The Lord is Great and Greatly to be Praised
1 Chronicles 16:1 to 17:1–17

The two books of Chronicles are one book in the Hebrew Scriptures. It was written 450 years before Christ and about 500 years after King David. It is a book of history unfolding events from Adam to the Babylonian captivity. Ezra, the scribe, is most credited with writing the Chronicles. They were written for the Jews who had returned from Babylonian captivity in 536 BC under the leadership of Zerubbabel. At the time everything was in ruins. There was no temple, no wall, no Jerusalem. It was all rubble.

When the temple was finally rebuilt 22 years after they returned, the temple was a disappointment to those who had witnessed Solomon’s temple. It was not as large or as magnificent.

When they returned they had a Persian governor and no king. They thought about those days 450 to 500 years earlier, during the reigns of King David and then his son Solomon. They knew their plight at the hands of Gentile rulers was the judgment of God for their unbelief as a nation. They wondered if there would be any hope for them to be a great nation again.

This history of the Chronicles was written to give them hope, to encourage them that God was a faithful God. He was faithful in the past; His nature is faithful. He will be faithful in the future and will ultimately bring salvation to Israel through the anticipated Davidic king, their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The height of this history is in chapter 16 where the Jews are reminded of a great day in Israel’s history. During the reign of King Saul the presence of God was symbolically away from Jerusalem. The Ark of the Covenant, which represented the presence of God, was away from Jerusalem. When David became king one of his first objectives was to bring the Ark back to Jerusalem. He had built a house for himself and then a tabernacle to house the Ark of the Covenant.
In chapter 13 of 1 Chronicles he sent out his priests to Kirjath Jearim to the house of Abinadab where the Ark had been kept after it was rescued from the Philistines. The priests placed the Ark on a new cart as David and all Israel played music before the Lord. Along the way, the ox pulling the cart stumbled and the Ark began to tip. Uzzah reached out to steady it, then the Lord in His anger struck him dead because he violated God’s standard for transporting the Ark.

When the Ark arrived in Jerusalem it was placed in the tent that David had made for its keeping. Burnt offerings and peace offerings were offered before God. David then blessed the people in the name of the Lord. He then distributed to everyone in Israel a loaf of bread, a portion of meat and a raisin cake. He appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the Ark and the people began to celebrate with music played with stringed instruments and harps, trumpets, horns, and loud sounding cymbals. This was one big party with sacrificial offerings, food, a full orchestra, and even dancing. Remember, David danced before the Lord much to the despised heart of his wife Michal, the daughter of Saul (1 Chronicles 15:27-29).

In verse 7 of 1 Chronicles 16, we read: “On that day David delivered this psalm into the hands of Asaph [the chief musician] and his brethren, to thank the LORD.” David has declared this Thanksgiving Day because God’s presence, in the form of the Ark, is where it belonged — in Jerusalem!

David sings this song of Thanksgiving accompanied by the orchestra under the direction of Asaph. It is a Psalm of Thanksgiving and comes in three stanzas.

The first stanza:

**Be Adoring of God (16:8–27)**

*Adore Him for His service (vss. 8–12)*... “Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; talk of all His wondrous works!.... Remember His marvelous works which He has done, His wonders and the judgments of His mouth...” (vss. 8–12).

The very essence of praise is to extol God, to honor God, to thank God. We are to thank Him for “His deeds among the peoples... All His wondrous works... and the judgments of His mouth.”
How do we thank Him? We call on His name. We make His deeds known. We sing to Him. We glory in His name. We rejoice with those who seek the Lord. We remember His marvelous works.

Think of what God has done in your life! He has redeemed you unto Himself; He has called you His child; He has adopted you into His family; He has forgiven you of all sin; He has saved you from the wrath to come. Do you not have reason to sing, to shout, to speak of all the marvelous works God has done in your life?

The psalmist wrote: “Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD O my soul, and forget not all His benefits” (Psalm 103:1). We know God has blessed us, but how do we bless Him? We bless Him when we remember all His benefits. The psalmist then lists those benefits: He forgave our iniquities, He heals our diseases, He redeemed our life from destruction, He crowns us with loving kindness and mercies, He satisfies our mouth with good things, He renews our youth like the eagle’s (see vs. 2–5). Are these not reasons to give thanks? That is how we bless Him.

Adore Him for His selection of you (vss. 13–22)... The key verse is 13: “O seed of Israel His servant, you children of Jacob, His chosen ones!”

