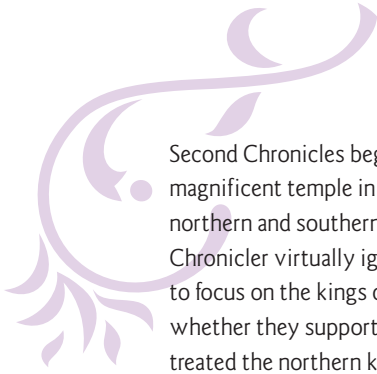


2 Chronicles



Second Chronicles begins by focusing on Solomon's work of building a magnificent temple in Jerusalem. After describing Israel's division into northern and southern kingdoms following the death of Solomon, the Chronicler virtually ignores the history of the northern kings in order to focus on the kings of Judah, judging the merit of their reigns only by whether they supported the temple and its worship. By so doing, he treated the northern kingdom of Israel as schismatic and emphasized the importance of the Davidic line, ruling from Judah, with Jerusalem as the center of worship for all Jews.

The last chapter quickly describes the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of Solomon's temple, and the exile of the Jews to Babylon and then ends with Cyrus, the king of Persia, making provision for the Jews to return to Jerusalem (538 B.C.) in order to rebuild the temple that was destroyed.

Centuries later, we are reminded that the liturgy of worship, so painstakingly described in Chronicles, foreshadowed the liturgy of the Eucharist that is the heart of our worship today.

Solomon Requests Wisdom

1 Solomon son of David established himself in his kingdom; the LORD his God was with him and made him exceedingly great.

2 Solomon summoned all Israel, the commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds, the judges, and all the leaders of all Israel, the heads of families. **3**Then Solomon, and the whole assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for God's tent of meeting, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness, was there. **4**(But David had brought the ark of God up from Kiriath-jearim to the place that David had pre-

pared for it; for he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem.) **5**Moreover the bronze altar that Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, had made, was there in front of the tabernacle of the LORD. And Solomon and the assembly inquired at it. **6**Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the LORD, which was at the tent of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

7 That night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, "Ask what I should give you." **8**Solomon said to God, "You have shown great and steadfast love to my father David, and have made me succeed him as king. **9**O LORD God, let your promise to my father David now be fulfilled,

for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. ¹⁰Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of yours?" ¹¹God answered Solomon, "Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked for possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked for long life, but have asked for wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may rule my people over whom I have made you king, ¹²wisdom and knowledge are granted to you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honor, such as

none of the kings had who were before you, and none after you shall have the like." ¹³So Solomon came from^a the high place at Gibeon, from the tent of meeting, to Jerusalem. And he reigned over Israel.

*Solomon's Military
and Commercial Activity*

14 Solomon gathered together chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he stationed in the chariot cities

^a Gk Vg: Heb to

Gift of Wisdom

In the epistle of James (1:5) we are told to pray for wisdom. "If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you."

I had prayed for the gift of wisdom since I was seven years old, at the time of my confirmation, right through to that day, and I found I had no wisdom. So, I began consciously to pray for wisdom, still not understanding what it was.

One day, I was at work helping a patient prepare for her examination by the doctor. She was relating to me all her different problems. As we talked, I tried to point out to her certain things about her concerns. At the end of the conversation, when she was ready for the doctor, I said to her, "Okay. God bless you." And she said to me, "Thank you, Mrs. Bleasdel, for all the wisdom you have shared."

I said, "Wisdom? I don't know that I gave you any wisdom. In fact, I'm always praying for wisdom, but I am not sure that I have any." She said, "I would have you know that in the last twenty minutes when you spoke to me, all I heard was wisdom."

I left the room laughing, but perplexed. As I got outside the room, I said to the Lord, "Jesus, I've prayed so much for wisdom, and I don't know that I have it. But she said that all she heard was wisdom."

Immediately, in my spirit, I heard the Lord come right back:

"Wisdom? I am Wisdom! Wisdom is not something that you acquire and carry around on your back in a knapsack. No, I am the source of all wisdom, and when you are in me and I am in you, I release it to you moment by moment as you need it. I give you my wisdom so you may be able to deal with things wisely."

