

2 CHRONICLES

WRITER

The books of 1 & 2 Chronicles as we have them today in our Bibles were originally one book. They were separated as two with the publication of the Septuagint (See introduction to 1 Chronicles).

DATE

Considering the statements of 36:22,23 we would conclude that the Chronicles were written sometime immediately before the first return of Jews to Palestine after the decree of Cyrus. This would date the book sometime after 536 B.C. and the arrival of the Jews in Jerusalem. Since many of the Jews who did return to rebuild the temple had never before been in Palestine, it would have been a necessary thing for the writer of the Chronicles to educate them concerning the history of Israel. And since the purpose of the first return of exiles was to reinstitute the altar sacrifices and rebuild the temple, then the theme of the Chronicles corresponds to the goal of the first returnees.

In reference to the dating of the reigning kings of Israel, it is sometimes difficult to assign the date for the beginning of their reigns. It is difficult because some kings began their reign in their youth while their fathers were still on the throne. Since adding the time of the reign of the kings end to end adds up to a duration of time that is too long for the time of history that would correspond with history of the world, then we would assume that the beginning of a king's reign often was coregent with his father's reign. Though the Kings and Chronicles do not mention the coregent reign of succeeding kings, we must assume that some of the kings began their reign while their fathers were still the sitting king.

BOOK

2 Chronicles covers a period of Israelite history that begins with the reign of Solomon and extends to the end of the Babylonian captivity by the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia. If we assign the beginning of the reign of Solomon to be around 971 B.C, and the signing of the decree of Cyrus to allow the first captives to return to Palestine to 536 B.C., then the period of time covered would be about 435 years of history that is covered by 2 Chronicles.

Both 1 & 2 Chronicles primarily focus on the religious apostasy of Judah and not the political drama that played itself out with the ascension of kings to the throne of Judah. Most of 2 Chronicles records efforts by noble kings to restore Judah from

her persistent fall from the will of God (Asa - ch 15, Jehoshaphat - ch 20, Joash - chs 23,24, Hezekiah - chs 29-31, Josiah - ch 35). The book begins with the glory of Israel during the reign of Solomon, but it ends with an apostate Judah going into Babylonian captivity. One might say that 2 Chronicles is a story of the tragedy of a nation that left the Father of her birth.

Since there is a great deal of emphasis on the building of the temple and its splendor, the writer seems to assume that we, the readers, will conclude that all the wealth and power of the nation did not prevent Israel, and specifically Judah, from going into apostasy. A subplot of the history of 2 Chronicles was that God sought to preserve His people in the land for as long as possible. He thus allowed the people to centralize government in Jerusalem of Judea. By allowing the building of the temple in Jerusalem, He sanctioned Jerusalem as the location for the annual place of sacrifices. Though He allowed such to be done by the kings and the people, these moves eventually encouraged the division of the twelve tribes. The division of the twelve tribes expedited the apostasy of the northern kingdom under the initial leadership of Jeroboam who built altars in Bethel and Dan. Later kings of the north discouraged the northern residents from going to Jerusalem for the annual sacrifices, which journey would have encouraged loyalty to the king of Judah and to the teaching of the Levites. Regardless of the unfortunate results of bad choices on the part of the people, God still remained with the two kingdoms in order to salvage from them a cleansed remnant that would eventually be restored to the land after the captivities.

The northern kingdom went into captivity in 722/21 B.C. Therefore, the inspired historian who wrote the Chronicles focused on the history of Judah as the remnant in the land that would carry the torch of the seedline promise that was made to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). It was Judah that carried on with the remnant of the faithful until the Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C. Once Judah had gone into captivity, then God's punishment of His people for their apostasy had been completed. It was then time to await the fulfillment of the prophecies of the return of the remnant from captivity. With that note the writer of 2 Chronicles leaves the readers at the conclusion of Israel's history. Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther take the story from the decree of Cyrus who allowed the remnant to return to the land of promise.

Reign Of King Solomon

(1:1 – 9:31)

Outline: (1) Solomon establishes his reign (1:1-17), (2) Solomon plans to build the temple (2:1-18), (3) Solomon builds the temple (3:1 – 5:2), (4) Placement of the

ark (5:3-14), (5) Solomon addresses the people (6:1-42), (6) God accepts Solomon's offering (7:1-3), (7) Feast of dedication (7:4-11), (8) Message of blessing and warning (7:12-22), (9) Solomon's achievements (8:1-18), (10) The queen of

Sheba (9:1-12), (11) Solomon's splendor (9:13-28), (12) Solomon's death (9:29-31)

Chapter 1 SOLOMON

ESTABLISHES HIS REIGN

1:1-6 (1 Kg 1:1 – 11:43) In the early part of his reign, Solomon truly reigned with splendor. However, by the end of his reign it was a different story. His reign ended with a king who had gone after the gods of his many wives. The totality of the reign of Solomon was a picture of the history of Israel from the time of the first kings to the time of the captivities. Israel started with grandeur, but ended in apostasy to other gods. The record of the Chronicles omits Adonijah's revolt (1 Kg 1,2) and his idolatry (1 Kg 11:1-40). Solomon's marriage to foreign women certainly influenced his behavior, and thus led to his fall as a leader. He was not a spiritual leader as his father, David. At first Solomon sought to link the nature of his reign with that of his father, David, by seeking the Lord through offerings. But once he married foreign women, this changed by the end of his reign after he had been influenced by the idolatry of his wives. **Tabernacle ... high place:** By the time of Solomon's reign the people had already associated "high places" with locations to which one would go to worship through the offering of sacrifices. As Israel went into apostasy, they retained these locations of worship. However, they brought idolatrous practices into their worship on the high places. The high places, therefore, became a symbol throughout the record

of the Kings and Chronicles of the apostasy of Israel. **Moses ... made in the wilderness:** This would not have been the exact tabernacle that Moses constructed at the foot of Mt. Sinai. It had been over 400 years since the original tent was made. God had given detailed instructions on how the tabernacle was to be built. He did this for a specific reason. Throughout the 400 years the tabernacle was rebuilt when the canvas wore away. The normal life of the canvas of those days would not have been over ten to fifteen years in the sun. Nevertheless, God expected Israel to rebuild the tabernacle continually through their history.

1:7-12 (1 Kg 3:5-15) David had prayed that Solomon reign with wisdom and understanding (1 Ch 29:10-20). This may have been the stimulus for Solomon to ask God for the same. **I will give you riches:** These riches did not come as a result of Solomon's obedience to the will of God. In fact, Solomon digressed in his life from the moral principles of God through marriages to foreign women who encouraged him to honor idol gods. God's blessing with riches, therefore, must have been for another reason. The reason may have been that God wanted to bring Israel to a climax of power and wealth in order to give a lesson of what sin in the lives of the leaders and people would eventually do to the nation. We must keep in mind that it was during the reign of Rehoboam, Solomon's son, that Shishak came up from Egypt and took away all the wealth that Solomon had accumulated throughout his reign. Solomon spent a lifetime accumulating

wealth, but it was all gone within five years after his death.

1:13-17 (1 Kg 10:26-29; see 2 Ch 9:13-28) *Silver and gold ... plentiful as stones:* This was certainly a vivid description that explained the amount of silver and gold that was amassed by both David and Solomon. However, it seems that Solomon failed to read and obey Deuteronomy 17:14-20. What Solomon did during his reign in reference to wives and wealth was a direct violation of the will of God. For this reason we conclude that Solomon was not blessed by God because of his righteousness. He simply gained the wealth because of his wisdom that was given to him by God.

Chapter 2

SOLOMON PLANS

TO BUILD THE TEMPLE

2:1-10 (1 Kg 5:1-18) *Huram:* Or, Hiram. He was the son of a Danite woman who was married to a man of Tyre. Before Solomon sought the help of King Hiram, he assessed how many skillful men he had in Israel who could do the job of building the temple. Knowing that Israel was primarily a farming culture, the assessing of his own skilled workers was necessary in order to make sure that what he planned and started could be designed and completed by local talent. ***Great is our God above all gods:*** Since it was believed in those days that the splendor of a kingdom was manifested by the splendor of the temple of the nation, Solomon wanted to declare to all travelers who passed through Palestine that his God was greater than all

other gods. In the competition between the nations of those times, the greatness and strength of a nation was determined by the greatness and strength of the local god. We would thus question Solomon's motives for building the temple. There was more behind the elaborate structure than simply a structure to honor God. In the competition of deities among the nations, Solomon wanted to guarantee that his God won the prize. ***The heavens ... cannot contain Him:*** When the tabernacle was constructed at the foot of Mt. Sinai, it was to be only a symbol of the presence of God among His people. Solomon was correct in saying that no building could ever contain the one true and living God. The temple was to be built, not to contain God, but to be a manifestation of His presence among His people. When the final building was completed, it measured about 45 feet (14 meters) by 120 feet (37 meters). It was actually a small structure. ***Only to burn sacrifices:*** The temple was not a place of assembly, but only a place to which sacrifices were brought and offered. ***My servants will be with your servants:*** The Israelites worked with Gentiles – those of Hiram's kingdom – in order to build the temple.

2:11-18 *Huram-abi:* This could be translated "Huram, my Father's," "Huram, my master craftsman," or "Huram, my trusted counselor." It is worthy to note that the laborers who built the temple were composed of Israelites, with some Canaanites who came from King Hiram. It is for this reason that many believe the design of the structure was after the design of many of the

Canaanite temples that were contemporary with the reign of Solomon.

Chapter 3 SOLOMON BUILDS THE TEMPLE

3:1-7 (1 Kg 6:1-38) *Mount Moriah:*

This was Ornan's threshing floor (1 Ch 21:18; Gn 22:2). Jerusalem was located on Mt. Moriah and Mt. Zion. The temple was constructed on Moriah, but the city was built on Zion. **Cubit:** It is difficult to determine the length of a cubit. Most Bible students have used 18 inches as the length of a cubit, though this can be disputed.

3:8-14 *Cherubim:* The symbolism of the cherubim was protection. They were located above the ark in order to symbolize God's protection of the covenant (See Ex 25:20). **Veil:** See Ex 26:31.

3:15-17 *Two pillars:* See 1 Kg 7:15; 2 Kg 25:17; Jr 52:21. The difference in the pillars' heights between this account and that given in the Kings is clarified by the fact that the Hebrew wording in the texts can be easily confused, and thus a variant reading exists here in different Hebrew texts. **Jachin:** Meaning, "He will establish." **Boaz:** Meaning, "In it is strength" (See comments 1 Kg 3:17). **Pomegranates:** This often mentioned tree and its fruit from which articles for religious ceremonies were designed was used in the hanging gardens of Babylon. Though the tree was small in size, its fruit was very refreshing (See 1 Sm 14:2). An archaeological discovery has been made in Jerusalem of a small figure designed

after the shape of the pomegranate fruit. It is believed by some that this figure was one of the ornate pomegranates used in the temple (1 Kg 7:18,20; Ex 28:31,33,34). Articles formed after the shape of the pomegranate fruit were used to symbolize the fertility of the promised land (Nm 13:23; Dt 8:3).

Chapter 4

4:1-10 (1 Kg 7:15-51) *Altar of bronze:* See 1 Kg 7:23-50 (Ez 43:13-17). **Molten sea:** See 1 Kg 7:23-29. **Ten lavers:** These were for the washing (cleansing) of the priests during and after the sacrifices. **Candlesticks:** Or, lampstands. **Tables:** These were for the showbread. **Courts:** There were two courts. One was exclusively used by the priests, whereas the outer court was larger and for other people than the priests (1 Kg 6:36; 7:12).

