

# Notes on 2 Chronicles

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## Introduction

For an explanation of the title, writer, date, scope, and purpose of this book, see my comments in my notes on 1 Chronicles. Second Chronicles continues the historical narrative begun in 1 Chronicles.

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## Exposition

### III. THE REIGN OF SOLOMON CHS. 1—9 (cont'd from 1 Chronicles outline)

The Chronicler's main interest in David's reign, as we have seen, focused on the Davidic Covenant with its promises to David and his descendants. In recounting the events of Solomon's reign he proceeded to emphasize the temple that Solomon built. Almost everything he mentioned about Solomon ties in with the temple somehow. The writer of Kings, on the other hand, emphasized many different aspects of Solomon's reign, though his interest was particularly Solomon's fidelity to the Mosaic Covenant (1 Kings 1—11). In the rest of 2 Chronicles the writer likewise pointed out how the kings who succeeded Solomon cared for the temple and perpetuated temple worship.

When the Chronicler wrote his history there was controversy over the second temple (i.e., the temple that Ezra built). Some of the residents in and around Jerusalem opposed its construction (Ezra 4:4-24; Hag. 1:2-4). If the returned exiles were to renew their (Mosaic) covenant relationship with God, they had to have a temple. There they could obey the laws regarding expiation of sin, worship, and fellowship with God (cf. Exod. 25:8).

Furthermore, when the Chronicler lived the Israelites realized that God had not fulfilled the promises concerning David's son completely in Solomon's day or during any of his successors' reigns. They looked for a Messiah to appear who would be both a king and a priest. The prophets had given revelation that such a person would come someday. He would be a perfect king who would rule the whole world, not just Israel (Ps. 2; et al.). Moreover he would be a priest, not of the Aaronic order, but of the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110; et al.). David was the first king of Israel who served as a faithful priest after this order. He personally offered sacrifices and led the people in worship as well as in government. David's successors on the throne did the same things. The prophets promised that Messiah would build a house (temple) for God. He would give attention to His people's worship of God and their fellowship with God. He would be a man of peace compared to David who was a man of war (1 Chron. 22:7-9). David's rule was the kind of rule the coming King would establish. Consequently the writer of Chronicles measured all David's successors by the standard of David and his kingdom.

Concern for temple worship marked David's rule, as we have seen in 1 Chronicles 17—29. The King who would fulfill God's covenant promises to David would have to possess similar zeal for temple worship (cf. John 2:17). The writer viewed Solomon as a second David and compared him to David as Joshua compares to Moses.<sup>1</sup> The Chronicler reviewed the histories of David's successors to see if any one of them was that King. He showed in 2 Chronicles that none was. He was yet to come.

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<sup>1</sup>See Raymond B. Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, pp. 1-7; H. G. M. Williamson, "The Accession of Solomon in the Books of Chronicles," *Vetus Testamentum* 26 (1976):351-61.

When Solomon began to rule he stepped onto a political stage in the ancient Near East that God had prepared. There were no major empires reaching out to conquer surrounding territories because these empires had internal problems that demanded their attention. Some of them were experiencing harassment from their neighbors. Consequently Solomon was free to solidify David's gains in an atmosphere of peace.

### **A. SOLOMON'S WISDOM AND PROSPERITY CH. 1**

Solomon had some serious weaknesses that the writer of Kings pointed out. However the Chronicler presented a generally positive picture of this great ruler because Solomon did well regarding Yahweh worship at the temple. His people's spiritual life was one of Solomon's primary concerns. He devoted himself to making worship and fellowship with God possible for the Israelites. In this he was similar to the promised ideal King.

One of Solomon's first official acts as king was to worship Yahweh (v. 3). This happened at Gibeon where the central sanctuary stood. David had taken the ark into Jerusalem, but the Mosaic tabernacle at Gibeon was still a legitimate place of worship. It was the only place where the priests could offer sacrifices on the bronze altar that apparently remained from the wilderness wanderings. The writer emphasized the legitimacy of Solomon's act of worship (vv. 3-6).<sup>2</sup>

"The second book [of Chronicles] begins, theologically and not just geographically, at Gibeon, for 'the bronze altar . . . was there' (1:5a). The previous two chapters focus on what God does; these two [i.e., chs. 1 & 2] turn our attention to what man will do in response."<sup>3</sup>

Solomon requested the wisdom he needed to understand and obey the Mosaic Law by which Israel's kings were to shepherd the nation (v. 10; cf. Deut. 4:5-8; 17:18-20; Matt. 7:7; James 1:5). Solomon's heart was right, as David's had been. He wanted to serve God faithfully and to honor Him above himself. He was off to a good start as Israel's shepherd.

"Solomon's repeated reference to his father, David, shows that he was in a sense praying in David's name. That is, he was relying on his relationship as David's son for favor with God."<sup>4</sup>

"The central teaching of chapter 1 . . . lies in Solomon's selfless prayer for wisdom, which was the precise characteristic that his father David had already invoked for him (1 Chron. 22:12)."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Other "high places" were contaminated by association with Baal worship and were, therefore, under God's ban, even if the Israelites used them to worship Yahweh (cf. Num. 33:52; Deut. 12:2).

<sup>3</sup>Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Chronicles*, p. 122.

<sup>4</sup>J. A. Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, p. 205.

<sup>5</sup>J. Barton Payne, "1, 2 Chronicles," in *1 Kings-Job*, vol. 4 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 441.

"The right place to begin was with God. His favor and direction alone could give health and peace to the nation. Once again, therefore, the king is portrayed in a favorable light not in order to obscure his sins but in order to make the point that the good things he did are what we should imitate."<sup>6</sup>

## **B. THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE 2:1—5:1**

Solomon was a model of the ultimate Davidic temple builder. Consequently the writer gave his temple construction much attention. This was Solomon's major accomplishment from this writer's point of view.

### **1. Preparations for building the temple ch. 2**

Though he gave some attention to the materials Solomon used in the temple, the writer's primary interest was the communications between Solomon and Hiram (Hiram). Solomon's letter reveals that he had a sincere desire to glorify God. He did not regard building the temple as a duty David had imposed on him. Furthermore his conception of Yahweh was appropriate and realistic (v. 5). Hiram's reply (vv. 11-16) shows that in Solomon's day Israel was drawing Gentile nations to Yahweh. This was part of God's purpose for Israel and was something the ideal Son of David would accomplish (cf. Hag. 2:7; Zech. 8:22-23). Verses 11 and 12 are not in the parallel passage in 1 Kings 5.<sup>7</sup>

### **2. The temple proper 3:1-9**

The mention of Mount Moriah as the site of the temple (v. 1) recalls God's provision of a substitute sacrifice for Isaac on that very spot (Gen. 22:2, 14).<sup>8</sup> The temple would later stand there, and the high priest would offer a substitute sacrifice for Israel on the Day of Atonement each year there.

