the Restoration ideal which is vital, and should itself be restored? And where can we go in Scripture to find such a program of restoration?*
- F. *Strangely enough, we can go to the book of Chronicles for a program of “return, renewal, and restoration.”*
- G. *I will look at renewal and restoration in Chronicles in the story of king Asa, in the three movements of Israel as a community of worship, as a community under Torah, and as a unified community.*

II. King Asa and the renewal of Israel as a community of worship.

- A. *After defeating Zerah and the Ethiopian army (2 Chron. 14), and in response to the prophetic word of Azariah son of Oded:*
 - 1. Asa destroyed the idols in the land,
 - 2. Repaired (Hebrew: “renewed”) the altar of the Lord (15:8),
 - 3. Gathered with all Israel in order to worship (15:9–11).
- B. *A pre-requisite to true worship is the removal and destruction of idols.*
- C. *Also, before sacrifice, before renewal of worship, is the set of the heart: prior to Asa’s acts of government, war, and worship comes his command to Israel to “seek the Lord.”*
- D. *Also after sacrificing, all Israel entered into a covenant to “seek the Lord” (15:12–15).*
 - 1. Before the renewal of outward forms is acceptable, the set of the heart to seek the Lord individually and corporately above all things is necessary.
 - 2. After seeking the Lord with the whole heart, and attending to the renewal of worship, comes peace to Asa and Israel:
 - a) And all Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and had sought him with their whole desire, and he was found by them, and the Lord gave them rest all around.

III. Asa and the renewal of Israel as a community under *Torah*.

- A. *A pre-requisite for Asa's program of renewal was to seek the Lord through the "keeping the Torah and the commandment" (14:4).*
- B. *These are not somehow distinct or opposite.*
- C. *After the defeat of Zerah (for Asa had "leaned" upon the Lord—šā`an, "to lean or rely!"), Azariah combines them once again:*
 - 1. "If you seek him, he will be found by you" (15:2).
 - 2. "For a long time, Israel was without ... *Torah*, but when... they sought him, he was found by them" (15:3). Seeking God at least partially implied the teaching and the application of God's instruction, *Torah*.
 - 3. Seeking God involved "turning," or "returning" to the Lord: "When they returned to the Lord, ... he was found by them" (15:4).

IV. Asa and the Unified Community of Israel.

- A. *It is interesting that when Asa begins his reform in Judah, only Judah and Benjamin are mentioned as the realm of those reforms.*
 - 1. With the defeat of Zerah, and the resolve to renew worship in Jerusalem in chapter 15, great numbers from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Ephraim had deserted to Asa, "when they saw that the Lord was with him" (15:9).
 - 2. In Jerusalem, they all worshipped and made a covenant together to "seek the Lord" (15:11–12).
- B. *Seeking the Lord, returning to the Lord, and renovating worship and its forms also involved the unity of the whole people of God.*

V. Return and restoration in Chronicles and Today.

- A. *The Chronicler is concerned with return and repentance. Part of what this means is:*
 - 1. Renewal of worship and its institutions;
 - 2. Renewal and rededication to God's righteous instruction in Scripture;
 - 3. Renewal of unity of heart and purpose of the people of God.
- B. *Nothing could be more pertinent to the Restoration appeal than this agenda of the ancient Chronicler.*
 - 1. Do we, like in 5th century Judah, lose our worship amid the distractions of the false gods of our age?
 - 2. Do we forget the covenant and promise of the Word in the midst of the barrage of words?
 - 3. Do we seek for the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of faith" in the midst of a sadly fractured church?