God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham and confirmed it by an oath to Isaac and then to Jacob. To a thousand generations He said, “To you I will give the land of Canaan as an allotment of your inheritance.” Even when the Jewish people were subject to foreign kings, God protected and preserved them. He rebuked those kings who took them captive, and warned those who would harm His prophets saying, “Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm” (see vss. 14–22). He brought them out of Egypt. He brought them out of Assyria. He brought them out of Babylon, and while these empires all bit the dust, His people still live and His prophets still speak.

There is reason here for us to give thanks! We too are God’s chosen! As part of the New Covenant which God established through Jesus Christ, Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:4). Thank Him because He chose you! Regardless of what hardships that may come your way, He is there protecting you. In the end there is final victory for you as you will have eternal life with Him in heaven. As a chosen one of God He is your protector. He will not let you go. As Jesus said, there is nothing that can snatch you out of the
Father’s hand or out of My hand (see John 10:28–29). His covenant promises to you are forever promises. And the voices of His prophets will outlast all who rise up against them. They will not be silenced. Thank God you are one of His chosen ones. The Lord is great and greatly to be praised!

Adore Him for His salvation (vss. 23–27)... “Sing to the LORD, all the earth; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples (vss. 23–24). We are commanded to sing to the Lord and proclaim His salvation. We are to declare His glory and wonders among all peoples. There is no greater news than to know you have been forgiven of all sin, that God has declared you holy and blameless before Him (Ephesians 1:4). He has cleansed you in the blood of Jesus; He has washed you clean so you are whiter than the driven snow; He has promised you that when this life is over you will be in heaven with Him and live with Him forevermore! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

That is why David could sing and why we can sing, “For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and gladness are in His place” (vss. 25–27).

There is no God like our God. He is from everlasting to everlasting. He is personal, not something made of stone or wood. He is loving, not cold and capricious like Allah. He is Creator, not part of creation as is the moon god of Islam. He is all-present, all-powerful, all-knowing. He is sovereign, holy, immutable, faithful, and He is a God of grace. That is why He can save wretched sinners like you and me! Thank God for His grace and your salvation.

Yes, let us adore Him. He has served us! He has selected us! He has saved us! No wonder David could sing: “For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised” (v. 25).

The second stanza:

Be Active for God (16:28–30)

“Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples, give to the LORD glory and strength. Give to the LORD glory due His name; bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him,
all the earth. The world is also firmly established, it shall not be moved” (vss. 28–30).

Look at the action words: give, bring, worship, tremble. What are we to do?

*Speak of His glory... “Give to the Lord the glory due His name...”* (v. 29a). How do we give God glory? The word “glory” in Hebrew (*kabod*) means heavy or weighty. It is used in a figurative sense to suggest an impressive or worthy person. His name is to be glorified for it is worthy of our praise. There are many names for God in Scripture apart from *Yahweh*, or “I Am” (Exodus 3:14). That name implies He is the center of all things; all the universe and all life originated from Him. There is no one above Him for He alone is the sovereign ruler in heaven above and in things on earth and in things below the earth. There is no God like our God. Give Him glory for He is the great “I Am.”

Our God is also named: *El Shaddai*, God Almighty (Genesis 49:24); He is *Yahweh-Jireh*, the Lord our Provider (Genesis 22:14); He is *Yahweh-Rapha*, the Lord our Healer (Exodus 15:26); He is *Yahweh-Nissi*, the Lord our Banner, meaning He leads us to victory (Exodus 17:15); He is *Yahweh-M’Kaddesh*, the Lord our Sanctifier (Leviticus 20:8); He is *Yahweh-Shalom*, the Lord our Peace (Joshua 6:24); He is *Yahweh-Elohim*, the Lord our God; He is *Yahweh-Tsidkenu*, the Lord our Righteousness; He is *Yahweh-Rohi*, the Lord our Shepherd (Psalm 23:1); He is *Yahweh-Shammah*, the Lord Ever Present (Ezekiel 48:35); He is *Yahweh-Sabaoth*, the Lord of Hosts (Isaiah 1:24).

Stop and think just who our God is! He is our provider, our healer, our victory, our sanctifier, our peace, our righteousness, our shepherd, our ever-present companion! He is known by His name. Yet the psalmist tells us there is one thing about God that is greater than His name. He writes, “You have magnified Your word above Your name” (Psalm 138:2). God can claim the names He has because He always speaks the truth. His reputation for who He is has never been questioned! His word is truth! What He reveals will come true! His word is to be honored even above His name.

