

# WHAT IF?

2 Chronicles 7:14

**INTRO** Find your place in God's Holy Word at 2 Chronicles chapter 7. II Chronicles is the 14th book of the Old Testament. If you have trouble finding it, it is preceded by 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, then 2 Chronicles. It is five books before the Psalms.

Today, I want us to look at verse 14. That's probably no big surprise. V 14 is one of the most familiar verses in all the Old Testament. In all the Bible! It has been a rallying cry for churches throughout the centuries. With that being said, there is the question of whether or not this verse should be used to spur the modern church toward revival or if it should be left in it's context of scripture. Is this verse for us today, or should it be left alone in the dark annals of history? Well, for those of you who know me, you know I am BIG on context! I am an expository preacher and I believe in the exegetical approach to studying God's Word. And I also believe, as the Word of God teaches, that we are to rightly divide the whole of scripture and draw from it the applicable truths that can challenge us in the day that we live. Not just a few passages or books of the NT, but the entire Bible.

The Bible tells us in **2 Timothy 3:16**, *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."* In the first century, when the NT writers referred to *"scripture"*, they were referring, almost exclusively, to the OT. It is all they had of scripture at the time, the NT was in process. So, when Paul tells young Timothy, *"All scripture is inspired by God and profitable"* He is including, of course, 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Now, let me share a word about context. When you study the Word of God, context is a must! But context is multifold. There is the immediate context, that is the verses surrounding a verse, before and after it. Then there's the larger context, what a verse means to the overall story of a chapter or book. There is the historical context, what a verse would have meant to the people and culture it was originally written to. Then there's the ultimate context, how the verse relates to the whole of scripture. These must all agree if we are to interpret a verse or passage correctly. That is certainly true of the verse we are about to read. But if we rightly divide well this verse and passage, I believe God will speak through it and challenge us today. For the title of my sermon I want to ask a question, "WHAT IF". Read with me...

**2 Chronicles 7:14** *"If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land."*

Notice...

**I) THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:** **v 14** *"If my people who are called by my name..."* This opening phrase is a very important qualifier to what the rest of the verse declares. And it starts by saying, "If MY PEOPLE" Now in the immediate context we know that this is speaking of the Israelites, God's chosen people. As a matter of fact, God is speaking to King Solomon. Solomon, and the children of Israel, had just completed the task of building the Temple of God, which King David, Solomon's father, had desired to build. In chapter 7 we have the dedication of the temple. It is the night after this dedication that God comes to Solomon and tells him, *"12 ...I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. 13 If I close the sky so there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send a plague among My people, 14 and if My people who are called by My name..."*

**I) THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:** v 14 CONTINUED Now, Solomon would have immediately recognized what God was speaking to, and so would have every Jew. God was reiterating the warning of Deuteronomy 28. God had entered into a covenant with Israel and promised to take care of them and cause them to prosper as long as they obeyed Him. But He also promised to bring curses upon them if they disobeyed. And this is exacted what God is saying again. After v 14 of our text we read in vv 19-20, *“But if you turn away and forsake the statutes and commandments I have set before you, and if you go off to serve and worship other gods, 20 then I will uproot Israel from the soil I have given them, and I will banish from My presence this temple I have sanctified for My Name.”*

NOW, how does this apply to us? Well, God did exactly what He said He would do. He uprooted the Jewish people, and He destroyed the temple using the enemies of Israel. But before that, He sent His only Son into the world. He sent Jesus to the Jewish people, the people of His heart. Jesus was born of a young Jewish girl, a virgin named Mary. The Bible then tells us in Luke 2:52 *“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”* But then we read the horrific account of John 1:11 that states, *“He (Jesus) came to His own, and His own (people) did not receive Him. 12 But to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God (people of God) 13 children born not of blood, nor of the desire or will of man, but born of God.”* NOW, because we have believed in Jesus Christ as our redeemer Savior, we ARE the Children of God! We are the people of God!

The question is WHAT IF, what if we started living our lives in ways that ACKNOWLEDGED God as our Father, that acknowledged that we are His children and honored Him with our lives? What if we lived in such a way that pleased Him? What do you think He would do for us?

Most Christians today want to live life on the fringe of Christianity, out on the edge, not too involved, not too absorbed. But WHAT IF God's people today took a strong stand and raised banner of Christ, what do you think God would do on our behalf? WHAT IF?

**II) THE AGREEMENT:** v 14 *“If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land.”*

When we humble ourselves before God and pray, we are agreeing with Him that He is who He claims to be (the Savior and Lord of all), and that we are who He says we are (Sinners in need of a Savior). When we disagree with God our stubborn pride rises up in us and all humility is lost.

WHAT IF we just agreed with God? What would happen? What would God do for a people who humbled themselves before Him and gave themselves fully over to God to do through them what He so desired? James 4:6-10 tells us what He will do, *“This is what scripture says: “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” 7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts... 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.”*

But before God can do anything in our lives we must AGREE with Him about who we are.

## I) THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: v 14

**II) THE AGREEMENT:** v 14 So we have seen the importance of ACKNOWLEDGING that we belong to God, and living our lives in such a way that honors Him. And we know now that we must have an AGREEMENT with God about who He is, and who we are, if we are to ever live humble lives before Him. NOW NOTICE...

**III) THE ACTION:** v 14 *"If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land."*

The words translated SEEK and TURN are action verbs. SEEK means to forsake all other things and make a priority. We have a picture of this in Luke 15:8 *"suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?"* Likewise, God's children are to SEEK God's face!

**ILLUS:** Have you guys ever watched little Ellie Jean when someone other than Taylor is holding her? She can be somewhat content with someone else carrying her around IF she can see her mother, if Taylor's in eyeshot. But if Ellie gets where she can't see her mom, she is going to let the whole world know! She seeks her mother's face! That's what we as Children of God should be doing.

Then the verse says we should TURN from our wicked ways. TURN means to repent! It's the Hebrew word, Shub (shoob), and it means to turn FROM our own way of thinking and our own desires, and to turn TO God. It's a surrendering of our stubborn will to the will of God. Acts 3:19 *"Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out,"*

WHAT IF we just lived our lives seeking God's face and leaning into (turning to) God? What difference would it make in our lives, our children's lives, our relationships, and in our walk with God? WHAT IF WHAT IF? Now notice the last thing...

**IV) THE ACCEPTANCE:** v 14 *"If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land."*

This was certainly a welcomed word for the Israelites of Solomon's day. And even to this day, God has something special in mind for His chosen people, the Jews. They are a covenant people. And God is still doing something amazing in the lives of the Israelites. BUT what about the rest of us? What about us that were grafted in, adopted in the beloved, is this promise good for us today? The Bible teaches that it is!

Acts 10:34-35 *"Then Peter began to speak: "I now truly understand that God does not show favoritism, 35 but welcomes those (ACCEPTS THOSE) from every nation who fear Him and do what is right."*

Do you remember the Ninevites? They were an awful people, and enemies of the Israelites. But God sent Jonah to preach to them. When the Ninevites heard the message the King said in Jonah 3:8-9, *"Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. 9 Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."* The king said WHO KNOWS? I say to you today, WHAT IF? What if we just do what this great verse says? Will God then do great and awesome things for us? I SAY LET'S FIND OUT! (PRESENT THE GOSPEL)