4:11-22 (1 Kg 7:40-47) The detail that is given in reference to all that Solomon did to build the temple was to remind the initial readers what was later destroyed by Babylon because of the sin of Israel. Keeping in mind that the Chronicles was written sometime after the return of Israel from Babylonian captivity in 536 B.C., the initial readers needed to understand that the apostasy of Israel resulted in the destruction of the great temple that Solomon built. Never again in history would such an elaborate temple be built by Israel, for never again would Israel be able to accumulate such great amounts of silver and gold. From the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C. by Nebuchad-

nezzar, the land of Palestine was plundered of all its wealth by the nations that occupied the region until the coming of Jesus. The temple of Solomon was a manifestation of the pinnacle of the greatness of the kingdom of Israel. Sin took the nation down from that time unto this present day. The temple was rebuilt when the remnant returned from Babylonian captivity, but not with the grandeur of bronze, silver and gold with which Solomon had built it (Er 3:12). Another temple was built during the reign of Herod the Great, but again, not with all the bronze, silver and gold that Solomon used in the building of the first temple.

Chapter 5

5:1 This verse concludes the narrative concerning the construction of the temple. From verse 2 to the end of chapter 7, the ark is brought into the holy place, the temple is dedicated, sacrifices are made, and God sanctifies the temple.

PLACEMENT OF THE ARK

5:2-14 (1 Kg 8:1-21) In the seventh month of the year, Tishri, the feast of dedication coincided with the feast of tabernacles. It was during these feasts that the ark was brought to Jerusalem in order to be placed in the sanctuary of the temple. At this time in history, the ark contained only the two tablets of stone on which was written the ten commandments of the law. Aaron's rod that budded and the pot of manna were missing. ***There it is to this day:*** This would be the time when the writer of Chronicles inscribed these words. Since the Baby-

lonian captivity took place in 586 B.C., at which time Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple and took its artifacts to Babylon, we might assume that the writing of Chronicles took place before 586 B.C. If so, then the last verses of Chronicles concerning the decree of Cyrus would possibly be a prophecy, or more likely, a footnote addition by someone who lived at the end of the Babylonian captivity. Since there is no mention of the ark after the Babylonian captivity, we assume that it was either destroyed at the time Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C. or lost in Babylonia (See Dt 10:2-5; 1 Kg 8:8,9; Hb 9:4). Some have suggested that the ark was taken to Egypt by those who fled Judah immediately before the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C. However, we must not discount the assumption that Nebuchadnezzar took the ark, with the rest of the temple articles, to Babylon and placed them in the temple of Babylon. If this is true, then the ark was there when the Chronicles were written after Cyrus gave the decree for the rebuilding of the temple. ***The house was filled with a cloud:*** This was God's signal that he accommodated, and thus approved of the proceedings, the temple, and the placement of the ark in the temple (See Ex 16:10; 24:16; 40:34; Nm 9:15; 1 Kg 8:10,11). All that had transpired to this time in the history of Israel was in view of God's foreknowledge of the fact that Israel was headed for apostasy. He knew that under the leadership of Jeroboam the northern ten tribes would speedily go into apostasy after the division of the kingdom during the reign of Rehoboam. He

knew that Jeroboam would set up altars in Bethel and Dan. He knew that the sins of Jeroboam would eventually lead the northern kingdom into Assyrian captivity. For this reason, therefore, God sanctioned the temple in order to be the final resting place of the ark of the covenant until the southern kingdom followed the same path of her sister to the north. Instead of the ark being moved among the territories of the tribes, God allowed it to become stationed in Jerusalem until the final blow came from the Babylonians for the apostasy of Israel. The Bible historian must continually remind himself that God allowed the Israelites the freedom to make choices, which choices would eventually lead to their end. He accommodated their choices, as the building of the temple and the desire for a king, that were not sinful, but were unwise. At the end of their history when they reaped the consequences of their wrong choices, He reminded them that their unfortunate end was the result of their own choosing. What was sinful was their rejecting of Him and His word. They had chosen to ignore His word and His settlement plan in the land of promise, and thus they were held accountable for their own demise (See comments Hs 4:6). God will allow us to walk on the path of our unwise choices, but in the end He will allow us also to reap the consequences of our unwise choices.

sen Jerusalem: The building of the temple was initially David's choice, but later sanctioned by God. It was an unwise choice that was accommodated by God in order to preserve the last remnant of Israel until they eventually went into captivity. And thus, because of His approval to allow the centralization of the government around one city and a king, God stated that it was His choice. It was not God's original plan to have a king over Israel. But once the people chose to have a king, then the king was God's choice. David was God's choice, and now Solomon was the choice of God. In this case of God's providence to preserve a portion of society for the coming of the Messiah, God allowed the people to make choices which He later approved and used in order to continue with His original choice of people. His approval of man's choices meant that it was His choice, as long as the choice was according to His scheme to use Israel to bring the Messiah and Savior into the world. But we must not forget that the wishes of the people were often unwise. We must also not forget that God's scheme was to preserve a portion of world society in order to continue the seedline promise to mankind that was initially made in Genesis 3:15. At one time, Satan's attack against the seedline of woman took all the world into apostasy, except for eight faithful souls who entered Noah's ark. The world always morally digresses, and thus to preserve the seedline promise that was given in Genesis 3:15, and restated to Abraham and his seed in Genesis 12:1-3, God chose

Chapter 6
SOLOMON ADDRESSES
THE PEOPLE
6:1-11 (1 Kg 8:22-53) *I have cho-*

one nation of the world that would come from Abraham's seed. At the time in history when Solomon reigned, God knew that the majority of this nation was following the course of moral degradation. Therefore, the centralization of the nation and faith around Jerusalem and the temple was a last resort to maintain Judah as long as possible until the Babylonian captivity.

6:12-21 *Bronze platform:* This is the same Hebrew word for scaffold. This was a structure that was located in front of the bronze altar on which Solomon stood in order to address the people (1 Kg 8:54). ***How much less this house that I have built:*** Contrary to the beliefs of the nations around Israel, Solomon knew that no physical structure on earth would house God who is beyond the definition of our words. The temple, as the tabernacle before it, was only a symbol of the presence of God. ***When they pray toward this place:*** When Mohammed developed the theology of Islam, he took from this context his concept to pray toward Mecca, instead of Jerusalem. As Solomon asked the people pray toward Jerusalem and the temple, Mohammed asked his people to pray toward Mecca. Mohammed's purpose was to turn the thinking of the Arabs from Jerusalem and Judaism to the place of the origin of Islam. In Solomon's words there was a sense of nationalism that was imposed on the Israelites by these words. We must keep in mind when reading this prayer, that the prayer was from Solomon. Its contents were written by inspiration, though we would assume that the origi-

nal prayer itself was not inspired. It was as if Solomon himself understood that the construction of the temple marginalized the tribes to the north. He thus invoked loyalty to the place, to Jerusalem and the temple. What actually transpired was that within about five years after his death, and under the leadership of Jeroboam, the northern tribes would pull away from Judah, Jerusalem and the temple. They would then sanction their own capitals and altars for worship. God knew that this would happen, and thus prepared Jeroboam to lead the northern ten tribes, though He did not want the altars of Bethel and Dan to be built. One might question that if God knew that the division of the kingdom would happen as a result of the centralization of kingship, government and faith in Jerusalem, then why did He allow it to happen? The answer is that God will allow us to follow after our own misguided ways in order that we might learn from our past. If Israel would not follow the law of God as He originally intended, then He would take only a remnant of the faithful after the Babylonian captivity in order to bring them to the birth of the Messiah and Savior of the world. We must keep in mind that throughout God's work with Israel, He always focused on the faithful remnant, not the entire nation of the twelve tribes. From a historical sense, and in the foreknowledge of God, the promised land, the nation of twelve tribes, the kings, Jerusalem and the temple, were all for the purpose of producing a faithful remnant of Israel in order to be the background upon which the Savior of the

world would be born. Though this theme is not so clear in the histories of the Kings and Chronicles, it is very clear in the prophets who spoke of the faithful remnant that would come back into the promised land after the Babylonian captivity. ***There will not fail you a man in My sight to sit on the throne of Israel:*** God promised David that from his descendants kings would sit on the throne of Israel. Only those of the house of David, therefore, were rightful heirs to be kings in Israel. Within this promise is a prophecy of Jesus who was of the lineage of David and is now sitting on the throne of David (See At 2:30-35). He is sitting on the throne in heaven where the source of authority of the throne of David has always been.

6:22,23 (1 Kg 8:31-46) Contrary to the original law of swearing an oath before witnesses, an oath that would be made before the altar would also bring justice. The swearing of an oath was an act of one bringing himself into compliance with a law that he made for himself. ***In this house:*** If sin by the nation led to defeat before the enemies of Israel, then Solomon asked God to forgive the sin if confession was made in the temple. If some other dire consequence for their sin beset the nation, Solomon asked that the condition for answered prayer be one's presence in the temple. This condition certainly marginalized the tribal groups to the far north. We must keep in mind that the prayer of Solomon was not inspired in its content, only its recording in the Scriptures. We could assume, therefore, that Solomon was

placing a condition on Israel for forgiveness that was not placed on the nation by God. At least in the law there was no condition for forgiveness of the people that was based on being "in the house of the Lord" in Jerusalem. God's forgiveness was never based on one being in a specific location, or facing a particular direction at the time of confession. These were new concepts that were introduced by Solomon, which at the time, seemed to be loaded with Judean nationalism, or the influence of the false religions of the nations around Israel. It may have been that even at this time in the life of Solomon he was being influenced by the false theologies of the nations around Judah. At least what he was asking in this prayer of dedication was not a part of the law. Nowhere in the law is one restricted to either a direction or posture in prayer or a specific location in which one must be in order to have one's prayer answered.

6:24-27 *If... defeated:* If the defeat were the punishment of God for some sin, then Solomon asked that repentance be the condition for their victory over their enemies. ***When the heavens are shut up:*** If drought came as a result of sin, then repentance would be necessary for the restoration of rain (See 1 Kg 17:1).

6:28-31 *If there is famine:* Eight calamities are given that can come as a result of national sin. God used such calamities in order to turn the people's minds to Him. Since the calamities would come over a period of time, then their repentance had to be manifested over a period of time. A simple prayer

of confession would not do. They had to prove their repentance by an obedient life.

6:32,33 The land of Palestine was the central trading route between the countries to the north of Palestine and eastern Africa. There were thus many traders (foreigners) who passed through Palestine. Solomon's prayer was that these foreigners witness the glory of God in Israel, and thus propagate what they experienced throughout the nations where they traded.

6:34,35 The condition for victory is if the people go to war according to the command of God.

6:36-40 *They carry them away captives:* Within the teachings of the law there was the consequence of national captivity. Reference was thus to a national apostasy, for the captivity was in reference to the nation of Israel paying the price for their culture of sin. Though individuals commit sin (see Lv 5:1; 1 Sm 2:25), emphasis in this text would be to a culture of sin that would be considered a national apostasy. Captivity as a nation would come only when the culture of the people became sinful against the word of God.

6:41,42 *Clothed with salvation:* The conduct of the religious leaders must be according to the righteousness of God. The priests were not only to be dressed properly, but they also were to be clothed in moral behavior.