The glory of the temple was not so much its size as its quality and appearance. The writer stressed the gold that overlaid it and its general magnificence. Its significance was that it represented the glory of Yahweh, the greatest of all gods (2:5). In the ancient Near East a god's house (temple) represented the god.

### **3. The temple furnishings 3:10—5:1**

The cherubim (3:10-13) represented angelic beings (cf. Gen. 3:24). Probably they looked more like the sculptured combination human-animal-bird creatures that archaeologists have discovered in the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian capitals than like pudgy winged

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<sup>6</sup>Thompson, p. 202.

<sup>7</sup>On the similarities between the building of the tabernacle and the building of Solomon's temple, see Payne, p. 444; Roddy Braun, "The Message of Chronicles: Rally 'Round the Temple," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 42:8 (September 1971):502-14; and Raymond B. Dillard, "The Chronicler's Solomon," *Westminster Theological Journal* 43 (1981):289-300.

<sup>8</sup>See Asher Kaufman, "Where the Ancient Temple of Jerusalem Stood," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 9:2 (March-April 1983):40-59.

children. This child motif is traceable to medieval Christian artists. The cherubim evidently stood against the back (west) wall of the temple and faced east toward the ark.<sup>9</sup> They were twice as high as human beings.

The two pillars (3:15-17) were evidently contemporary freestanding objects that served as visual aids designed to emphasize God's faithfulness and strength in establishing Israel (cf. 1 Kings 7:21; 2 Chron. 7:16). They were probably 18 rather than 35 cubits high (cf. 1 Kings 7:15).<sup>10</sup>

God designed the temple furnishings (ch. 4) to enable the priests to carry out the instructive ritual that the Mosaic Law prescribed. The furnishings and ritual taught and reminded everyone who viewed them lessons about God, man, and the relationship between them that God's grace had made possible.

"The Chronicler . . . fashioned his account of Solomon as temple builder, with his helper Hiram-Abi (2 Chr 4:16), on that of Bezalel, the tabernacle supervisor of building, and his helper Oholiab (Exod 36:1-2). Solomon is seen as the new Bezalel and Hiram-Abi as the new Oholiab."<sup>11</sup>

The whole temple was a tribute to the greatness of Yahweh. It enhanced His reputation (2:4).

### **C. THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE 5:2—7:10**

The dedication ceremonies consisted of four parts: the installation of the ark, Solomon's address to the people, Solomon's prayer, and the celebration of the people.

"There can be little doubt that this ceremony, together with God's response which immediately follows it, marks one of the major climaxes in the Chronicler's presentation."<sup>12</sup>

#### **1. The installation of the ark 5:2-14**

Solomon dedicated the temple during the feast of Tabernacles (v. 3). The priests brought the ark and the other utensils that had been in the tent David had pitched for the ark into the temple. The temple site was north of and higher than the city of David where the people lived. Sacrifices of worship accompanied the installation. The descent of the cloud (shekinah) signified that God's presence now abode in the most holy place in a localized sense (cf. Exod. 40:34-35). From then on God dwelt there among His people until the Babylonians destroyed the temple in 586 B.C. His presence was the basis for Solomon's address to the people and his prayer that followed.

<sup>9</sup>Eugene H. Merrill, "2 Chronicles," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, p. 622.

<sup>10</sup>For my comments and other sources of information on the remaining temple furnishings that the Chronicler mentioned, see my notes on 1 Kings 7.

<sup>11</sup>Thompson, pp. 41-42.

<sup>12</sup>H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, p. 213.

The statement in verse 9 that the poles of the ark were visible "to this day" suggests that someone wrote Chronicles before the destruction of the temple. However most scholars believe the evidence for a postexilic date of composition is overwhelming and that this reference is a copyist's mistake. Probably it came into this text from 1 Kings 8:8.<sup>13</sup> Evidently the veil did not extend the full width of the sanctuary.

## **2. Solomon's address 6:1-11**

Solomon repeated some of the promises in the Davidic Covenant publicly. His completion of the temple fulfilled part of what God had promised. Complete fulfillment required Solomon's continued faithfulness to God (1 Chron. 28:9). Unfortunately Solomon was not completely faithful so some of those promises remained unfulfilled. Another Son of David would fulfill them later.

God had previously dwelt in the thick cloud on Mount Sinai (Exod. 20:21) as well as among His people in the wilderness (Exod. 40:34-35). This cloud again represented God's presence among His people (cf. 2 Sam. 22:7-18; Ps. 97:2; et al.).

God's choice of Jerusalem as His place of dwelling and David as His vice-regent (v. 6) would have encouraged the returned exiles. They were back in Jerusalem, and the descendants of David lived among them. God had commended David's desire to glorify Himself (v. 8), another incentive for Solomon's hearers, for the restoration community, and for us.

## **3. Solomon's prayer 6:12-42**

In his prayer Solomon explained the significance of God's coming to indwell His temple. God had come to empower, to have fellowship, and to judge, if necessary. God was present among His people, and He would hear their prayers when they obediently called out to Him.

Solomon acknowledged that God had fulfilled some of the promises of the Davidic Covenant already (v. 15), but he also saw that there were others yet unfulfilled. He called on God to grant them (v. 16). Solomon's view of God was that He was both transcendent and immanent (v. 18). Even though God is everywhere at once, He can and does localize His presence as well (e.g., the incarnate Christ, cf. John 2:20-21). At this period in history He localized His presence in the temple. Nevertheless in heaven He would hear the prayers of His people wherever they might be when they called out to Him (vv. 38-39).

Solomon specified seven concrete situations in which he asked the Lord to intervene in answer to prayer. These were when the people swore an oath in the temple (vv. 22-23), suffered defeat and exile from an enemy (vv. 24-25), and lacked rain (vv. 26-27). They were also when they experienced disease or other disaster (vv. 28-31), and when foreigners would come to pray toward the temple (vv. 32-33). The final two situations

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<sup>13</sup>Payne, p. 460; and C. F. Keil, *The Books of the Chronicles*, p. 324.

were when Israel was at war (vv. 34-35), and when Israel was in captivity due to sin (vv. 36-39).

This prayer is similar in its structure to Abraham's prayer recorded in Genesis 18:22-33. It also recalls Elijah's prayer on Mount Carmel in that God responded to both of these prayers with fire from heaven (7:1; cf. 1 Kings 18:38-39).