—BABSIE BLEASDELL

THURSDAY

Scripture Reading
for Today:
2 Chronicles 1:7–12



Verse for Today:
2 Chronicles 1:10



Rahab

Her Name Means “Storm,” “Arrogance,” “Broad,” or “Spacious”

Read Joshua 2.1–21; 6.17–25

Jericho may be the world’s oldest city. Established nearly six thousand years before Miriam and Moses completed their desert wanderings, its ancient ruins can be found just 17 miles northeast of Jerusalem. Gateway to Canaan, it was also the home of a prostitute named Rahab, whose house nestled snugly into its thick surrounding walls.

As well as entertaining locals, Rahab welcomed guests from various caravans whose routes crisscrossed Jericho. Men from all over the East brought news of a swarm of people encamped east of the Jordan River. Rahab heard marvelous stories about the exploits of their God: How he had dried up the Red Sea so they could escape their Egyptian slave masters; how he had trained and toughened the Israelites for 40 years in the desert.

Before long, two Israelite spies made their way to Rahab’s house, where she hid them beneath stalks of flax drying on the roof. Later, when she received a message from the king of Jericho, inquiring about the spies, Rahab lied in order to save them: “True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they came from. And when it was time to close the gate at dark, the men went out. Where the men went I do not know. Pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them” (2.4–5).

As soon as the king’s men left, she hurried to the roof, warning her guests: “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the

THE STORY OF A WOMAN



Her Character: *She was wise as well as clever. She saw judgment coming and was able to devise an escape plan for herself and her family. As soon as she heard what God had done for the Israelites, she cast her lot with his people, risking her life in an act of faith.*

Her Sorrow: *To see her own people destroyed and her city demolished.*

Her Joy: *That God had given her, a prostitute and a foreigner, the opportunity to know him and belong to his people.*



inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you . . . The LORD your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below. Now then, since I have dealt kindly with you, swear to me by the LORD that you in turn will deal kindly with my family. Give me a sign of good faith that you will spare my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death” (2.9, 11–13).

Quickly, the two men handed her a scarlet cord, instructing Rahab to tie it in the window on the side of the house built into the city wall. Their people, they promised, would see it and spare everyone inside. With that they slipped out the window and scrambled down the city walls.

Later, Rahab watched from her window as the Israelites gathered around the city. Her eyes followed the curious scene: Seven priests were carrying an ark, followed by thousands of men, and they all were marching around the city walls. The spectacle repeated itself for the next five days. Then, as the sun rose on the seventh day, she watched as they marched several times around Jericho. As they completed their seventh turn, Rahab heard the ram’s horn and a thunderous cry of voices. Suddenly the city walls collapsed. The invading army killed everyone inside, sparing only Rahab and her family.

A prostitute and a foreigner, Rahab is the only woman singled out by name and commended for her faith as part of the great cloud of witnesses mentioned in the book of Hebrews. Her own people destroyed, Rahab left everything behind and joined the Israelites, eventually becoming an ancestor of King David and one of Jesus’ ancestors as well.

Praying With Rahab

"I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you . . . The LORD your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below. Now then, since I have dealt kindly with you, swear to me by the LORD that you in turn will deal kindly with my family. Give me a sign of good faith that you will spare my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."—*Joshua 2.9, 11–13*



Praise God: *For giving women key roles in his plan of salvation.*

Offer Thanks: *That no one, including yourself, is beyond the reach of grace.*

Confess: *Your unwillingness to take risks in order to follow God.*

Ask God: *To increase your awe of him.*

Lift Your Heart

The scarlet cord that saved Rahab and her family reminds us of the red blood of Jesus, who still saves us today, and of Isaiah's words, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow" (Isaiah 1.18). This week, use a small red ribbon as a bookmark or tie a scarlet ribbon around the pot of a favorite plant to remind yourself of the vital importance of living by faith. Each time you notice your scarlet cord, let it remind you of the lengths Jesus went to in order to save you. Your life and the vitality of your relationship with God depend on faith.

Father, I praise you for the wonderful and unexpected ways you have acted in my life. Let the knowledge of your faithfulness increase my courage to take the risks that faith demands.

- 17 Have mercy, O Lord, on the people
called by your name,
on Israel, whom you have
named ^y your firstborn,
18 Have pity on the city of your
sanctuary,^z
Jerusalem, the place of your
dwelling.^a
19 Fill Zion with your majesty,^b
and your temple^c with your
glory.
20 Bear witness to those whom you
created in the beginning,
and fulfill the prophecies spoken
in your name.
21 Reward those who wait for you
and let your prophets be found
trustworthy.
22 Hear, O Lord, the prayer of your
servants, according to your
goodwill toward^d your
people,
and all who are on the earth will
know
that you are the Lord, the God of
the ages.