Give Him glory! The Lord is great and greatly to be praised!

*Share in your gratitude... “Bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!”* (v. 29). We are to bring an offering and worship the Lord. God wants us to show gratitude to Him by supporting His work. God does not need support, but we need to show gratitude. One way of doing this
is giving an offering. You cannot separate offering from worship. The writer of Hebrews speaks of “the sacrifice of praise.” He writes: “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:15–16). What is the sacrifice of praise? It is speaking praise, doing good, and giving an offering by sharing in His ministry.

Be sharing in showing gratitude for God. The Lord is great and greatly to be praised!

Shudder at His greatness... “Tremble before Him, all the earth...” (v. 30). Our God is an awesome God and greatly to be feared! Fear is showing reverence for God. To fear Him is to recognize Him as the ultimate reality. To fear God is called “the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7). That is to say, to take God into account is the foundation of a disciplined and holy life (Proverbs 1:3; Psalm 36:1–4). To fear God is to reject every competing deity and to serve Him only (Deuteronomy 6:13). Fear of the Lord is expressed by walking in all His ways, by loving Him, and by serving Him with all our heart and soul (Deuteronomy 10:12; Job 1:1; Psalm 128:1).

While fear of God is closely linked to morality and to obedience of God’s commands, it is also very liberating. To fear Him is to recognize Him as Creator and that His plans stand forever (Psalm 33:8–11). Thus those who fear the Lord can say with the psalmist: “We wait in hope for the LORD; He is our help and our shield. In Him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in His holy name. May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD, even as we put our hope in You” (Psalm 33:20–22).

Our God is an awesome God! Before Him the earth will tremble! May we fear Him that we will know Him better. The Lord is great and greatly to be praised!

The third stanza:

Be Assured by God (16:31–36)

Be assured by His position... “Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; and let them say among the nations ‘The LORD reigns.’ Let the sea roar,... let the field rejoice.... Then the trees of the woods shall rejoice before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth” (vss. 31–33). The day is coming when Jesus Christ
will rule and reign on this earth. He will be King and Judge over the whole earth! When He does all the earth will rejoice.

God made promises to His creation. He has promised to remove the curse which He placed on the earth due to the sin of man. He has promised to deliver all creation from the bondage of decay (Romans 8:18–23); to restore the earth to its original beauty with lush vegetation like the Garden of Eden before the Fall (Ezekiel 36:35; Isaiah 30:23–26; Amos 9:13–14).

The curse on man will be partially lifted as he will have long life. At age 100 he is still a child and during Christ’s earthly reign he is given all that time before death to come to recognize Jesus as His Messiah-Savior and thus have eternal life (Isaiah 65:20). During Christ’s earthly reign man will be reconciled to nature and nature will be reconciled to man. The wolf will dwell with the lamb because the wolf will no longer be carnivorous. The nursing child will play with the cobra because the cobra will no longer be poisonous (Isaiah 11:8). The carnivorous animals will be herbivorous (Isaiah 11:6–7) and the deadly animals will cease to be poisonous (Isaiah 11:8–9).

Jesus is the Lord who will reign over the earth. “Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad.” Thank Him. The Lord is great and greatly to be praised!

*Be assured by His prudence...* “...He is coming to judge the earth” (v. 33b). James makes it clear, “There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and destroy...” (James 4:12). That judge is Jesus for the Father “has entrusted all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22). He will judge at His coming and He will judge justly. The psalmist wrote, “For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteous and the peoples with His truth” (Psalm 96:13). Righteousness and truth are the standards by which He will judge. Thank God for His wisdom to judge in righteousness and in truth. The Lord is great and greatly to be praised!

*Be assured by His protection...* “Oh, give thanks to the LORD for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. And say, ‘Save us, O God of our salvation; gather us together and deliver us from the Gentiles, to give thanks to Your holy name, to triumph in Your praise’” (vss. 34–35). The cry of David is that God will protect Israel from all her enemies. He promised to do just that. The prophet Zechariah said how God is “a wall of fire all around her” (Zechariah 2:5). God said through Isaiah the prophet, “But now, thus says the LORD, who created you O Jacob, and who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by
your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, the holy One of Israel, your Savior...” (Isaiah 43:1–3a). The greatest miracle of the past 2000 years has been the survival of the Jew. They have been as Zechariah said “a brand plucked from the fire” (Zechariah 3:2b). One of the greatest evidences for the existence of God is the survival of the Jewish people. He has been their refuge and shelter in times of need.