#### **4. The celebration of the people 7:1-10**

This celebration consisted of the seven-day dedication of the bronze altar followed by the seven-day feast of Tabernacles. The very large number of sacrifices Solomon offered seems incredible, but there are records of other large sacrifices such as this one that scholars have discovered from ancient times (cf. 1 Kings 8:63).<sup>14</sup>

"The double attestation of the temple, in 5:13, 14 and 7:1-3a, reminds one of the twofold divine endorsement of Jesus, with a voice from heaven at his baptism and a voice from the cloud of glory at his transfiguration (Mark 1:11; 9:7)."<sup>15</sup>

This record of the dedication of the temple emphasizes both the importance of the temple and the character of Israel's God who indwelt it. Solomon reunited the ark, the symbol of God's grace, and the altar, the symbol of human sacrificial response to that grace. It was now possible for Israel to fulfill the purpose for which God had created her as never before in her history. The temple was the key to this possibility. That is why the temple was so important in the national life of Israel.

#### **D. GOD'S BLESSINGS AND CURSES 7:11-22**

God responded to Solomon's prayer with a special revelation. He promised to grant the petitions of the people, as Solomon had requested, if they manifested a true heart for Him (vv. 12-14). Verses 13 and 14 are a short summary of the message of Chronicles.

"This verse [v. 14] is of vital significance for the Chronicler's theology. Four avenues of repentance are mentioned that will lead God to forgive and restore. Each of these is taken up at appropriate places in the later narrative of Chronicles, often in connection with one of the remarkable interventions of God."<sup>16</sup>

God would establish Solomon's kingdom if he fully obeyed God's Word (vv. 17-18). However if Solomon proved unfaithful, the nation might go into exile and Israel's enemies might destroy the temple (vv. 19-22).

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<sup>14</sup>Edward Curtis and Albert Madsen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles*, p. 348.

<sup>15</sup>Leslie C. Allen, *1, 2 Chronicles*, p. 236.

<sup>16</sup>Thompson, p. 43.

This passage shows how to avoid the consequences of disobedience: submit to God, pray, and repent (i.e., change direction, not just feeling; v. 14). This remedy is as applicable today as it was in postexilic Israel and in the days of Israel's monarchy. The promise that God would "heal their land" ties in with His earlier promise to bless *the Israelites' land* with rain and fertility if they obeyed His commandments *in the Mosaic Law* (Deut. 28:11-12). God has not promised specifically to heal the land of other believers who obey His will for them. However, He has promised to bless generally those who do so (Ps. 1; Matt 6:33; Gal. 6:7-8; et al.).

### **E. SOLOMON'S SUCCESSES CHS. 8—9**

This section of the text is similar to 1 Chronicles 18—21. Those chapters showed how God did keep His promises to David that the Chronicler recorded in 1 Chronicles 17:8-12. These chapters (8—9) show how God kept His promise to Solomon in 1:12 and 7:17-18.

#### **1. Solomon's political success 8:1-11**

God blessed Solomon by giving him good relations with King Hiram of Tyre (v. 1). Hiram evidently returned the cities Solomon had previously given to him (v. 2; cf. 1 Kings 9:10-14). Then Solomon developed these towns. Solomon also captured more territory and fortified many cities.

"It seems safe to say that, following this action, Israel controlled more territory than at any other time in its history. In his day, Solomon was probably the most powerful and influential ruler in the Middle East."<sup>17</sup>

Moreover he controlled the native Canaanite population (v. 8). Verse 3, which is very brief, is the only reference in Chronicles to Solomon's military activity. Everywhere else his image is that of a peaceful king (1 Chron. 22:9).

#### **2. Solomon's religious success 8:12-16**

Solomon was faithful to perform what the Mosaic Law required in ritual worship. In this he succeeded, though in his heart he departed from the Lord. The Chronicler gave him credit where credit was due and did not draw attention to his failings.

"This verse [v. 16] represents an important literary mark in the story of the Chronicler, concluding the long section that began at 2:1. A similar phrase to 'so the temple of the LORD was finished' occurs in 29:35, as the Chronicler concluded his account of the restoration of the temple service under Hezekiah."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Leon J. Wood, *Israel's United Monarchy*, p. 326.

<sup>18</sup>Thompson, p. 240.

### **3. Solomon's economic success 8:17—9:28**

God gave Solomon wisdom and wealth as He had promised (1:12). The location of Ophir (8:18) is uncertain. Scholars have suggested India, Somaliland on the east coast of Africa, West Arabia, and South Arabia.

The Queen of Sheba attested to Solomon's wisdom (9:1-12). God's purpose for Israel was that she should draw the nations to Yahweh (Exod. 19:5-6). We see Israel realizing this purpose partially in this queen's visit to Solomon. She came to listen to him, and she brought gifts to him (cf. Isa. 2:3; 60:3, 5-6; Hag. 2:7).

"Negotiations with Solomon concerning trade in aromatic resins were to be expected. Frankincense and myrrh were in high demand for use in pharmacopoeia and cosmetics, embalming and religious offerings (Isa 60:6; Jer 6:20). Frankincense and myrrh ranked alongside gold for trade and as gifts for a king."<sup>19</sup>

"The Queen of Sheba who came to Jerusalem with much wealth and found that she had only imagined the half of the king's wisdom gives a dramatic picture of the hope that the Chronicler, along with the prophets, had vested in the Davidic kingship."<sup>20</sup>

"The impression made upon the Queen of Sheba shows the power that belongs to the children of God to bring God to those who are, figuratively speaking, 'far off'. "<sup>21</sup>

Other Gentile nations also contributed greatly to Solomon's wealth (vv. 22-24). God brought this wealth to Solomon because of his obedience. Nevertheless Solomon only partially fulfilled God's promises. Their complete fulfillment awaited the appearance of the perfectly obedient Son of David.

### **4. Solomon's death 9:29-31**

The Chronicler omitted any reference to Solomon's apostasy that resulted in the division of the kingdom (cf. 1 Kings 11:9-11). By doing so, he was not trying to whitewash Solomon's record. The Book of Kings was available to the postexilic community as were other records of Solomon's reign, to which he referred his readers (v. 29).<sup>22</sup> He chose to present only those aspects of Solomon's career in which he provided a positive example of trust and obedience and consequent blessing. His purpose was to encourage his readers with a good example and to build hope for the future King, not to lament the past. The purpose of Chronicles thus emerges quite clearly. It was to preach a message for the

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>20</sup>John Sailhamer, *First and Second Chronicles*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>21</sup>McConville, p. 148.