7:1-3 *The glory of the Lord filled the house:* This was God's signal that He accepted the offering that was made. This event was similar to the revelation of God's glory at Mt. Sinai. On that occasion God signaled the beginning of a new era, which era lasted over 400 years unto the time of this inauguration of the temple. The glorious outpouring of the glory of God on this occasion would be the beginning of another era that would end in captivity.

FEAST OF DEDICATION

7:4-11 (1 Kg 8:62-66) Since there was no specific sin for which sin or trespass offerings were to be given, the offerings during this event centered around the burnt and peace offerings. The peace offerings were made in reference to bringing parties together during a fellowship meal. Since the completion of the temple was an opportunity and occasion to bring the people together, it was the perfect occasion for the fellowship meals that resulted from the offering of animals for the peace offering. *All Israel:* Israelites from the far north in Hamath to the river that was the border between Israel and Egypt were present at this dedication. At least during this time in the history of Israel the tribes were united. It would be the last time they would be united to this extent. They would eventually digress to the point of conducting wars against one another.

Chapter 7 GOD ACCEPTS SOLOMON'S OFFERING

MESSAGE OF BLESSING & WARNING 7:12-22 (1 Kg 9:1-9) *If My people:*

God placed conditions on answered prayer. The conditions involved not only change in attitude, but also in action. In order for God to answer their prayers, they were to humble themselves before Him. This meant that they were to be obedient to His will. Therefore, if we would have God answer our prayers, there must be humility and obedience to the word of God. Our sincerity is determined by our humility and our obedience (1 Jn 1:7).

Chapter 8

SOLOMON'S ACHIEVEMENTS

8:1-18 (1 Kg 9:10-28) The content of verses 13-18 is here added to the information that is given in 1 Kings. The information that is given here was to highlight the grandeur of the reign of Solomon, and the economic strength of Israel at this time in Israel's history. No other kingdom of the world at this time in history could surpass the wealth of Israel. Solomon's network of trade and tribute brought a great deal of wealth into the kingdom treasuries. Add to this the fact that the stretch of land that was given to Israel was the trade route between nations to the north of Palestine and all of eastern Africa. Custom taxes of traders also added to the treasury of Solomon. In order to establish the borders of the territory of Israel, and secure the trade routes, Solomon constructed many cities, specifically fortified cities where he stationed his army. The taxation of the Israelite people and traders, with the tribute from subjugated kingdoms, necessitated the building of storage cities for the

wealth that came into the coffers of Solomon. **Forced labor:** Solomon used the remnant of the Canaanites as slaves for the kingdom of Israel. When employed personnel were needed, the Israelites were used. **Daughter of Pharaoh:** Solomon's marriage to an Egyptian, though possibly done for political reasons, was against the law of God. She was moved out of the temple area because she continued to honor the gods of Egypt. Why Solomon did not convert her to the only God before he took her as his wife, we are not told. It seems that Solomon was more interested in an economic alliance with Egypt than the preservation of the faith of Israel. **According to the order of David:** Though David was not allowed to build the temple, he went as far in the construction as he could, and yet be obedient to the will of God that excluded him from the actual construction. He provided most of the materials that were to be used in the construction. And, he provided the organization of the priests and Levites in their services with reference to the ceremonies that pertained to the temple. **Ezion Geber:** This key city was first mentioned in reference to the wilderness wanderings of Israel (Nm 33:35,36; Dt 2:8). The city was located near Elath on the Red Sea, or Gulf of Aqaba in the land of Edom. During the reign of Solomon, it was developed into a major seaport. **Knowledge of the sea:** The people of Hiram's kingdom were very knowledgeable of the sea. The Israelites, however, were a farming culture of people. In the construction of the ships, it was only natural that Hiram's

men construct the ships and provide guidance in sailing the seas for Solomon (1 Kg 9:26-28).

Chapter 9

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

9:1-12 (1 Kg 10:1-25; 11:41-43)

The kingdom of Sheba is believed to have been in the area of modern-day Ethiopia. Since archaeological discoveries in reference to Judaism in northern Ethiopia date back to the time of Solomon, no one seriously challenges the claim that Solomon had a great impact on the queen of Sheba. We could assume that when the queen returned from visiting Solomon, she brought with her not only the gifts of Solomon, but also his religious beliefs. The queen was thoroughly impressed with the grandeur of Solomon's kingdom and all that he had accomplished by his skillful administration. We would conclude, therefore, that she returned with all she could in order to influence the future of her own people in a manner that Solomon had influenced the Israelites.

SOLOMON'S SPLENDOR

9:13-28 This context concludes the assessment of the writer concerning the achievements of Solomon. What is interesting are the negative things in reference to Solomon and his kingdom that are not mentioned in the record of the Chronicles, but are mentioned in the Kings. Nothing is said of the apostasy of the nation under the reign of Solomon. Nothing is said of his failing health, his marriage to many foreign women, his

idolatry, severe taxation of the people, the extravagance of his life-style, and the continuing threat of the enemies of Israel. It seems that the writer wanted the initial readers to stay focused in their minds on where Israel was at the time of Solomon, but could never again achieve as a nation. If the writer wanted to impress upon the initial readers' minds the cost of sin, then he certainly conveyed this message by focusing on the grandeur from which Solomon fell, as well as Israel as a whole, because of their desire to run after foreign gods.

9:29-31 All the wealth that Solomon accumulated throughout his reign was gone within a few years after his death. When Shishak came up from Egypt during the reign of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, he took away the treasures of the temple and royal palace. God did not want the leaders of Israel to accumulate great centralized wealth (See Dt 17:14-20). In the vanity of his life, however, Solomon ignored many of the principles of the law of God. In the latter part of his life, he weakened his own faith in God by catering to the gods of his many wives. The writer wanted to focus on the great institutions that were established by Solomon, and thus placed less emphasis on his moral leadership which eventually led to the downfall of all the institutions that he created. He was a great builder, administrator and king of government. However, he failed in being the type of spiritual leader the people needed. The lesson of Solomon is that one can accomplish great things in the material world, but without moral leadership, leave little

to the religious posterity of his people.

The Divided Kingdom

(10:1-19)

Outline: (1) Rehoboam and the people (10:1-5), (2) Division of the kingdom (10:6-19)

Chapter 10

REHOBAM & THE PEOPLE

This chapter begins the end of Israel as a whole, but specifically Judah. The twelve tribes of Israel were divided into the northern and southern kingdoms, with Rehoboam being the first king of the southern kingdom of Judah and Jeroboam leading the northern ten tribes. After a little over 200 years, both kingdoms would from the time of this division, be taken into captivity. The north would go into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. and the south would go into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. What is related to us in the following chapters emphasizes the apostasy of the southern kingdom. What the writer wants us to reap from this chronicle of a kingdom are the reasons why God allowed Israel as a whole to go into captivity. The captivities were a purifying necessity for Israel, and thus the writer portrays the sins of Israel of which they needed to be cleansed. We must keep in mind that God was interested in preserving the Seed of woman (Gn 3:15) through the preservation of the faithful remnant that would emerge from Babylonian captivity.

What delayed the captivity of the southern kingdom were the reformation and restoration actions of four out of the

nineteen kings and one queen who ruled over Judah. The reformationists and restorationists, were Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Hezekiah and Josiah. The actions of these four kings divide the history of Judah into four cycles of sin and repentance. Once reforms were made by one of these great kings, in the years that followed the reformation, or restoration, the people again went into apostasy. In the years following the last, Josiah, God handed the people over to the Babylonians.

10:1-5 Rehoboam (1 Kg 12:1-20)

Rehoboam was truly an inept leader with little skill in leading the people from 931 to 913 B.C. **Shechem:** By this time in the history of Israel, the foundation had already been laid for the division of the twelve tribes. The leaders of the northern ten tribes thus came to Shechem for a conference with Rehoboam concerning the future of his reign. They sought relief from the great burden of taxes that was levied from them by Solomon, as well as greater liberty from the centralized government in Jerusalem. The ineptitude of Rehoboam was manifested in his refusal to listen to their pleas, while at the same time listening to the young men with whom he had grown up in the courtyards of the temple and palace. They knew no other life, and thus Rehoboam was typical of a spoiled child who grew up in luxury and had no desire to change his life-style. Under him greater taxes and harsher rule would come.

DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

10:6-19 For it was brought about

by God: We are not told how God providentially worked behind the scenes of history in order to bring about what transpired in the division of Israel. In verse 15 we are told why God allowed the event of the division to happen. It was punishment of the house of David because of the apostasy of Solomon. The ideal was that Israel dwell in the promised land as an agricultural community until the Messiah came into the world. Unfortunately, Israel succumbed to many of the desires of the surrounding nations. God accommodated their desires, but they had to live with the consequences of their foolish choices. **David, see to your own house:** If Rehoboam were wise, he could have seen this coming. The northern tribes had already been marginalized by the establishment of central government in Jerusalem. They had been consigned to always being too far away from the temple for the annual sacrifices. Added to this was the fact that King David and his household took up residence in Jerusalem. All these actions on the part of the house of David laid the foundation for what happened in this context. The northern tribes simply had had enough, and thus the appeal to Rehoboam was a last effort on the part of the northern tribes to maintain a united Israel.

From Rehoboam To The Captivity (11:1 – 36:21)

Outline: (1) Reign of Rehoboam (11:1 – 12:16), (2) Reign of Abijah (Abijam) (13:1-22), (3) Reign of Asa (14:1 – 16:14), (4) Reign of Jehoshaphat (17:1–21:3), (5) Reign of Jehoram (21:4-20),

(6) Reign of Ahaziah (Jehoahaz) (22:1-9), (7) Reign of Athaliah (22:10 – 23:21), (8) Reign of Joash (Jehoash) (24:1-27), (9) Reign of Amaziah (25:1-28), (10) Reign of Uzziah (Azariah) (26:1-23), (11) Reign of Jotham (27:1-9), (12) Reign of Ahaz (28:1-27), (13) Reign of Hezekiah (29:1 – 32:33), (14) Reign of Manasseh (33:1-20), (15) Reign of Amon (33:21-25), (16) Reign of Josiah (34:1 – 35:27), (17) Reign of Jehoahaz (Joahaz or Shallum) (36:1-4), (18) Reign of Jehoiakim (Eliakim) (36:5-8), (19) Reign of Jehoiachin (Jeconiah or Coniah) (36:9,10), (20) Reign of Zedekiah (Mattaniah) (36:11-21), (21) Decree of Cyrus of Persia (36:22,23)

Chapter 11

REIGN OF REHOBOAM

11:1-4 (1 Kg 12:21-24) Might bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam: Rehoboam was probably thinking that he had a right to reign over all Israel because he was of the lineage of David, through Solomon, to whom promise was made that God would continually set one of David's seed on his throne. This belief was true, but he did not know what God knew about the future. God knew that the northern tribes would go into apostasy, and subsequently into captivity. Though God did not explain this, He did say to the south to let their northern brothers go their way. Also, we must not discount the fact that Rehoboam's desire to go to war with the north was simply a matter of economics. He wanted the taxes that came from the northern tribes. **This thing is from Me:** This message

from God through Shemaiah prevented a civil war. Rehoboam was losing a great deal of tax money, and thus was willing to create a war with the northern tribes in order to secure his kingdom and the taxes. What he was about to do manifested not only his selfishness, but also his total lack of concern for his northern brothers. Even though they divided over this issue, throughout the remainder of the history of the divided kingdom there would be continual strife between the two kingdoms (See 12:15).