What is true of the Jew is true of God’s people, the church. Jesus said: “This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day” (John 6:39). Peter wrote: “We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5). Thank Him for His keeping power and watchful care over us. The Lord is great and greatly to be praised!

*Be assured by His presence...* “‘Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting!’ And all the people said ‘Amen!’ and praised the LORD” (v. 36). Our God is eternal. No one created Him. He had neither a mother or a father. No one was before Him. No one will come after Him. There was never a time He was not and there will never be a time He will not be.

Our God existed before time (Genesis 1:1). To say He existed before time is to say He is not controlled by time. Time implies limitations. There is a beginning and an end to time. Time was established for man. Time moves on and determines age. But since God exists outside of time, He has no age. He is the same today, yesterday and forever. God cannot count birthdays because He is without beginning and without end!

Our God exists in all time at the same time. Isaiah writes, “For thus says the High and Lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy” (Isaiah 57:15a). That is to say, God dwells in the past, while dwelling in the present, while dwelling in the future. He occupies all eternity, even history yet to become history.

Our God exists outside of time and is not controlled by it. As Peter wrote: “…with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8b). The psalmist said, “For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night” (Psalm 90:4).
It is because time does not exist with God and because He dwells outside of time that He can know everything time will bring. That makes God an omniscient God, an all-knowing God. That is why we can praise God and thank Him for His loving care and His continual presence with us. It was Moses who wrote: “The eternal God is a dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deuteronomy 33:27a).

What a tribute to God as given in this psalm of David when the Ark of the Covenant found its resting place in the tabernacle inside the city of Jerusalem. Thank God that He is the eternal God who lives from everlasting to everlasting! The Lord is great and greatly to be praised!

**Be Affirming God’s Plan for Your Life (16:37 to 17:1–17)**

*By worshipping God daily (16:37–43)*... Once the congregation shouted “Amen,” David left Asaph and his fellow musicians before the Ark where they were to minister every day before the Lord. This was not just Sabbath worship. They were “to minister before the ark regularly, as every day’s work required” (16:37). This was so of Obed-Edom and his 86 gatekeepers and Zadok the priest and his brethren who were on duty for the daily sacrifices. This was so of Heman and Jeduthun and the rest who were chosen to give thanks to the Lord “because His mercy endures forever.” Once all this was set up, “Then all the people departed, every man to His house, and David returned to bless his house” (16:43).

The point is a simple one: Do you have a daily time to worship God and thank Him because “His mercy endures forever?”

*By willing to accept God’s purpose for your life even if it is different than you first thought (17:1–16)*... After David went home to bless his house, he was visited by Nathan the prophet. He told David, “Do all that is in your heart, for God is with you.” David’s heart was to build the temple. After Nathan left, the Lord appeared to Nathan in a dream saying, “Go tell My servant David, “Thus says the LORD: ‘You shall not build Me a house to live in.”’ Nathan returned to David’s house with this disappointing news. Nathan continued saying God has not dwelt in a house since the time He brought up Israel. He has moved from tent to tent and He never asked the people, “Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?”

Perhaps it would have been good for David to find out whether God really wanted a temple, or a “house of cedar.”
Nathan then encouraged David by reminding him that God raised him up from the sheepfold to rule over His people. He has made his name great among all the people on earth. He subdued all his enemies. He established His people in the land. Only after he has died and gone to be with his father, will God raise up his seed after him and He will establish his kingdom.

Hear these words from God to David: “I will be His father and He shall be My son; and I will not take My mercy away from Him, as I took it away from him who was before you. And I will establish Him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and His throne shall be established forever” (17:13–14).

What son is he talking about? You might think it’s Solomon. Wrong! Solomon’s reign was but 40 years and ended in a divided kingdom. The Son who comes from the line of David is the Lord Jesus Christ. He will establish an everlasting kingdom (1 Samuel 7:15–17; Luke 1:26) and build His own house (Zechariah 6:12). When Christ comes to rule and reign during the Millennium there will be a temple that He Himself will build (Ezekiel 40–48). Remember He was a carpenter and He is God! He needs no help.

What at first must have been disappointing to David was well accepted by him. After Nathan left David went in before the Lord and humbly prayed: “Who am I, O LORD God? And what is my house that You have brought me this far?” (17:16).

David could not build the temple, but He was honored to be a seed through whom the Messiah would come and establish His everlasting Kingdom. Sometimes God has much bigger plans for us then we have for God. Let’s give Him thanks. The Lord is great and greatly to be praised! Amen!