<sup>22</sup>Iddo was a seer (cf. 12:15) and prophet (13:22) whose ministry apparently consisted primarily in writing books. No references to him depict him as involved in any other event.

present generation from the earlier historical records. It was not primarily to provide a parallel or supplementary historical record to what existed in Samuel and Kings.

Solomon modeled the ultimate Davidic temple builder. He was wise and prosperous. He built and dedicated the glorious temple, and he received the wealth of the Gentiles who sought his wisdom.<sup>23</sup> David's ultimate Son would do all of these things too. Solomon proved not to be the Son of David who would rule forever. Nevertheless his reign helped the Jews of the restoration period know what they needed to do and to what they could look forward.

"The Chronicler's aim in his portrayal of Solomon is to show how God governed the events of history to impart to the kingdom of Israel, at least once, a splendour [*sic*] which was fit to symbolize his own. . . . The Kings and Chronicles accounts, taken together, become another testimony—alongside the whole biblical picture of David—to the way in which God deigns to use great sinners in the work of his kingdom, so much so that the OT's latest picture of Solomon does not even remember his sins."<sup>24</sup>

"The study of typology is an approach to the Bible that can readily be abused. But nothing could be more biblical than to hold that the Davidic monarchy is a type of the rule of Christ."<sup>25</sup>

#### **IV. THE REIGNS OF SOLOMON'S SUCCESSORS CHS. 10—36**

"With the close of Solomon's reign we embark upon a new phase in Chr.'s account of Israel's history. That account can be broadly divided . . . into the pre-Davidic era, the time of David and Solomon, and the period of the divided monarchy up until the Babylonian exile."<sup>26</sup>

". . . the Chronicler never regarded the northern monarchy as anything but illegitimate and a rebellion against God's chosen dynasty. As far as he was concerned, all Israel had one and only one ruling family."<sup>27</sup>

The writer continued his sermon by evaluating each of Solomon's successors with the same yardstick he had used on Solomon, namely, the example of David. His intent appears to have been to show that none of David's descendants measured up to him much less surpassed him. Consequently the promised Son of David was yet to appear. The relationship of each king to temple worship showed his heart commitment to God. So there is much in what follows that deals with the kings' relationship to the temple and temple worship.

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<sup>23</sup>Jeffrey Townsend, "The Purpose of 1 and 2 Chronicles," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145:575 (July-September 1987):288.

<sup>24</sup>McConville, p. 110.

<sup>25</sup>Wilcock, p. 141.

<sup>26</sup>McConville, p. 150.

<sup>27</sup>Thompson, p. 249. See also G. N. Knoppers, "Rehoboam in Chronicles: Villain or Victim?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109 (1990):423-40.

## **A. REHOBOAM CHS. 10—12**

### **1. The division of the nation ch. 10**

This account is very similar to the one in 1 Kings 12. Solomon's son Rehoboam did not act wisely and therefore lost his kingdom. The Chronicler added that a prophet had foretold this situation (v. 15; cf. 11:1-4). The division of the kingdom looked like a tragedy, but it was part of God's plan for His people. That would have given hope to the original readers since the captivity looked like a tragedy, but prophets had foretold it too. It was part of God's sovereign will. Furthermore it was not the end of the nation (cf. Ezek. 37:11-13).

"Jeroboam stands forever as a caution against the danger of becoming passionately angry about a rightly perceived evil, yet blinded by that passion to such an extent that all measures taken against it seem right. When this happens there is almost inevitably a failure, ironically, to distinguish between right and wrong."<sup>28</sup>

### **2. Rehoboam's kingdom ch. 11**

This chapter is unique to Chronicles. It contains an evaluation of both Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Israel set up a humanly devised form of worship (v. 15). This resulted in many of the faithful followers of Yahweh moving from Israel to Judah so they could continue to worship God as He had specified (v. 16).

The faithful worshippers of Yahweh thus populated Judah. The true Israel was now in Judah (cf. v. 3; 12:1).<sup>29</sup> Faithfulness lasted only three years, however (v. 17). Rehoboam, like Solomon, was not entirely faithful.

"Each of the three short paragraphs which make up this section [11:5-23] uses a motif (building; defection of the faithful from the north to the south; large family) which the Chronicler regularly uses to demonstrate God's reward for faithfulness."<sup>30</sup>

### **3. The invasion by Egypt ch. 12**

The writer pointed out the connection between Shishak's invasion and Rehoboam's unfaithfulness clearly (vv. 1-5; cf. Prov. 3:12).

"The passage makes use of terms that are characteristic of the Chronicler's theology of divine retribution, namely, 'forsake' or 'abandon' (vv. 1, 5), 'be unfaithful' (v. 2), and 'humble oneself' (vv. 6-7, 12). The Shishak incident provided a model of the sort of thing that could happen again."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>McConville, p. 155.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Williamson, *1 and 2 . . .*, p. 238.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>31</sup>Thompson, p. 257.

"After three years of stability, Rehoboam led Judah into apostasy. There are conscious parallels with Saul. The 'unfaithfulness' of v. 2 is the same term as that which was applied to Israel's first king (1 Chr. 10:13). Rehoboam, therefore, has entered upon what might be termed a 'Saul' period in his reign, which contrasts with the early phase, in which he 'walked . . . in the way of David and Solomon'."<sup>32</sup>

Rehoboam's repentance caused God to grant deliverance from the Egyptians (vv. 6-7, 12; cf. Ps. 51:17). Over all, Rehoboam failed to set his heart on the Lord (v. 14). This resulted in his doing evil, namely, not leading the people to follow Yahweh as David had done.

"The case of Rehoboam has shown particularly clearly how much the Chronicler is concerned to show that obedience and blessing, disobedience and impoverishment are closely linked."<sup>33</sup>

"The destiny of any country depends to a great extent on the character of its leaders; and this was particularly the case among the Hebrews, into whose history God chose to intervene more directly than he has for other nations."<sup>34</sup>

### **B. ABIJAH 13:1—14:1**

Abijah generally did not please God (1 Kings 15:3). However there was the instance the Chronicler recorded in which he spoke out in favor of the temple, the priests, and the Levites against the apostate Jeroboam and Israel.

This is the only place in Chronicles where the writer linked the reigns of the southern and northern kings (vv. 1-2). He may have done this to identify the occasion on which Abijah made his speech since Jeroboam and he were constantly fighting. Abijah took the offensive this time even though Jeroboam outnumbered him two soldiers to one (v. 3). Since the town of Zemaraim lay within the territory of Benjamin (Josh. 18:22), this battle must have taken place near the border between Ephraim (Israel) and Judah. Abijah charged Israel with fighting against Yahweh since the Judahites had remained faithful to Him (vv. 11-12). Judah won because the people relied on Yahweh (vv. 15, 18).