Concerning Discrimination

- 23 The stomach will take any food,
yet one food is better than
another.
24 As the palate tastes the kinds of
game,
so an intelligent mind detects false
words.
25 A perverse mind will cause grief,
but a person with experience will
pay him back.
26 A woman will accept any man as a
husband,
but one girl is preferable to
another.
27 A woman's beauty lights up a man's
face,
and there is nothing he desires
more.
28 If kindness and humility mark her
speech,
her husband is more fortunate
than other men.
29 He who acquires a wife gets his best
possession,^e
a helper fit for him and a pillar of
support.^f
30 Where there is no fence, the
property will be plundered;

and where there is no wife, a man
will become a fugitive and a
wanderer.^g

- 31 For who will trust a nimble robber
that skips from city to city?
So who will trust a man that has no
nest,
but lodges wherever night
overtakes him?

False Friends

- 37** Every friend says, "I too am a
friend";
but some friends are friends only
in name.
2 Is it not a sorrow like that for death
itself
when a dear friend turns into an
enemy?
3 O inclination to evil, why were you
formed
to cover the land with deceit?
4 Some companions rejoice in the
happiness of a friend,
but in time of trouble they are
against him.
5 Some companions help a friend for
their stomachs' sake,
yet in battle they will carry his
shield.
6 Do not forget a friend during the
battle,^h
and do not be unmindful of him
when you distribute your
spoils.ⁱ

Caution in Taking Advice

- 7 All counselors praise the counsel
they give,
but some give counsel in their
own interest.
8 Be wary of a counselor,
and learn first what is his interest,
for he will take thought for
himself.
He may cast the lot against you
and tell you, "Your way is good,"
and then stand aside to see what
happens to you.

^y Other ancient authorities read *you have likened to*

^z Or *on your holy city* ^a Heb: Gk *your rest*

^b Heb Syr: Gk *the celebration of your wondrous deeds*

^c Heb Syr: Gk *Lat people* ^d Heb: and two Gk

witnesses: Lat and most Gk witnesses read

according to the blessing of Aaron for ^e Heb: Gk

enters upon a possession ^f Heb: Gk *rest*

^g Heb: Gk *wander about and sigh* ^h Heb: Gk *in*

your heart ⁱ Heb: Gk *him in your wealth*

10 Do not consult the one who regards you with suspicion;
hide your intentions from those who are jealous of you.

11 Do not consult with a woman about her rival
or with a coward about war,
with a merchant about business
or with a buyer about selling,
with a miser about generosity^j
or with the merciless about kindness,
with an idler about any work
or with a seasonal laborer about completing his work,
with a lazy servant about a big task—
pay no attention to any advice they give.

12 But associate with a godly person whom you know to be a keeper of the commandments,
who is like-minded with yourself,
and who will grieve with you if you fail.

13 And heed^k the counsel of your own heart,
for no one is more faithful to you than it is.

14 For our own mind sometimes keeps us better informed
than seven sentinels sitting high on a watchtower.

15 But above all pray to the Most High that he may direct your way in truth.

^j Heb: Gk *gratitude*

^k Heb: Gk *establish*

THE
TRADITION

Spiritual Direction

*All counselors praise the counsel they give,
but some give counsel in their own interest.*

SIRACH 37.7

“Do you seriously wish to travel the road to devotion?” asks Saint Francis de Sales in his *Introduction to the Devout Life*. If so, then find a faithful friend who gives good spiritual counsel. “This is the most important of all words of advice.”

How many would-be disciples of Christ have lost their way to him because they followed their own misguided lights? How many more have given up any attempt at holiness because they grew discouraged and confused? How many have suffered the painful consequences of incompetent spiritual guides?

Saint Teresa of Avila, who appreciated some spiritual directors but suffered at the hands of others, always stressed the benefits of these holy friendships as aids to prayer—provided the guide was wise, prudent, and virtuous. She and the author of Sirach would have agreed about what type of person to

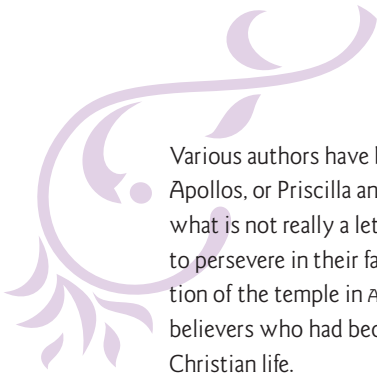
avoid: the naïve and inexperienced, the self-interested, the unmerciful, the irreligious. “Choose carefully!” they would advise us.