11:5-12 *Cities for the defense of Judah:* Now that the kingdom was divided, Judah was vulnerable. Rehoboam thus built or fortified fifteen key cities to protect all trading routes, as well as to establish defensive measures against the northern kingdom. What he did not understand was that the threat would not come from his northern brothers, but from the southwest, from Egypt.

11:13-17 *The Levites ... came to Judah:* The centralization of the sacrifices around Jerusalem consigned the northern tribes to be always too far away from the place to which they were to go every year for the annual sacrifices. The tabernacle was originally meant to be moved among the tribal territories, and thus not consigned to any one or two tribes. This would have prevented any tribe from continually being too far away from the tabernacle for the annual sacrifices. When the kingdom divided, Jeroboam built places for sacrifices in Bethel and Dan, thus keeping the people from going to the temple in Jerusalem. This move did not go well with the priests and

Levites, and thus, they forsook the apostasy of Jeroboam. Jeroboam subsequently established his own paid priesthood (1 Kg 12:31; 13:33). There were plenty of people who were looking for a salary to be full-time priests, and thus he had no problem in finding false priests to administer the sacrifices at Bethel and Dan. ***Excluded them from serving as priests:*** Those who seek to do the will of God will always be excluded by those who are hirelings. They will be excluded by those against whom they speak the truth. They will be excluded by those as Jeroboam and his sons who seek to maintain control. ***All the tribes of Israel:*** This is a reference to all twelve tribes. A remnant of all twelve tribes took up residence in the territory of Judah. This is significant in reference to the Babylonian captivity that would occur in 586 B.C. In this captivity a remnant of all twelve tribes was taken to Babylon. ***Strong for three years:*** Rehoboam was made strong until Shishak came from Egypt, defeated him, and then took all of the treasures of the temple and royal house back to Egypt (ch 12). ***The way of David and Solomon:*** With the “way of David” there would be no problem in discerning their faithfulness during these three years. However, the “way of Solomon” must have reference to his first years of reign, for in the last years of his reign he went after the gods of the many wives he had married. ***Strong for three years:*** He was strong until Shishak came and plundered the treasuries of the royal house and temple.

11:18-23 Rehoboam did follow after the marital ways of his father for he

had 18 wives and 60 concubines, who together gave him 28 sons and 60 daughters. He chose Abijah to be his successor. Abijah was the son of Maachah who was the daughter of Absalom. As a political move, he stationed his children throughout the fortified cities of Judah. By doing this he guaranteed the loyalty of the cities, and thus prevented possible rebellion from any part of Judah.

Chapter 12

12:1-16 (1 Kg 14:25-28) Shishak ... took away the treasures of the house of the Lord: Pharaoh Sheshonk I is probably the Shishak that is mentioned in this text. He provided refuge for Jeroboam when he fled from Solomon (1 Kg 11:40). However, after the kingdom of Israel was divided, Jeroboam possibly fell out of favor with the Egyptian Pharaoh. Whatever the case, he went to seize control of the northern ten tribes of Israel, for God had promised that he would reign over them. The invasion of Egypt that is in this context took place within five years after the kingdom of Israel was divided. On a temple wall in Karnak, Egypt there has been discovered reliefs (pictorial writing) where Shishak described his campaign into Judah and Israel, the northern kingdom. He mentioned those cities that he conquered in Palestine, most of which were in the northern kingdom where Jeroboam reigned. Also in the information of the reliefs is a statement referring to the "highlands of David," thus confirming the existence of David as a major figure in the history of Palestine before Pharaoh's arrival. Among the cit-

ies that are mentioned in the reliefs, Shishak claimed to have taken Megiddo. A stele (monument) has also been found in Megiddo that dates to the time of this attack, which stele mentions Sheshonk, the king of Egypt. The destruction of many other cities in Palestine date to the time of this invasion. It was at this time that Shishak took back to Egypt Solomon's treasures of the temple and the royal house. When Osorkon I, the son of Sheshonk (Shishak), came to the throne of Egypt, he donated great amounts of silver and gold to the temples of Egypt. It is believed that much of this silver and gold came from his father's raids into Palestine during the early part of the reign of Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The irony of the story is that after David and Solomon had amassed a great amount of silver and gold, it was all taken by Shishak within five years of the death of Solomon. All the burden of Solomon's taxation of the people ended up in Egypt in the temples of pagan gods.

Chapter 13

REIGN OF ABIJAH

13:1-22 (1 Kg 15:1-8) Abijah: Or, Abijam, a variant spelling of the same name. He reigned from 913 to 911 B.C. Abijah antagonized the northern kingdom to the point that war broke out between the two kingdoms within three years of the beginning of his reign. He assumed that in order to fulfill the promise that was made by God to the house of David, he had to forcefully bring the northern tribes again under the command of Jerusalem. *The kingdom over Israel to*

David forever: Abijah assumed that he was the rightful king to reign over all twelve tribes because of God's promise to David. **Covenant of salt:** The covenant was a perpetual covenant between God and Israel (See Lv 2:13). Abijah assumed that because of the division of Israel, the tribes of the north no longer honored the covenant. His accusation against the north was that they rejected the covenant and hired for priests those who were not Levites. Since Jeroboam had taken the northern tribes further away from God than God originally intended by giving him kingship over the north, He fought for Abijah. The result of the war was a massive death of 500,000 Israelites. The defeat was so massive that the north under the rule of Jeroboam was never able to regain military strength (1 Kg 14:20; 15:9). **Rebelled against his lord:** Jeroboam rebelled against the house of David because God had given him the right to reign over the northern ten tribes. **Whoever comes:** If anyone came with a bull and seven rams, he could be a priest. In other words, Jeroboam was selling the office of a priest. **You will not prosper:** Abijah's message was against the northern tribes who had gone too far from the will of God. Though God had given the ten northern tribes to Jeroboam, Jeroboam took them into idol worship. **God smote Jeroboam:** Through the proxy of the army of Judah, God judged the north for following after the sins of Jeroboam.

Chapter 14

REIGN OF ASA

14:1-15 (1 Kg 15:9,10) Asa: Asa reigned from 911 to 870 B.C. In the first part of his reign he had peace for ten years as a result of the total defeat of the northern kingdom by Abijah. Asa was a reformer, but not as some of the reformers who followed him. **Took away ... the high places:** This statement in verse 3 is at the beginning of Asa's reign, whereas the one in 15:17 is in reference to the last of his forty-one year reign. It seems that the reforms that he made at the beginning of his reign were not effective in ridding Judah of all the places of worship where people went to pay homage to false gods. **So they built and prospered:** The first of Asa's reign was a time of great prosperity in Judah. Because they were in a time of peace, they could focus on economic development. It could have been that their development led them to be a prey for a people as the Ethiopians who had come with a great army that needed the support of spoils they would take from conquered nations. **Zerah the Ethiopian:** There was a truth reaffirmed in Judah's victory over the massive army of Zerah. That truth was in God's promise to Israel that if they remained faithful, each Israelite soldier would be able to stand against many soldiers of the enemy. Judah's battle with the Ethiopians was probably the greatest battle of all battles that Israel fought throughout her history. The battle of

580,000 men against one million would certainly have resulted in a great carnage of humanity. But at least one point was emphasized. Any nation that would oppose Judah should think twice before engaging God's people in war when they had gone to God, as Asa, in repentant prayer.

Chapter 15

15:1-7 (1 Kg 15:11-15) Asa was a reformer. He recognized that Judah was in trouble in that the nation had reaped the consequences of their desire for allegiance to gods that they thought would bring them profit as a nation. He also recognized that God required obedience to His will in order that the blessings from God be unleashed on Judah. When Asa set out to reform Judah, he was promised by God that his efforts would not go without reward. ***While you are with Him:*** God was on Asa's side only when Asa had committed himself to God. God is not with an apostate. ***Without a teaching priest:*** When they ceased teaching the word of God, they encountered trouble from God.

15:8-15 *Oded the prophet:* The name of the father of Azariah is used instead of Azariah. The meaning could be that Asa carried out this prophecy that was earlier stated by Oded, but repeated by his son, Azariah. ***They defected to him out of Israel in abundance:*** This was another great defection from the north to Judah. The significance of this defection is that when the northern kingdom fell in 722/21 B.C., a remnant of the northern ten tribes was dwelling in Judah

at the time. Those of these tribes possibly continued in Judah, and thus were also taken into captivity in 586 B.C. when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem. When the return from captivity came in 536 B.C., a remnant of all twelve tribes in the Babylonian captivity thus returned to Palestine in order to receive the Messiah that was promised to the seed of Abraham. ***Should be put to death:*** This was a threat (See Ex 22:20; Dt 13:6-17; 17:2-7). They entered into a covenant to reform Judah. Those who would not join the reformation were threatened with death because they would be seen as obstacles to the reforms.

15:16-19 *Maachah ... he removed:* Asa's reformation began at home. His own mother had to be taken from her leadership role in order to give an example to everyone that he was serious about his reforms. ***The high places:*** The people had become so attached to these places of worship that they refused to sacrifice them for the sake of reformation. Throughout the history of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel the high places were rarely destroyed in any reformation. The reason for this was that people become accustomed to places of worship. Going to a place of worship means that they leave a place where they are usually not worshiping. Instead of worshiping daily wherever one is, it is easy to think that one can escape God when he leaves the place that he has designated as a high place of worship. Jesus taught that there would never be any location that was designated for worship among His disciples (See comments Jn

4:20-24). **Idol in a grove:** The syncretism of religious beliefs was common throughout the history of Israel and Judah. Syncretism in faith is the simultaneous worship of different gods. The Israelites continued to worship the God of heaven, but as Solomon, they brought into their pantheism of worship the gods of the nations around them. The Asherah, or Ashteroth, was associated with this syncretism of worship. The Asherah was probably a grove of trees or wooden idols that were erected in special places of worship, specifically in high places. Gideon (Jg 6:25-28), Asa (2 Ch 15:16), Hezekiah (2 Ch 31:1) and Josiah (2 Ch 34:3-7) destroyed these wooden images during their restorations. Archaeological discoveries have revealed that in the syncretism of Israel, it was believed that the wooden images or idols of the Asherah protected the individual from harm. The wooden idols were thus considered fetishes that were revered objects because of their protection for the one who honored the god or spirit they represented. **Thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign:** There is a variant reading in this text in reference to the reading in 1 Kings. Most commentators, however, believe that the reading here is to be preferred.

Chapter 16

16:1-10 (1 Kg 15:16-24) Built Ramah: Baasha sought to build Ramah as a fortified city in order to establish a blockage against Asa. He wanted to stop the supply route of trade to Jerusalem. **Asa ... sent to Ben-hadad:** It seems that Asa faltered in his faith in God in refer-

ence to the Syrians. He had trusted in God when threatened by the massive force that came up from the Ethiopians. With his 580,000 men he was able to defeat an army of one million. But in reference to the threat that came from Baasha, the king of Israel, it seems that he lost his faith in God's help and trusted instead in his wealth to buy help from the Syrians. Because he did not trust in God, Hanani, the prophet, delivered the word of God to him that he would have wars the rest of his life. God looks for those who will trust wholeheartedly in His help. We do not know exactly why Asa stumbled in faith with a lesser threat than the Ethiopians. We do know that God considered his purchase of Syrian help with the treasures of the house of God to be foolish. His heart, therefore, was not loyal to God. **Put him in a prison house:** When the people do not want to hear the truth, they will retaliate against those who bring the message of God to their ears (See comments Hb 11:32-40).