"It is hard to avoid the thought that, in biblical theology, weakness is a positive advantage, because it is a prerequisite of reliance (cf. 2 Cor. 12:10)."<sup>35</sup>

The reference to a "covenant of salt" (v. 5) suggests the connection between the ratification of a treaty and a meal (Exod. 24:11) at which salt provided seasoning (cf.

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<sup>32</sup>McConville, pp. 157-58.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>34</sup>Payne, p. 478.

<sup>35</sup>McConville, p. 165.

Lev. 2:13). Normally participants sealed covenants by eating a meal together. What is more important, salt as a preservative symbolized the covenant-makers' hope that their agreement would last a long time (cf. Num. 18:19).

The real difference between the Southern and Northern Kingdoms was theological. Judah was relying on what God had done, but Israel was trusting in what she could do. The temple site and ritual were God's provision for His people (cf. Gen. 22:14). Israel had rejected these and had set up a system of her own devising that she hoped would make her acceptable to God. Israel had rejected God's grace and had adopted a works system of worship.

This chapter is the only assessment in Chronicles of the Northern Kingdom's sin. From here on, the writer's attention focused on Judah primarily.

Other evidences of God's blessing on Abijah were the cities he was able to take from Israel (v. 19), the death of his enemy, Jeroboam (v. 20), his power (v. 21), and his many children (v. 21). Though marrying many wives was a sin, fathering many children was an evidence of divine blessing (fruitfulness).<sup>36</sup>

### **C. ASA 14:2—16:14**

Chronicles gives much more attention to Asa than Kings does. That is because Asa's experiences illustrated the points the Chronicler wanted to drive home to his readers.

We have already seen in Rehoboam's history that obedience brought blessing from God, but disobedience brought discipline (chs. 11—12). The Chronicler used this retributive motif frequently. We see it clearly here in Asa's history.<sup>37</sup> In chapters 14—15 we see Asa obeying and blessed. In chapter 16 he was disobedient, and God disciplined him.

#### **1. Asa's wisdom 14:2-15**

Asa inherited a kingdom at peace. He wisely used the peace to purge the idolatry that had crept into Judah (vv. 3-5). The term "Asherim" (pl. of *'asherah*) refers to the various representations of Baal's goddess consort Asherah. The Canaanites believed this goddess resided in a carved wooden pole that they erected beside a carved stone pillar in which they believed Baal abode. Both the wooden poles and the stone pillars served as incense stands, and both were idols.<sup>38</sup>

Asa also fortified his defenses against future attacks from the North. Because of his trust in Yahweh, God gave him deliverance from his attackers (vv. 9-15).

<sup>36</sup>The writer's notation "the treatise of the prophet Iddo" (v. 27) is literally in Hebrew "the *midrash* of the prophet Iddo." A *midrash* is a commentary (cf. 24:27).

<sup>37</sup>Raymond B. Dillard, "The Reign of Asa (2 Chronicles 14—16): An Example of the Chronicler's Theological Method," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23 (September 1980):213-18.

<sup>38</sup>William F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, pp. 215-16.

"They [the Cushites, v. 9] have been identified with Ethiopians (cf. 16:8). This is rejected by recent commentators. The reference in 14:15 to a Bedouin group with sheep, goats, and camels that Asa drove off has led several recent writers to suggest that Cush may have been an ethnic group living in the vicinity of Judah (cf. Hab 3:7)."<sup>39</sup>

In all these events Asa followed the good examples of David and Solomon.

### **2. Asa's reform ch. 15**

The Chronicler featured Azariah's sermon (vv. 1-7), Asa's reformation (vv. 8-15), and Maacah's removal (vv. 16-19) during the middle part of Asa's reign.

A message from the prophet Azariah was the spark that ignited revival in Asa's day.<sup>40</sup> Asa responded to Azariah's challenge by rededicating the temple, himself, and his people to the Mosaic Covenant. He even executed those who refused to submit to that covenant (Exod. 22:20; Deut. 13:6-9). His removal of the powerful dowager queen (v. 16) shows that he put spiritual purity above family loyalty.<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately Asa's revival did not result in the removal of the high places in Israel (v. 17) even though Asa destroyed them in Judah (cf. 14:3). Asa's heart was not sinless, but it was blameless all his days (v. 17). Zeal for the house and worship of the Lord marked him as a true son of David.

The writer counted Simeon among the northern tribes because many of the Simeonites, although some lived within the tribe of Judah, allied with their northern brothers in their religion (cf. 34:6).<sup>42</sup> Many Simeonites had apparently moved north into Israel.

### **3. Asa's failure ch. 16**

Three parts also mark this record of the later period of Asa's reign: his war with Baasha (vv. 1-6), Hanani's sermon (vv. 7-10), and the conclusion of his reign (vv. 11-14).

Asa's heart was right in that he consistently loved God. Nevertheless, like David, his obedience lapsed. He trusted in a foreign alliance and later in physicians more than in Yahweh. This resulted in defeat and death.

"Asa, then, has done a complete volte-face from his earlier faithfulness. It is as if we meet two altogether different Asas. He appeared first in the strength of God-reliance, now in the weakness of self-reliance."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup>Thompson, p. 267. Cf. Williamson, *1 and 2 . . .*, pp. 263-65. J. Daniel Hays, "The Cushites: A Black Nation in the Bible," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153:612 (October-December 1996):401-3, argued for their being from Cush (modern Ethiopia).

<sup>40</sup>Gerhard von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, pp. 267-80, named the literary form in which a confessional statement is made with a quotation from the canonical prophets as "the Levitical Sermon" (cf. vv. 2-7; 16:7-9; 19:6-7; 20:15-17, 20; 29:5-11).

<sup>41</sup>Other significant queen mothers during the monarchy were Bathsheba, Jezebel, and Athaliah.

<sup>42</sup>Keil, pp. 364-65.

<sup>43</sup>McConville, p. 174.

Rather than confessing his guilt, Asa became angry and oppressed his own kingdom. It may have looked for a while as if Asa was the Son of David who would perfectly trust and obey God. Unfortunately he did not remain faithful.

"Just as the Chronicler inserted Azariah's sermon in 15:2-7 to interpret to his readers the positive period of Asa's reign, so here he draws out the lessons to be learned from his falling away."<sup>44</sup>

"There are some occasions in the Bible when a person's handling of some small matter is taken as an indication of his capacity to handle a large one (e.g. Matt. 25:21, 23; Jer. 12:5). Asa, however, having passed the sternest of tests first (by withstanding Zerah), fails a comparatively trivial one."<sup>45</sup>

Verse 9 is especially noteworthy (cf. Zech. 4:10). No problem can arise for God's people of which He is not aware and out of which He cannot deliver them if they commit themselves to Him fully (cf. Rom. 8:28). Verse 10 records the first persecution of a prophet, but many others followed (cf. 1 Kings 22:27; Mark 6:17-18).