Catholics looking for spiritual direction usually begin by seeking out a priest or a lay person with formal training in the area. But the Holy Spirit gives the necessary gifts to other people too (see I Corinthians 12.4–11). Sometimes God leads one person to another, as with Saul and Ananias (Acts 9.10–19).

What do we do until the right guide turns up? Sirach has some words of advice here, too. Listen to your conscience, and “above all pray to the Most High that he may direct your way in truth” (37.13, 15). Especially, we might add, get to know the best Counselor of all, the Holy Spirit.

And of course, when you do find that wise and prudent friend, don’t hesitate. “Rise early to visit him,” Sirach urges, “let your foot wear out his doorstep” (6.36).

The Letter to the Hebrews



Various authors have been suggested for this book: Paul, Barnabas, Apollos, or Priscilla and Aquila. But it is impossible to tell who wrote what is not really a letter but a written sermon encouraging believers to persevere in their faith. Possibly it was written prior to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, and it may have been addressed to Jewish believers who had become wearied by their efforts to live the Christian life.

Whoever wrote Hebrews had an excellent command of Greek and thorough familiarity with the Old Testament. Hebrews reveals Jesus as the perfect high priest who, because he was also human, can sympathize with our weaknesses without himself succumbing to temptation. We are encouraged to persevere as he did and are also to look to the faithful men and women of the old covenant who suffered greatly because of their faith: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God" (12.1–2).

God Has Spoken by His Son

1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son,^a whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. ³He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains^b all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Maj-

esty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

The Son Is Superior to Angels

5 For to which of the angels did God ever say,

"You are my Son;
today I have begotten you"?

Or again,

^a Or *the Son* ^b Or *bears along*

"I will be his Father,
and he will be my Son"?

⁶And again, when he brings the firstborn
into the world, he says,

"Let all God's angels worship him."

⁷Of the angels he says,

"He makes his angels winds,
and his servants flames of fire."

⁸But of the Son he says,

"Your throne, O God, is^c forever
and ever,
and the righteous scepter is the
scepter of your^d kingdom.

⁹ You have loved righteousness and
hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has
anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond
your companions."

¹⁰And,

"In the beginning, Lord, you
founded the earth,

^c Or *God is your throne*
authorities read *his*

^d Other ancient

Raised Up Into Heaven

Angels are everywhere in the New Testament, signaling a closer rapport between heaven and earth, established by the coming of Jesus. In fact, the angels couldn't seem to stay away from the man from Nazareth. Like parentheses encircling a phrase, they were present at both the beginning and end of Jesus' earthly life.

Notably, the angels were present at his ascension. Few of us stop to consider the significance of Jesus' reentry into heaven, an event that is mentioned in the book of Acts and described elsewhere in the Bible. After the Resurrection, Jesus entered heaven as a victor. But that's not all there is to the story. By becoming human, Jesus was able to release us from the terrifying bondage of evil. Having done that, the King of the universe did not shed his human nature like a worn-out suit. Instead, he chose to reign forever as *both* God and man.

John Chrysostom touches on this amazing truth when he says that the angels looked on at the ascension because they wanted "to see the unheard of spectacle of man appearing in heaven." He goes on to say: "Today we are raised up into heaven, we who seemed even unworthy of earth. We are exalted above the heavens; we arrive at the kingly throne. Was it not enough to be elevated above the heavens? Was not such a glory beyond all expression? But [Christ] rose above the angels; he passed the cherubim; he went higher than the seraphim; he bypassed the thrones; he did not stop until he arrived at the very throne of God."

The heights to which Jesus has ascended and to which he invites us are dizzying. The angels look on with awe and so should we. Higher than the seraphim, more glorious than the cherubim, our God reigns!

—ANN SPANGLER

Go to page 1603 for your next devotional reading.

MONDAY

Scripture Reading
for Today:
Hebrews 11–14



Verses for Today:
Hebrews 1.3–4