16:11-14 He did not seek the Lord: It was not wrong to seek the physicians. However, when healing power was available from God, he should have sought God's healing before consulting the physicians. This statement was made in order to manifest the fact that Asa had in his latter years turned from the zeal that he had for the Lord in his early days when he led a reformation in Judah. Nevertheless, the good of his reign was greater than his shortcomings. When he died, great honor was given to him. **Great burning:** This was the burning of many fragrant spices in honor of the king.

Chapter 17

REIGN OF JEHOSEPHAT

17:1-6 (1 Kg 22:41-50) Since he reigned from 870 to 848 B.C., it seems that during most of this time Jehoshaphat reigned coregently with his father, Asa. Since he built on the limited reforms of his father, he may have been one of the first successful reformationists in Judah. Since he walked in the ways of David, we would assume that he sought the Lord with all his heart in order to bring Judah back to the authority of the will of God in their lives. ***Took delight in the ways of the Lord:*** He made it his desire to live according to the word of God. The worship places of Bethel and Dan in the northern kingdom were obstacles that continually led the people away from God. But in the south, Jehoshaphat sought to bring the people into conformity with what God instituted for His people.

17:7-9 *Teach in the cities:* In order to accomplish the type of reformation that is explained in this context, the first step was to send forth teachers to the cities throughout a particular region. In this case, teachers were sent throughout Judah. The usual manner by which the people were taught in the past in Israel was that the people brought their offerings and came to the Levites to receive instruction. But the people had stopped coming to the teachers of the word of God. So in order to initiate a reformation, a system of taking the teachers to the people had to be initiated. Therefore, this was the first time when the Levites and priests were sent in groups to the

people. Apostasy can always be identified by the refusal of the people to go to the teachers of the word of God. ***The book of the law of the Lord:*** If reformation is to become a restoration to God's will, then the Bible must be the source of the teacher's information. These Levites and priests did not go forth to teach subjects that were parallel to the word of God. They taught the law of God. Only when men submit to the word of God can true reformation occur (See 2 Kg 23:2; Ne 8:3-8). Since the Levites went to different places to teach, then we can correctly assume that each group of teachers had their own copy of the first five books of the law (Genesis–Deuteronomy). We must also assume that throughout the history of Israel copies of the law were continually made by the scribes.

17:10-19 In order to secure peace in the kingdom, Jehoshaphat had a large army of men. In times of peace reformations can occur because conflicts do not hinder the work of the teachers of God's word. In times of war, the faith of believers may increase, but it is difficult for the teachers of the word of God to do their work. It is in times of peace when evangelism is more successful.

Chapter 18

18:1-3 (1 Kg 22:1-38) *Allied himself by marriage:* It was the right objective to unite the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. But the way he sought unity, in this case, was wrong. Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, was given in marriage to Jehoram, the son of Je-

hoshaphat. Unfortunately, the evil influence of Ahab and Jezebel came into the life of Jehoram, and thus when he came to the throne, wickedness once again came into the royal family of Judah.

18:4-11 (1 Kg 22:4-39) *Four hundred men of the prophets:* Since these prophets were on the payroll of the government of Ahab, then we would expect them to make pronouncements that were politically correct. However, since their pronouncements depended on their pay, we would question what they said. The hirelings usually never speak against the wishes of those who sign their paychecks. For this reason, Jehoshaphat was skeptical of the pronouncements of the hired preachers of Ahab. He wanted a second opinion. He did not consider Ahab's paid prophets to be prophets of God, for he asked for a true prophet of God. ***Micaiah:*** A true man of God will speak that which is true, regardless of his source of support. And since Ahab was living in wickedness, the prophet of God in this case could speak only that which was contrary to the wicked wishes of Ahab.

18:12-27 *Speak good:* Four hundred paid preachers had preached a united message. The messenger that was sent to Micaiah wanted to intimidate him into conforming to the opinion of the 400. Brave men speak what is right, regardless of the number of those who speak error. ***What God says:*** If one would presume to be a spokesman for God, then he has no option but to speak the word of God. ***Go up and prosper, and they will be delivered into your hand:*** These words of Micaiah must be understood as

an irony. The truth was that the united army of Israel would be defeated in the battle and that Ahab would be killed. ***Put this fellow in prison:*** Those who would commit themselves to preaching the truth must resign themselves to the same fate as Micaiah (See At 14:22; 2 Tm 2:8-13; 1 Pt 4:16). If one would speak the truth, he will be sought after by those who seek the truth, but rejected by those who want to continue in their own deception. ***These have no master:*** This was a prophecy of the death of Ahab.

18:28-34 *God moved them to depart from him:* In the heat of the battle, and when there was a special effort by the soldiers to go after one they thought was Ahab, the king of Israel, Jehoshaphat cried out to the Lord. Here is a case where God directly moved those who were pursuing Jehoshaphat to turn away from him. Jehoshaphat's prayer was answered immediately and in a direct manner.

Chapter 19

19:1-3 *Should you help the ungodly:* The alliance that Jehoshaphat made with Ahab was an alliance with the ungodly. His goal was honorable, that is to bring unity between the two kingdoms. However, Ahab was wicked, and with wicked people one should never be unequally yoked. In this case, the alliance actually did much to undo all the good that Jehoshaphat did in his work of reforming Judah. He brought into the leadership of Judah evil influences through Athaliah who married his son.

19:4-11 *Judge ... for the Lord:* In

using the word of God as the standard for judgment, they were judging for the Lord (Dt 16:6-10; 18-20; see comments Jn 14:28). In order to judge for the Lord according to the standard of the word of God, the judgment must be without respect of persons. If bribes are taken, then the judgments are twisted. In order that civil matters not interfere with religious matters, Amariah was given charge over judgments in reference to religious matters. Zebadiah was given authority over the king's administration. In this way, there was a separation between the matters of faith and state. The wisdom of this arrangement was based on the fact that the state should never be given the authority to determine moral law. It is the work of God through His word to determine moral law, not man through the authority and power of the state.

Chapter 20

20:1-4 This was the first threat of the Moabites and Ammonites since the reign of David (2 Sm 8:2; 12:26-30).

20:5-13 *New court:* This was probably the outer court of the temple that had been rebuilt. ***Are You not our God who drove out the inhabitants:*** In this prayer Jehoshaphat recalled the work of God who drove out the Canaanites of the land by the Israelites (See 6:28-31). Not knowing what to do, he reaffirmed his loyalty to God in order to deal with the impending threat of the Moabites and Ammonites. Jehoshaphat's complaint was that God did not allow Israel to destroy them when they first came out of Egypt. But now, he complained, the

Moabites and Ammonites were trying to cast Israel out of the land that God promised to Israel. It seems that this threat was one of national destruction since all the families were gathered together to plead with the Lord for His help.

20:14-19 *Do not be afraid:* The people were afraid. The threat did not come upon them because of their own aggression against Moab and Ammon. It was the intent of the Moabites and Ammonites to expel Judah from the land. ***The battle is not yours, but God's:*** Essentially, the prophet was saying that God would take care of this matter. God's people must at all times pray. However, they must also take action. But this would not be the case in this situation. God would defeat the Moabites and Ammonites apart from the efforts of His people.

20:20-23 The Levites led the people into what they thought would be a battle of direct confrontation with the Moabites and Ammonites. But an armed conflict was not to be. Instead, in some way God moved the Moabites and Ammonites to turn on one another. Their internal strife with one another was so intense that they destroyed one another. Their alliance with one another to destroy a common enemy in order to possess their land ended in their destruction of one another.

20:24-30 There was so much spoil to be taken from the dead of the Moabites and Ammonites, that it took three days to take it from the battlefield. When word was circulated concerning this event, the other nations left Judah in peace.

20:31-37 *The high places:*

Throughout the history of Israel these locations of worship continued to plague any reformation or restoration efforts by those who sought to serve the Lord. It seems that the attachment of the people to these places where the faith of Israel was syncretized with the gods of the Canaanites was too strong for the reforming kings. Since the northern kingdom by the time of Jehoshaphat had digressed toward idol worship more than Judah, it was a very unwise move on the part of Jehoshaphat to align himself with Ahaziah, the king of Israel. God's punishment of Jehoshaphat for this alliance was the destruction of the ships that he had built to go to Tarshish, a city somewhere in Spain.

Chapter 21

21:1-3 The death of Jehoshaphat concluded the first cycle of Judah's history that ended with his reformation and death. Throughout this time Judah enjoyed a relative time of peace. At least, Judah was not invaded by foreign nations, and thus enjoyed a time of freedom from threats. The sons of Jehoshaphat were stationed at strategic cities throughout Judah and were supported by the centralized government in Jerusalem. As a nation, therefore, this cycle of history of Judah ended with a well organized government that was set up by Jehoshaphat. But when the firstborn of Jehoshaphat assumed the kingship of Judah, things changed.

REIGN OF JEHORAM

21:4-7 (2 Kg 8:16-24) *He slew all*

his brothers: Jehoram established the nature of his kingship by revealing his paranoia. Though he had served five years of coregent reign with his father (2 Kg 8:16), he did not want any competition for the throne that might arise from his brothers. Unfortunately, he had been influenced by his wife, Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. He subsequently worshiped the gods of the nations and was an idolatrous king. However, for the sake of David, God did not destroy the lineage of David from being kings in Judah. For this reason God allowed Jehoram to reign.

21:8-11 When Jehoram killed his brothers who were over the key fortified cities of Judah, he left Judah vulnerable to attack. Edom and Libnah took advantage of the situation, and thus launched their attack in order to gain their freedom from the subjugation of Judah. Judah did win the battle of this revolt, but Edom and Libnah remained in a state of revolt against Judah to the day the writer wrote these statements in the book of Chronicles. *He made high places:* This may have been a political move in order to gain the favor of the people. Since people yearn to have a location to which they can go for worship, Jehoram accommodated their desires, and thus built the high places that his father had previously destroyed. *Play the harlot:* They committed spiritual adultery by selling themselves to worship of idol gods (Compare comments Js 4:4).

21:12-15 Elijah had been taken up in a whirlwind to God before the reign of Jehoram (2 Kg 2:1). It seems that

Elijah had prophesied concerning the wickedness of Jehoram, even before the reign of Jehoram. Elijah had prophesied against Ahab and Jezebel, the parents of Jehoram's wife, Athaliah. In order to unite the kingdoms of Israel, Jehoram married Athaliah, but in doing so brought an evil culture into the family of David in Judah. The result of the prophecy was that Jehoram was stricken with a disease in his intestines and Judah suffered from a great plague.

21:16,17 Though previously subjugated during the reign of Jehoshaphat, the Philistines and Arabians, as the Edomites and Lidnahites, also took advantage of the weakened state of Judah. They subsequently plundered the treasury of Judah. They killed all the heritage of David except for one son, the youngest, Jehoahaz, who was also called Ahaziah (25:23). Through this one son the seed-line promise of the Messiah that God made to David would continue.

21:18-20 When Jehoram died, there was little sympathy for him, for there was no burning of incense for him. Because there was little respect for him as a person and king, he was not given the honor of being buried in the tombs of the kings of Judah.

Chapter 22

REIGN OF AHAZIAH

22:1-6 (2 Kg 8:25-29; 9:21-28) *The inhabitants of Jerusalem:* It must be noted that Judah, as Israel to the north, had digressed from God-anointed kings, to kings that were by this time anointed by the people. During the final years of

the kingdoms, they had kings who were appointed by foreign nations. Ahaziah reigned one year in 841 B.C. Since his father was 40 when he died, it is believed that the account of 2 Kings 8 has the correct reading of 22 years old (2 Kg 8:26).