Asa was one of Judah's best kings, but he failed as did all the rest.

#### **D. JEHOSEPHAT CHS. 17—20**

This account of Jehoshaphat's rule reveals that God was then actively leading His people. These were the years of alliance with Israel. Ahab was on the throne of the Northern Kingdom.

The Chronicler deliberately presented Jehoshaphat's record very similarly to the way he recounted Asa's experiences. In chapters 17—20, as in 14—16, we have a series of contrasts that teach the same lessons. These lessons are the importance of depending on Yahweh and being loyal to Him by obeying His Word and seeking His help.

Both Asa and Jehoshaphat followed similar patterns of reform, experienced victory in battle, and transgressed. Both of them suppressed and failed to suppress the high places (cf. 14:2-5; 17:6). Both enjoyed prosperity, conducted great building programs, and experienced victory because of their obedience. Both made foreign alliances, and both are mentioned together as the standard of piety to which Jehoram failed to attain.<sup>46</sup>

#### **1. Summary of Jehoshaphat's reign 17:1-6**

Jehoshaphat did right because he followed David's example (v. 3). He remained faithful to Yahweh by obeying His Law rather than worshipping Baal (vv. 3-4). Consequently God blessed his reign by giving him riches and honor (v. 5). The king took pride in obeying God, and he weeded out the high places that kept sprouting up around Judah (v. 6).

<sup>44</sup>Williamson, *1 and 2 . . .*, p. 274.

<sup>45</sup>McConville, p. 175.

<sup>46</sup>Raymond B. Dillard, "The Chronicler's Jehoshaphat," *Trinity Journal* 7NS:1 (Spring 1986):17-22.

The Baals (v. 3) ". . . were almost numberless, each individual field being treated as if it had its own guiding *ba'al* ('master, owner') i.e., fertility spirit."<sup>47</sup>

## **2. The strength of Jehoshaphat's kingdom 17:7-19**

This survey of the king's administrative accomplishments is not in Kings. Jehoshaphat sent teachers of the Mosaic Law throughout Judah to enable the people to know God's will (vv. 7-9). Thus he fortified his nation spiritually as well as physically. God blessed this effort to glorify Him by putting the fear of the Lord in Judah's enemies (v. 11). Again we see Gentiles bringing gifts to the Davidic king who walked in the ways of the Lord (cf. 9:14; 26:8).

## **3. Jehoshaphat and Ahab ch. 18**

This chapter is very similar to 1 Kings 22. Jehoshaphat's concern for God's will guided his actions (vv. 4, 6).<sup>48</sup> The Chronicler undoubtedly wanted to encourage his audience toward repentance and restoration by showing them first how low Jehoshaphat could sink and then how the consequences of his failure were reversed.<sup>49</sup> Ahab's disregard for Yahweh makes Jehoshaphat's faithfulness to Him stand out even more dramatically.

"The point for us is that flirtation with those in apostasy is flirtation with catastrophe."<sup>50</sup>

The end of verse 31 is unique to the Chronicler's account. It was God who delivered Jehoshaphat in the heat of battle but put Ahab to death. The writer of Kings recorded this incident to show the fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy that Ahab would die for his murder of Naboth (cf. 1 Kings 22:37-38). The writer of Chronicles used it to show how God delivered Jehoshaphat because he followed God and cried out to Him for help when he was in trouble.

## **4. Jehoshaphat's appointment of judges ch. 19**

Even though God had spared Jehoshaphat's life in the battle, his close brush with death was the result of an unwise decision to help ungodly Ahab. A prophet rebuked him for this alliance (v. 2).

"A Christian's attachment to God is necessarily expressed in the kind of atmosphere in which he prefers to live and move and have his being. Company, pursuits, ambitions will all bear upon them the mark of a love of God. This is by no means to put an embargo upon normal social

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<sup>47</sup>Payne, p. 496.

<sup>48</sup>For other instances of prophets providing war oracles for the Divine Warrior, see 11:1-4; 1 Kings 20:13, 28; 2 Kings 3:11-19; 6:12-22; 7:1-7; 13:14-20; and 2 Chron. 20:14-19.

<sup>49</sup>Williamson, *1 and 2 . . .*, p. 285.

<sup>50</sup>Thompson, p. 283.

intercourse with those who are not basically like-minded. It has to do with the sort of life-pattern which one chooses to construct. The task of construction is no easy one, and the temptation is to model oneself upon the 'architects' about us. This was Jehoshaphat's fault, and his error calls us to consistency in exhibiting the characteristics which are truly Christian. (See further Rom. 12:1f.; Gal. 5:16-26.)"<sup>51</sup>

Jehoshaphat sought to help the upright and to punish the wicked by appointing judges in Judah. Perhaps Jehu's words encouraged Jehoshaphat's decision to appoint judges (v. 2). The king instructed the judges to remember that they were acting in God's place when they judged. Therefore they needed to be fair (vv. 6-7).

Jehoshaphat's judges not only made legal decisions, they instructed the people in God's ways. In this, Jehoshaphat followed Moses' example (Exod. 18:17-26). As in Israel's earlier history, there were both local judges and a supreme court of appeals in Jehoshaphat's day (vv. 5, 8, 11). The king himself became actively involved in judging and teaching the people.

"One of the greatest sadnesses of Christians who have been in positions of responsibility within the Church, but who have become burdened by guilt because of some sin, is a sense that they are no more qualified to serve. The author of the greatest penitential Psalm feared as much. Yet in the throes of his prayer for restoration he gains the assurance that he shall again 'teach transgressors thy ways' (Ps. 51:13). The experience of Jehoshaphat proves the point."<sup>52</sup>

### **5. Victory over the Moabite-Ammonite alliance 20:1-30**

This chapter does not appear in Kings. It illustrates well that "the Lord will rule (judge)," the meaning of Jehoshaphat's name and the truth that characterized his reign. The motif of retribution is very strong here. God gave victory because Jehoshaphat and Judah trusted and obeyed Him (v. 17).

Jehoshaphat's prayer (vv. 6-12) was very similar to Solomon's at the temple dedication (cf. 6:12-42). Jehoshaphat based his petition for deliverance on God's promises (vv. 5-9). Verse 12 is another classic expression of trust in the Lord (cf. 1 Sam. 17:47).

"There is no excuse for Christian hopelessness. The Christian's response in the blackest hour must be: 'My eyes are upon thee.'"<sup>53</sup>

God revealed what the king was to do. Essentially he was just to observe the victory God would give him (v. 15). The expression, "Do not fear," (v. 17) occurs 365 times in the

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<sup>51</sup>McConville, pp. 188-89.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 189-90.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

Bible, one for every day of the year.<sup>54</sup> Other blessings God brought to Judah as a result of Jehoshaphat's faith were spoil from the nations (v. 25), her enemies' fear of Judah that restricted other attacks (v. 29), and peace (v. 30).

The Meunites (v. 1) were an Arabian tribe that lived in Edom and elsewhere east and south of the Salt (Dead) Sea (cf. 26:7; 1 Chron. 4:41). The wilderness of Tekoa (v. 20) was the Judean wilderness near the town of Tekoa that stood 10 miles south of Jerusalem.

### **6. Jehoshaphat's failures 20:31-37**

The reference to Jehoshaphat not removing the high places (v. 33) seems to contradict what the writer said in 17:6. Perhaps when the people rebuilt the high places that Jehoshaphat destroyed earlier in his reign he failed to tear them down again. In this the king fell short of the complete obedience required if God would establish his throne forever (1 Chron. 17:11-14). Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahaziah, king of Israel, was another instance in which he failed to trust and obey God as he should have (vv. 35-37).

". . . however much a person's life might be characterized by obedience to God, the possibility of lapse and compromise is forever present."<sup>55</sup>

"Jehoshaphat's weakness—and this the chronicler sets before us as a peril of pastoral leadership—was his inability to say no."<sup>56</sup>

"The weakness of Jehoshaphat, then, is a perilous thing. It is actually related to his excellence as a shepherd. He cares; if he is to be a good pastor, he cannot afford to be hard-hearted. His troubles begin when he is not sufficiently hard-hearted."<sup>57</sup>

Jehoshaphat was another of Judah's best kings who followed David's example. Nevertheless he was not the Son of David whom God would establish forever.<sup>58</sup>

### **E. JEHOAM CH. 21**

The events from Jehoram's reign that the Chronicler selected present a classic example of the consequences that follow departing from Yahweh. The king violated God's will by murdering his brothers (v. 4) and practicing idolatry (v. 6).

"Jehoram is the first king of the Davidic line of whom the Chronicler's judgment is totally negative."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Allen, p. 306.

<sup>55</sup>McConville, p. 196.

<sup>56</sup>Wilcock, p. 191.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>58</sup>For a study of the chronicler's portrayal of Jehoshaphat in contrast to that of the writer of Kings, see Dillard, "The Chronicler's Jehoshaphat," pp. 17-22.

<sup>59</sup>Williamson, *1 and 2 . . .*, p. 303.

"There is both irony and retributive justice in that Jehoram sets in motion events that would ultimately lead to the near obliteration of his own line (22:10; 2 Kgs 11:1)."<sup>60</sup>

The retributions Yahweh brought for these sins were the rebellion of and invasion by his neighbors (vv. 8-10, 16-17), his own painful death (vv. 18-19), and death with no one's regret (v. 19).

"It cannot be said too often that the tracing of cause and effect which so typifies Chr. does not imply that all suffering is the result of specific sin. The central point here relates rather to the folly and wickedness of usurping the place of God. Jehoram did not merely aim to exercise authority. He sought to control destinies. The same urge is not absent from the twentieth century."<sup>61</sup>

Even though Jehoram apostatized largely through the influence of his wife and in-laws in Israel (v. 6), God did not cut off the Davidic line. This was because He had promised David He would never do that (v. 7).

It is significant that the prophet God sent to announce judgment on Jehoram was Elijah (v. 12). Elijah's ministry was to condemn Baalism in Israel, but God sent him to Jehoram because Jehoram shared the same guilt as the kings of Ahab's house. This is the only record we have of a prophet from the Northern Kingdom rebuking a king of the Southern Kingdom. All the other prophets God sent to the Davidic kings were from Judah.

"As with most illnesses mentioned in the Old Testament, we are left to conjecture about the clinically imprecise vocabulary. Ulcers, colitis, chronic diarrhea, and dysentery have been proposed."<sup>62</sup>

The reference to Jehoshaphat having been the king of Israel (v. 2) is not an error. As we have already noted, the Chronicler regarded Judah as the true Israel and sometimes referred to Judah as Israel (cf. 12:6; 23:2; et al.).

## **F. AHAZIAH CH. 22**

The house of Ahab also strongly influenced Ahaziah (v. 3). His mother was Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. Because of his apostasy Jehu executed Ahaziah along with his uncle Jehoram, the king of Israel. Ahaziah had no descendant who could succeed him on the throne when he died (v. 9). His mother killed all his sons except one whom the high priest and his wife hid away when he was only an infant (vv. 10-11).

"The fact that royal infants may regularly have been put into the care of wet nurses or foster mothers becomes the key to Jehosheba's frustrating

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<sup>60</sup>Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, p. 165.

<sup>61</sup>McConville, pp. 198-99.

<sup>62</sup>Thompson, p. 300.

Athaliah's plans; the suckling child was overlooked and could have escaped detection as he grew by mingling with other priests' children or perhaps as a temple devotee like the young Samuel."<sup>63</sup>

The place where they hid him was evidently a bedding storeroom.<sup>64</sup> This too was a judgment from God on Ahaziah.

### **G. ATHALIAH CH. 23**

The Chronicler did not have much interest in Athaliah because she was not of the Davidic line. She was the daughter of Ahab. His concern in this chapter was with the events that brought the next Davidic king to the throne, Joash.

Instead of protecting the temple, as had all the good kings of Judah so far, Joash enjoyed protection in the temple. The temple was the visual symbol of the continuity of the Davidic dynasty. Even though there was no visible king during Athaliah's usurpation, the temple reminded the people that God would fulfill His promise to David of an unbroken royal line.

The returned exiles were in a similar situation. A Davidic king was not on the throne in their day, but the rebuilt temple gave hope that a successor to David would again sit on his throne. In their day they could not set a king on their throne because they were no longer a sovereign nation but only a province of the Persian Empire. Evidently the people had rebuilt the temple when the Chronicler wrote this book (cf. 5:9). Clearly the restoration community's hope of the fulfillment of the promise God made to David centered on the temple. As long as they had permission to rebuild the temple there was hope that someday a successor to David might rule over them again. The temple was in that sense the protector of the promise to David both in Athaliah's day and in the Chronicler's day.

The public presentation of Joash recalls the anointing of Solomon, which ended Adonijah's vain attempt to succeed David (1 Kings 1:39-40, 45-46).