Forty-two: This number may refer to the year of the kingdom of his mother's house. **His mother was his counselor to do wickedly:** This is a sad commentary of what a parent would teach her child. Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, was not only an evil influence on her husband, Jehoram, but also on their son, Ahaziah. The legacy of the evil of Ahab had continued to this third generation. **Daughter of Omri:** Since Omri was the father of Ahab, those descendants who lived after him were often called after his name instead of the immediate fathers. Athaliah was the immediate daughter of Ahab, who was the son of Omri. Thus as a descendant of Omri, she was the daughter of Omri. **Jehoram the son of Ahab:** This Jehoram should not be confused with the Jehoram of Judah who had just died. **Joram:** Or, Jehoram (2 Kg 8:28). **War against Hazel king of Syria:** Ahaziah followed the counsel of Athaliah to join the northern kingdom in their war against Syria. But the battle went against the coalition of Israelite kings. Jehoram, the king of the northern kingdom, was severely wounded in the battle. **Ahaziah:** Some manuscripts read, "Azariah."

22:7-9 God used Ahaziah's going to the wounded Jehoram (Joram) as a means to bring down his own kingship. Jehu was the new king of Israel whose mis-

sion it was to completely eradicate the house of Ahab (Compare Hs 1:3-5). When Jehu came to Jezreel, he killed the house of Ahab, and finding Ahaziah, he killed him also.

REIGN OF ATHALIAH

22:10-12 (2 Kg 11:1-3) In order to be the sole ruler of Judah, Athaliah sought to kill all the royal family of David, whom she supposed would take the throne after the death of Ahaziah. She reigned from 841 to 835 B.C. Her scheme to secure the throne was foiled by Jehoshabeath (Jehosheba - 2 Kg 11:2), Ahaziah's sister. Jehoshabeath hid Ahaziah's son, Joash, her nephew, for six years in the temple. It was during this six years that Athaliah reigned as queen of Judah, not knowing that Joash lived in secret in the temple not far from where she resided.

Chapter 23

23:1-7 (2 Kg 11:4-16) This chapter records the end of the wicked reign of Athaliah. **Seventh year:** This was the seventh year of Joash's concealment in the temple. In order to bring Joash to the throne, Jehoiada made and executed a plan to rid the kingdom of Athaliah, as well as reveal to the people the survival and arrival of the young Joash to the throne of Judah. **Took into covenant with himself:** At this time, Jehoiada made two covenants. The first was a covenant with those who would execute the plan to take the throne for Joash. The covenant involved them making a commitment to be loyal to the new king. The second cov-

enant included all those of the first covenant, and thus the covenant promise was by all to be loyal to Joash as the king.

23:8-15 It was the theme of the writer of Chronicles to reestablish the leading role of the Levites. He thus writes here that the Levites took a leading role in the scheme to dethrone Athaliah. Because of her idolatry, they saw the enthronement of Joash as a restoration to the one true and living God of Israel. **Long live the king:** See 1 Sm 10:24; 2 Sm 16:16. **Treason, treason:** The plot to overthrow Athaliah was totally unknown to her. Once she saw that the people had hailed Joash as the new king, she immediately realized that it was her end. Jehoiada commanded her execution outside the temple, which command the Levites immediately carried out.

23:16-21 (2 Kg 11:4-20) Jehoiada made a covenant: This was the third covenant agreement that was made by Jehoiada in reference to the reformation. This covenant was between himself, the people, and the new king. **They should be the Lord's people:** The first two covenants in verses 1-7 were to the restoration of the kingdom and to the king himself. This covenant was a commitment to God. No better covenant could have been made in reference to the commitment of the people to restore themselves to God. In order to execute a social paradigm shift, the people as a whole must make a covenant between themselves and God to do all that is necessary in order to be God's people. In this case it involved the execution of a tyrannical queen and

a cleansing of the nation of all that kept people away from focusing on God. In order to do this, the people had to slay the leader of the apostate religion and tear down all that symbolized the religion. What took place at this time, therefore, was not simply a reforming of the existing structures of religion, but the restoration of what God commanded in the law. In order to initiate restorations in Israel, extreme measures were necessary in order to guarantee that changes be made.

Chapter 24

REIGN OF JOASH

24:1-3 (2 Kg 12:1-16) Jehoiada continued to tutor the seven-year-old king as he assumed the throne of Judah. Joash reigned from 841 to 835 B.C. However, it seems that he followed the instructions of Jehoiada only as long as Jehoiada lived, for after his death the leaders of Judah led Joash back into idolatry. **Two wives:** Contrary to God's principle of one wife for one man, even Jehoiada was not without flaw in his life as a religious leader.

24:4-16 Repair the house of the Lord: It was the responsibility of the Levites to collect the temple tax in order to maintain the house of God. This tax was originally designated for the purpose of repairing the tabernacle, but in this case it was used to repair the temple (Ex 30:12-16; Nm 1:50). It seems that the Levites were negligent in keeping the temple in repair because of oppressing kings of the past. It thus took a command from the king to stir them into ac-

tion. **Chest:** This was a collection box that was placed in a location where it could be easily accessed by the people. Once the people realized that the restoration of themselves to God required financial sacrifice on their part, a great contribution was raised for the purpose of restoring the temple. **Hired masons:** No one was expected to work for free. In order that everyone share in the reconstruction, some contributed and some worked with their hands. **Brought the rest of the treasure:** No one put his hand into the collection in order to steal from the excess funds. Accountability was guaranteed by the honest hearts of those who had responsibility of the contribution. What was leftover was returned to the king and Jehoiada. **130 years old:** We must assume that God gave a long life to Jehoiada in order to lead in the restoration of the kingdom of Judah. Though we do not know his exact age when he concealed Joash in the temple, and then executed the plan to restore the priesthood of the Levites with the termination of Athaliah, we would assume that he was over one hundred years old at the time. One is never too old to carry out the work of God. There is no such thing as retirement when speaking of one's ministry for God.

24:17-22 (2 Kg 12:20,21) The information of this section is not in 2 Kings. This information is given because Chronicles focuses on a restoration of the Levitical priesthood after the Babylonian captivity. What is revealed in these events was a coalition of false teachers who remained in the background as the

restoration took place when Jehoiada was still alive. These false teachers lurked, as false teachers do, in obscurity until they had an opportunity to influence the king to move toward their views and support. ***But they left the house of the Lord:*** Regardless of how much contribution and effort that went into the repair of the temple, people were more loyal to idolatry. The temple was in Jerusalem, but the people found it more convenient to worship their idols in the country where they worked and lived. ***They would not listen:*** We must not be naive concerning the motives of those who turned the heart of Joash. It was more than simply changing religious beliefs. Those who influenced him toward idolatry had lost their jobs during the restoration from the worship of Baal to the worship of God. Baal, and all his idols were destroyed when Jehoiada was alive. Temple worship in the city was restored and all those who were aligned with Baal were dismissed. They lost their financial support. By killing only Mattan the priest of Baal (23:17), we would assume that a great deal of other Baal prophets also lost their jobs, but not their lives. Joash thus became a pawn who was controlled by those who wanted to go back into the financial scheme of things that existed under Baal idolatry. The restoration of Jehoiada was in the city, but not in the rural farms where the majority of the people lived. ***Zechariah:*** Joash considered Jehoiada a father. Therefore, he probably knew Zechariah as a friend for most of his life. And yet, the persuasion of the idolatrous leaders was so strong

that he had his childhood friend Zechariah stoned. We must never underestimate the extent to which one will go in apostasy. When money is involved, the apostate would rather murder a friend in the name of religion than lose his support.

24:23-27 God's proxy judgment of Judah were the Syrians. With half the number of soldiers, Judah was able to be victorious over an army of one million Ethiopians that came against her during the reign of Asa (14:1-12). But now in sin, the Syrians with a small army were able to defeat the greater army of Judah. The sign was clear. God empowered the army of Syria to punish Judah for her sin of apostasy. The tragedy of the event is in the fact that not all Judah went with the apostasy of Joash. Nevertheless, faithful soldiers died in the battle with Syria because of the idolatrous practices of Joash. ***His own servants conspired:*** It seems that even in the king's court there were those who were disgusted with the person and reign of Joash. They killed Joash because he had killed some of their friends who were the sons of Jehoiada. They inflicted on him a mortal wound, and then left him to suffer until he died. Because the people had no respect for him, he was not given the honor of being buried in the tombs of the kings of Judah.

Chapter 25

REIGN OF AMAZIAH

25:1-4 (2 Kg 14:1-6) Amaziah followed in the footsteps of his father. He reigned from 796 to 767 B.C. He killed those who had killed his father (See Dt

24:16). His reign was also marred with idolatry, and thus he opposed the true prophets of God.

25:5-13 In order to establish his kingdom, and defeat the Edomites, he mustered an army of men from Judah. But he also hired mercenaries from the apostate tribes of the northern kingdom. He was warned not to do this, because in doing such he would be bringing the idolatrous northern mercenaries into contact with those of Judah. If he did not heed the warning, he would have to reap the punishment of God. So Amaziah gave heed to this warning from the prophet of God. He then sent the mercenaries home. As a result of his obedience, he was able to defeat the Edomites. But because they were angered for their dismissal, the northern mercenaries on their return home plundered the cities of Judah. Amaziah had listened to the prophet of God, but he had to pay for his sin of hiring the mercenaries in the first place. ***The Lord is able:*** God was able to do for Judah what money could not buy.

25:14-16 ***See one another in the face:*** This was a challenge to war. Amaziah could not resist the temptation to secure loyalty by honoring the gods of those who resisted him. He thus burned incense to the gods of the Edomites (See 1 Sm 5:1,2).

25:17-24 Amaziah wanted to punish the mercenaries for their action of plundering the cities of Judah. He thus summoned Joash of Israel to battle. But the conflict went bad for Amaziah. Joash defeated his army, took Amaziah captive, and in order to lessen the chance of any

future aggression on the part of Judah, he tore down part of the wall of Jerusalem. He then plundered the riches of the temple treasury.

25:25-28 ***He fled to Lachish:*** The tyranny of a bad king was manifested in the fact that Amaziah had to flee from those over whom he had been king. He was later killed in Lachish.

Chapter 26

REIGN OF UZZIAH

26:1-5 (2 Kg 14:21,22; 15:1-7) In 2 Kings his name is Azariah. Uzziah reigned from 767 to 740 B.C. He was only sixteen when he began his reign and was the second longest reigning king of Judah. While his father, Amaziah, was in exile in Lachish, he began his reformation in Judah. Uzziah reigned in Judah during one of the most prosperous times of Israelite history, a time when the tribes had peace between themselves and surrounding nations. It was during this time that the rich prospered. And according to the prophets, it was a time when the poorer became more oppressed. Building projects were the highlight of Uzziah's reign. His success as a king was attributed to his desire to follow the will of God by listening to Zechariah, the prophet. Uzziah's name appears in two nonbiblical sources that have been discovered by archaeologists. Jeroboam II of the northern kingdom reigned at the same time as Uzziah. The name of Jeroboam, king of Israel, appears in the Shema Seal that was excavated at Megiddo.

26:6-15 The military accomplish-

ments of Uzziah were formidable. He subjugated the Philistines, Arabians, Menunims (Maonites) and Ammonites. In order to secure the territory of Judah, he built watchtowers both in Jerusalem and in the areas from where invading armies might come. The extent of his military campaigns secured territory to as far as Israel's border with Egypt.

26:16-23 Uzziah's downfall was that he became arrogant as the result of his many accomplishments. He became so arrogant that he usurped the authority and ministry of the Levitical priests in reference to their officiating in the temple. When a civilian leader assumes the position of the priests, then he is seeking to be a god among men. Uzziah stood against eighty priests who tried to stop him from doing that which did not pertain to anyone other than the priests. The result of his arrogance was immediate punishment by the Lord. He became leprous while standing in the temple with a censer in his hand. The result was that he was forcibly cast out of the temple, and then ostracized from the people until he died in his own house away from the people. Because he was a leper, he was not buried in the burial grounds of the kings. It was a sad end to a king who had accomplished so much in his reign. But his legacy is a warning to everyone who would become presumptuous because of their great accomplishments for the Lord.

Chapter 27

REIGN OF JOTHAM

27:1-9 (2 Kg 15:32-38) Jotham

reigned from 740 to 732 B.C. However, for about ten years before 740 he reigned coregent with his father, Uzziah. He was a ruler with administrative skills. He followed after the tradition of his father by building cities and fortresses in the hill country of Judah. As a military leader he led Judah against the Ammonites, subjecting them to paying tribute to the benefit of Judah. The success of his reign is explained in verse 6. He became and remained strong because he prepared his ways before the Lord. He focused on the way of God, and thus God worked for him. He was a good king because he allowed himself to be influenced by the right ways of God. Unfortunately, though he conducted himself in the ways of God, the people acted corruptly. He did not reign long enough to influence the people for good.

Chapter 28

REIGN OF AHAZ

28:1-4 (2 Kg 16:1-9) Ahaz, who reigned from 732 to 716 B.C., was certainly any thing but a good king. He followed after the idolatrous tradition of the kings of the northern kingdom. Contrary to Jotham who preceded him, he succumbed to the evil ways of the populace. ***Burned his children:*** He sacrificed his children as offerings to false gods. He spiritually led Judah to follow after any worship that would please the people.

28:5-15 ***Carried away ... captives:*** God had warned both the northern and southern kingdoms that they would eventually be carried away into captivity if they forsook His law. In order to warn

them that this would be the eventual end of Israel, there were minor defeats and captivities that took place in Israel before the Assyrians finally took the northern kingdom into captivity in 722/21 B.C. and the southern kingdom of Judah into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. As punishment for Ahaz's sin, Syria defeated Judah and carried away some of the people to Damascus as captives. At this time Judah was also defeated by her northern brothers. ***Carried away captive of their brethren 200,000:*** When Israel defeated Judah, Israel sought to take into captivity and make slaves of 200,000 of their fellow Israelites. But this was not to be. God immediately sent Oded the prophet to tell Israel that they were able to defeat their brethren because God was punishing Judah for her sin. They were to immediately return the captives they took out of Judah. They listened to the message of Oded, and subsequently fed, clothed and allowed the captives to return to their homes in Judah. What is interesting about this event is that the northern and southern kingdoms had become so autonomous from one another at this time in history that they would not only go to war with one another, but they would also take one another captive as foreign nations did with those they defeated. The Israelites had digressed a long way from the times of Joshua where all the tribes fought as one nation against the Canaanites.

28:16-27 *Sent to the kings of Assyria for help:* They should have been able to send to their northern brothers for help. But they had just been at war with

them. Now they had to go to a foreign nation, a nation that would eventually take their northern brothers into captivity. In this case, the Edomites took captive those of Judah. The Philistines also attacked and became successful in defeating the Judean army. ***The Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz:*** It seems that Ahaz could not get the message of doom that was sent to him from God. There was chaos in Judah because of the sin of Ahaz. But because of his arrogance, he would not lead the people in repentance. And because he would not repent, God unleashed His punishment upon the nation. ***Tiglath-pilneser:*** Or, Tiglath-pileser. Instead of helping, Assyria also afflicted Judah. After Tiglath-pileser defeated both Syria and the northern kingdom, Judah was subjugated to pay tribute. But regardless of God's warning through the prophets, Ahaz continued in his arrogance. He continued to build altars to false gods and encourage the people in apostasy. He brought Judah to a spiritual low, to the point that even the people would not bury him in the tombs of the kings when he died. After his death, it was time for another reformation in Israel, which reformation was brought about by his son, Hezekiah.

Chapter 29

REIGN OF HEZEKIAH

29:1-2 (2 Kg 18–20; Is 36–39)

Hezekiah reign from 716 to 687 B.C., though he reigned coregently with his father Ahaz from 729 to 720 B.C. (2 Kg 18:10). He came to the throne when Judah was at its greatest spiritual low

under his father. Because of the reforms that he made, he was, with Josiah, one of the two greatest restorationists of Judah. Because of the restoration work of these two kings, the southern kingdom existed almost a century and a half longer than the northern kingdom. The contrast between himself and his father, Ahaz, was significant. Ahaz was extremely polytheistic. Hezekiah was truly monotheistic. Ahaz was syncretistic in all his actions of worship of different imagined gods. Hezekiah purged Judah of the idol worship of false gods. The point is that a son has no right to blame his father for wicked behavior. Each person will be held accountable for his own sin at the final judgment (See comments 2 Co 5:10).

29:3-19 *He opened the doors of the house of the Lord:* It seems inconceivable that the temple doors had been closed, thus indicating that the priests had terminated their ministry for the people. This had occurred under the reign of Ahaz, Hezekiah's father. The influence and intimidation of the prophets of Baal were strong during the reign of Ahaz (28:24). They had shut down the temple. *Carry the rubbish out:* The temple had been shut down by Ahaz, and thus it became an unused building that collected rubbish. It took the Levites eight days to clean out the rubbish and cleanse the temple. All the honor that was given to the temple at the time when its construction was completed in the days of Solomon, had long since faded away. We would conclude that by this time in the history of Judah, the people had lost

much of their religiosity. They had become truly secular, and thus religious matters were of little value in a society that had become very materialistic. **Trouble ... desolation ... jeering:** The nations around Judah who knew their history mocked the nation that affirmed that God was her protector. It seems that the surrounding nations were more religious in their spirit than Judah at the end of the reign of Ahaz.

29:20-30 The offerings were instituted again with the ministry of the priests. Once the temple was cleaned and cleansed, those who were responsible for the ministry of the temple service were back at work. All that Ahaz had done to desecrate the temple was rectified, and now Hezekiah was ready to start working on reforms outside Jerusalem.

29:31-36 The offerings that were brought were for eating in order to reestablish the purpose for which the offerings were brought to the priests and Levites. In this case, there were so many animals brought that the priests could not prepare all the animals for cooking. Therefore, the Levites helped in the preparation of the animals. **So the service of the house of the Lord was set in order:** Before Hezekiah could initiate a restoration throughout the country, he had to first set in order the temple service in Jerusalem. The priests and Levites had to assume their responsibilities. After this was accomplished, then the call went out to all the people of Judah, and to those in the northern kingdom, to come for a restitution of the Passover feast. Hezekiah first led the leaders in a spiritual restora-

tion, and then he led the leaders to restore as many as possible of his fellow Israelites.

Chapter 30

30:1-9 *Sent to all Israel:* This invitation was significant. We do not know exactly when it was sent out in reference to the fall of the northern kingdom. The northern kingdom went into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. The invitation could have gone out a few years after this captivity. We would assume that Hezekiah listened to the prophets at this time, and thus called for his northern brothers who wanted to remain faithful to God to come out of the apostate Israel that remained in the northern kingdom after its fall. If he sent out the invitation after 722/21, then he asked them to come out of the fallen Israel. Whatever the case was at the time, the invitation went out to all the tribes of Israel for this unique celebration of the Passover feast. ***Will come again:*** Hezekiah's call was to the faithful who remained in the northern territories. He believed that even those who were taken captive from the northern ten tribes would come again from their captivity.

30:10-12 *Laughed ... scorn ... mocked:* Many of the northern kingdom had become truly secular. They had given up their religious heritage, and had become totally materialistic as a culture. These were those who mocked the invitation to come to a religious rededication at the Passover. ***Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun:*** At least from these three mentioned tribes a remnant came

to Judah, believing that their brethren who had been taken captive would return from captivity if they repented. We must never think that the totality of the northern ten tribes were taken into captivity. At least from these three tribes a remnant came to Judah. In the Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C. when Judah fell, we must assume that a remnant of the northern tribes was among the captivities that was carried to Babylon. From these a remnant returned from captivity in 536 B.C. (See comments of Ezra). At least we know that some from the descendants of Asher, as Anna's forefathers, were of the returnees, for she was a prophetess in Jerusalem at the time of the coming of the Messiah (See Lk 2:36). ***Many ... humbled themselves:*** Whenever apostasy sets in, we must never assume that everyone has gone with the majority into apostasy. In this case, there were still those in the northern kingdom who wanted to serve the Lord according to His will.

30:13-27 *Took away the altars:* These were the altars for Baal worship. Not only was the temple cleaned and cleansed, but also the city of Jerusalem. ***Feast of unleavened bread:*** This feast followed the eating of the Passover lamb. ***Were not sanctified:*** Since the occasion came about quickly, many of the participants were still unclean, and thus according to the law, could not eat the Passover. ***Hezekiah prayed for them:*** This was one time when a greater law prevailed over that which was written. It was a greater law that they eat the Passover. This law was greater than the law of being clean

in order to eat the Passover. Therefore, upon the prayer of Hezekiah, the Lord “healed” them for this special occasion (See comments Mt 12:1-8). **Continue another seven days:** It was truly a great celebration. It was a fourteen day occasion where the twelve tribes of Israel were reunited in spirit. Nothing as this had happened since the days Solomon completed the construction of the temple, which was about 230 years before this occasion.

Chapter 31

31:1-21 Now it was time to get down to the business of national restoration. Hezekiah was leading a restoration, not a reformation. Reformations only reform existing structures. In a restoration, existing religious structures are torn down and dumped in the Brook Kidron. The people at this time had made a massive paradigm shift in their thinking. The occasion of the fourteen-day “Passover lectureship” had united their hearts, and now it was time for astringent leadership on the part of Hezekiah. The result of the restoration was that as a united force all those who were in Jerusalem went throughout all Judah and eradicated the high places and altars of idolatrous religions. **Hezekiah appointed divisions:** Hezekiah’s next step was to organize the repentant. He organized the priests and Levites to assume their responsibility to lead spiritually the people and to carry out their responsibilities of ministry in reference to their physical duties for the people. **The king’s portion:** In order to lead the people as the king, the people

had to see the king himself giving to the offering. Hezekiah led by example. In order to encourage the priests and Levites, he commanded that the inhabitants of Jerusalem should contribute to their support. When the people willingly contributed, the priests and Levites were greatly encouraged. **When Hezekiah ... saw the heaps:** Hezekiah gave praise to God for working on the hearts of those who willingly contributed to the support of the priests and Levites. When God’s workers are supported by the people, God is glorified (See Dt 12:19; 14:22-29). **Over the freewill offerings:** The distribution of the offering was organized. Specific people were designated in order that the contributions be evenly distributed to the priests and Levites (See comments At 6:1-7). **With all his heart:** This was total commitment on the part of Hezekiah to do the will of the Lord (See Mt 22:37).

Chapter 32

32:1-8 (2 Kg 18:13 – 19:37; Is 36:1 – 37:38) Some have suggested that the date of this invasion took place about fifteen years after the Passover celebration of chapter 30, or in 710 B.C. Upon his ascension to the throne in Assyria, Sennacherib had to put down many revolts throughout his kingdom. One of the most significant discoveries that has been made was the discovery of the Sennacherib Prism (See *Encyclopedic Study Guide*, F. Sennacherib’s Prism). In this chapter is recorded a massive invasion of Judah. In his Prism, Sennacherib claims to have laid siege to 46 fortified cities of Hezekiah. Other archaeologi-

cal data supports this claim. Archaeological excavations have revealed the destruction of Judean cities from Phoenicia and Philistia all the way to, but not including, Jerusalem. Sennacherib stated on his Prism that he made a ferocious assault against Palestine in order to put down rebellion against his reign. However, he never claims to have conquered Jerusalem. He only boasted that he had “shut up Hezekiah in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage.” The writers of the Kings and Chronicles tell the rest of the story.

32:9-23 At the end of Sennacherib’s campaign into Judah, he came to the walls of Jerusalem. While engaged in a battle against Lachish at the time, he sent Rabshakeh to Jerusalem to taunt the Israelites who had taken their stand with God and behind Hezekiah and Isaiah. Since Lachish was only about 40 kilometers southwest of Jerusalem, the inhabitants of Jerusalem could surely see the smoke rising from Lachish as the army of Sennacherib burned the city. But with the encouragement of Isaiah, who was at the time with Hezekiah in Jerusalem, God promised that Sennacherib would never enter the city of Jerusalem (See Is 37:14-38).

32:24-33 (2 Kg 20:1-21; Is 38:1 – 39:8) *Hezekiah was sick unto death:* Compared to 2 Kings 20 and Isaiah 38, little information is given in Chronicles concerning the sickness of Hezekiah. *Hezekiah did not repay according to the benefit done to him:* We are not told the specifics of Hezekiah’s pride. Much had been done for him by God, but it seems he failed to give thanks to God for all

His blessings. Instead, Hezekiah became somewhat self-confident, and thus God sought to humble him. Upon rebuke of his pride, he did humble himself before the Lord. Judgment for his pride, however, did not come on Judah in his lifetime (See 2 Kg 20:19; Is 39:5-7). *Stopped the upper watercourse:* See comments 2 Kg 20:21,22. *Ambassadors ... of Babylon:* See comments 2 Kg 20:12-19.

Chapter 33

REIGN OF MANASSEH

33:1-9 (2 Kg 21;1-9,17,18)

Manasseh reigned from 687 to 642 B.C., but reigned coregently with his father, Hezekiah, from about 696 to 687 B.C. He was the longest reigning king of Judah. *Abominations of the nations:* All that we would conceive concerning the wickedness of the nations of the time, we would conceive as the depths to which Judah digressed through the leadership of Manasseh. The masses were no longer the people of God. It seems that Manasseh was rife with the abominations of the nations. He built altars to false gods, even in the temple. He offered his children as sacrifices and involved himself with witches and mediums. *More evil than the nations:* He led the people to be worse than the Canaanites that Israel had driven out of the land (See comments Gn 15:16). However, out of the depths of their apostasy that was led by Manasseh, God was able to bring Judah back to some extent through a repentant Manasseh.

33:10-13 In order to delay the captivity to which Judah was headed, God

took Manasseh into Babylonian captivity. **Hooks ... fetters:** With hooks in their lips and fetters on their ankles, Manasseh and others were taken into captivity. We know little of this captivity, other than the fact that in his situation in Babylon, Manasseh prayed for forgiveness. His captivity accomplished what God wanted, that is, his repentance.

33:14-17 When Manasseh was restored, he realized that there was only one God. This realization would later be characteristic of the remnant of all Israel who came forth from the captivities of Assyria and Babylon in 536 B.C. Never again were the Israelites tempted with beliefs in false gods, even to this day. **The people continued to sacrifice on the high places:** When Manasseh repented he did a great deal in restoring the nation to God. However, the people loved their high places, and thus went only so far in their restoration with Manasseh. Manasseh could not undo all the evil that he had done before his repentance.

33:18-20 The legacy that was left by Manasseh was his sin. Though he repented and sought to rectify the wickedness of his early life, we still see him as one of the most wicked kings of Judah who led Judah down a road of apostasy from which they did not recover.

REIGN OF AMON

33:21-25 (2 Kg 21:19-26) Amon was named after an Egyptian god. He reigned for only two years from 642 to 640 B.C. Amon took up where Manasseh had left off during his days of wickedness before his repentance. Amon was

unrepentant, and thus followed after the desires of his own lawlessness. He set an example of wickedness for the nation. He was killed in a conspiracy by his own servants in his own house.

Chapter 34

REIGN OF JOSIAH

34:1-13 (2 Kg 22:1-20) Josiah reigned from 640 to 608 B.C. and was the last and greatest restorationist of Judah. We are not told why he had a religious heart and a zeal to restore the religious behavior of Judah. He was possibly influenced by the repentant nature of Manasseh, realizing that if either he or Judah did not repent, he and the nation would suffer the same consequences as Manasseh when he was carried away into captivity. What we do understand is that when he finally secured a copy of the book of the law and read the curse that God would pour out on Israel for her disobedience, he astringently led to bring Judah back to the law of God. He purged the nation of the high places, cut down the groves, and destroyed the carved and molten images. He destroyed the altars of Baal and burned the bones of the priests of Baal. He even went beyond the borders of Judah and initiated restoration in places in the northern kingdom territory. He realized that if he did not lead Judah in a full restoration, the nation would end up as their northern brothers who were at this time in Assyrian captivity.

34:14-33 The legacy of Josiah will always be the response he had to reading the word of God. He was righteous be-

fore God before the discovery of the book of the law. However, when he read for himself, his response to what God said He would do to His people if they turned from Him was enough to set him into action to carry out one of the greatest restorations of all history. He saved his people from exile during his lifetime, but their apostasy had gone too far. They would still go into exile, but not during his lifetime.

Chapter 35

35:1-19 (2 Kg 23:21-23) *Not be a burden on your shoulders:* The ark may have been removed from the temple during the repairs of the temple. What Josiah was probably saying was metaphorical in reference to the anxiety of the Levites concerning the security of the ark. For years it had survived the apostasy of former kings. Josiah here reassured them that they should worry no more, for he would guarantee its safety. *Passover:* As in the days of Hezekiah eighty years before when a restoration was accomplished and celebrated with the eating of the Passover lamb, so on this occasion Josiah called for a celebration. It seems, however, that this Passover was even greater than the one that was celebrated during the restoration of Hezekiah. The significance of the Passover was to commemorate their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. In this celebration they were delivered from the idol worship of their fathers. Josiah had led a new generation of people out of the paradigm of the fathers, and in doing so, he instituted

change. Unfortunately, the sins of the fathers were deep in the culture of the apostate Judah, and thus in the few years after the death of Josiah, the people would find themselves in the bondage of the Babylonians.

35:20-27 (2 Kg 23:28-30) We are not told why Josiah made this foolish move. Pharaoh had warned him to stay out of the conflict between himself and the Babylonians. The Pharaoh of Egypt was on a mission to assist the Assyrians at Carchemish where the Assyrians were making a last stand against the Babylonians. The Carchemish battle occurred in 609 B.C., which date marks the year when Josiah was killed. It seems that Josiah's youthful pride moved him to go into a conflict in which he had no business involving himself. God allowed him to do that which He knew would end in his death. Sometimes God allows the righteous to die without explanation. But in this case, we assume that God was already carrying out plans for the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of Judah. He did not want Josiah in his old age to be taken into exile. It was better for him to die a hero of faith than to be humiliated by going into exile. *Jeremiah lamented for Josiah:* We are sure that this great prophet of God wondered why the righteous should die in the way that Josiah died. One lesson from this incident is learned. God is not obligated to protect us from our foolishness. Josiah was so loved among the people that the entire nation lamented his death.

Chapter 36

REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ

36:1-4 (2 Kg 23:30 – 24:20; Jr 52:1-11) The death of Josiah in 609 B.C. was the beginning of the end of the southern kingdom of Israel. Josiah's son, Jehoahaz (Joahaz or Shallum), reigned for only three months. He was the people's choice to be king. However, he was deposed and carried into Egyptian captivity by Pharaoh Neco. The Pharaoh then appointed his brother, Jehoiakim (Eliakim), to be the king over the people.

REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM

36:5-8 Jehoiakim was the oldest son of Josiah. Because he had the backing of Pharaoh Neco, he was the vassal of Pharaoh for eleven years. However, events in the world had changed and the Babylonian Empire, after the defeat of the Assyrians in 609 B.C., came into prominence at the end of his eleven year reign. He was subsequently replaced by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who took him into captivity. This was the first conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, which resulted not only in the change of Judean kings, but also the plundering of the treasures of the temple.

REIGN OF JEHOIACHIN

36:9,10 597 B.C. was the first defeat of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. It was during this time that Nebuchadnezzar made a regime change in Jerusalem. He took Jehoiakim into captivity and replaced him with Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin. The people of God had now gone from God-anointed kings as Saul, then David

and Solomon, to kings the people appointed for themselves, and now to kings that were appointed by foreign governments. *Eight years old:* This variant is not to be preferred over the eighteen years of age that is recorded in 2 Kings 24:8.

REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH

36:11-14 When Jehoiachin did that which was evil, he too was taken into captivity and replaced with Zedekiah, another son of Josiah (2 Kg 24:18 – 25:21). Zedekiah was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah remained as king from 597 to the final destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Zedekiah was a defiant king. The final days of the southern kingdom came as a result of his defiance against Babylonian control. Judah had already become a secular state. What brought the final end of the kingdom were the bad judgments of those who were placed in power. In the case of Zedekiah, he had rejected the counsel of Jeremiah and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. He led the priests and the people to do the same, and thus, the authority that put him in power came from Babylon to take him from power. The result of the insurrection was the total destruction of Jerusalem, including the temple, royal palace and all the major buildings of the city. The Israelites were condemned to seventy years of captivity, long enough for a rebellious generation to die off in order that a new generation of captive-born leaders to come into influence and subsequently lead a repentant remnant back from Babylonian captivity (See Jr 25:12; 29:10).

36:15-21 Brought to Babylon:

From this statement we assume that the writer of the Chronicles was in Babylon at the time he wrote. The Chronicles were written after Cyrus assumed control of the Babylonian Empire. It was at this time that the Medo-Persian Empire came into existence. **Sabbaths:** See Lv 26:34-43; Dn 9:2. The land rested from being used for crops. **Jeremiah:** He had prophesied that the Israelites would go into seventy years of captivity (Jr 29:10).

DECREE OF CYRUS OF PERSIA

36:22,23 (Er 1:1-4) In 539 B.C. the army of Cyrus took control of Babylon. Cyrus was the king of the Medo-Persian

Empire. A year later in 538 B.C., he gave the decree that is here recorded. The decree released those Israelites who were in captivity to go back to Jerusalem in order to rebuild their city and the temple (See Is 44:28; 45:1; Er 1:1-3). In doing so, they were to preserve Israel for the coming promises concerning the Messiah. Since the Medo-Persian Empire included all the territory of the former Assyrian and Babylonian Empires, then the Jews who were given the opportunity to return came from all the tribes of Israel (see comments of Ezra). In the writing of the decree, God's promise that a remnant would return was fulfilled.