Jehoiada's reforms indicated the extent to which Judah had departed from God's ordained worship (vv. 16-17). Jehoiada was the Chronicler's ideal high priest.<sup>65</sup> It is interesting to read that the popular reaction to Athaliah's death was joy (v. 21).

"All the people of the land rejoiced, a characteristic response found in Chronicles whenever the Lord's will was being followed."<sup>66</sup>

The flame of love for Yahweh burned low, but it was still alive in His people. In the absence of a king the Lord raised up the high priest as Judah's spiritual leader.

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<sup>63</sup>Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, pp. 179-80.

<sup>64</sup>Payne, p. 510.

<sup>65</sup>Thompson, p. 313.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 311.

"The story of Athaliah, like that of Jehoram and Ahaziah, is a testimony to the ephemeral and ultimately illusory character of brute power exercised in a self-serving way."<sup>67</sup>

### **H. JOASH CH. 24**

Joash's life, as the writer narrated it, proves again the principles that Chronicles stresses. God was faithful to His promise to provide rulers over His people from David's descendants. Each king's success depended on his submission to God's authority as expressed in the Law of Moses and the announcements of the prophets. The writer evaluated each king's success and measured it by his attitude toward prescribed worship that centered at the temple.

"His rule . . . serves as a characterization in miniature for the historical course of his entire nation."<sup>68</sup>

The use of boxes or baskets to receive the gifts of the people was common in the ancient Near East.<sup>69</sup> Coined money did not exist before the seventh century B.C., so the people evidently brought their contributions in the form of refined or unrefined metals.

The priests were to instruct the kings in God's Law. As long as Joash listened to this instruction, he succeeded. When he stopped listening, he began to fail. He began to lead the people away from God.

Nevertheless God did not abandon His people because they had abandoned Him. He sent at least one prophet to warn them to return to Him or experience discipline (v. 20).<sup>70</sup> When the people refused to respond properly, judgment followed (vv. 21-27). The way of repentance was still open to the people (cf. 6:24-25; Jer. 18:7-10).

"This prayer of imprecation, rather than of forgiveness [by Zechariah] (cf. Lk 23:34; Acts 7:60), was justified by the official positions of both the killer and the killed. God's name was at stake, and vengeance did follow (II Chr 24:24, 25)."<sup>71</sup>

The murder of Zechariah was especially heinous. He died in the very courtyard where "Jehoiada and his sons" (23:11) had anointed his executioner, Joash, as king.<sup>72</sup> Ironically Jehoiada sought to protect the sanctity of the temple from murder (23:14-15), but his own son was murdered there.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>McConville, p. 206.

<sup>68</sup>Payne, p. 513.

<sup>69</sup>Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, p. 191.

<sup>70</sup>The Hebrew text says literally, "The Spirit clothed Himself with Zechariah" (v. 20; cf. 1 Chron. 12:18).

<sup>71</sup>J. Barton Payne, "Second Chronicles," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 409.

<sup>72</sup>An earlier instance of conspiracy followed by stoning involved Naboth in the days of Ahab (1 Kings 21:8-14). Thus Joash suffers by comparison with Ahab.

<sup>73</sup>Many students of Scripture believe that the Zechariah to whom Jesus referred in Matthew 23:35 was this man (e.g., Leon J. Wood, *The Prophets of Israel*, p. 237, n. 8). However, Jesus referred to Zechariah the son of Berechiah (cf. Zech. 1:1). Furthermore, Zechariah the prophet died hundreds of years later than Zechariah the son of Jehoiada.

In this chapter in particular the people's response to the temple clearly reflects their response to God (vv. 4, 5, 13, 18, 20, 24). This is always the case in Chronicles.

### I. AMAZIAH CH. 25

The Chronicler selected three events from Amaziah's reign to teach important spiritual lessons.

First, Amaziah followed the Mosaic Law faithfully in dealing with the people who had killed his father (vv. 1-4; cf. Deut. 24:16). These actions transpired at the beginning of his reign.

Second, the king obeyed God partially in his war with the Edomites (vv. 5-16). He unwisely hired mercenary soldiers to help him rather than seeking the Lord's help (v. 6). However when the prophet rebuked him, he obediently dismissed them even though it cost him 7,500 pounds of silver (v. 10). Nevertheless because he had hired them, he not only lost his money but he also lost the lives of some of his soldiers when the Edomites retaliated for having been dismissed (v. 13). Furthermore he disobeyed Yahweh by importing the gods of Edom (v. 14). Finally he refused to repent (v. 10).<sup>74</sup>

Third, Amaziah disobeyed God by attacking Israel late in his reign (vv. 17-24). This was due, from the divine perspective, to the king's idolatry (v. 20) and, from the human perspective, to his pride (v. 18).<sup>75</sup> The consequences were that Judah's enemy destroyed a portion of the wall around Jerusalem (God removed its defense, v. 23), and stripped the temple (the glory of God diminished, v. 24).

"At bottom, it is the breakdown in the relationship between Amaziah and God which causes his downfall."<sup>76</sup>

Idolatry was a serious matter because it struck at the heart of God's relationship with His people. God blessed Israel with the opportunity to have intimate personal relationship with the living sovereign Lord as no other people in the world then. To turn from this privilege to pursue dead idols was the height of effrontery (cf. Exod. 20:5). From the time Amaziah turned from Yahweh, God began to turn against him by using the faithful in Judah as His instruments of judgment (v. 27). "The city of Judah" (v. 28) is a later name for Jerusalem (cf. 2 Kings 14:20).

"Instead of royal building programs, the walls of Jerusalem are destroyed; instead of wealth from the people and surrounding nations, the king is plundered; instead of a large family, there were hostages; instead of peace,

<sup>74</sup>On the parallels between this passage (vv. 5-15) and the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37, see F. Scott Spencer, "2 Chronicles 28:5-15 and the Parable of the Good Samaritan," *Westminster Theological Journal* 46 (1984):317-49.

<sup>75</sup>Joash's parable of the arrogant thistle recalls Jotham's parable of the ignominious bramble (Judg. 9:7-15).

<sup>76</sup>Wilcock, p. 217.

war; instead of victory, defeat; instead of loyalty from the populace and long life, there is conspiracy and regicide."<sup>77</sup>

### **J. UZZIAH CH. 26**

The Chronicler gave us much more information about Uzziah than we have in Kings (2 Kings 15:1-7). Uzziah ("Yahweh is strong") was evidently the king's throne name and Azariah ("Yahweh helps") his personal name.

Uzziah, as his father, began well but ended poorly. The writer documented his fidelity to Yahweh and God's consequent blessing of him and his kingdom at length (vv. 1-15). Perhaps verse 5 summarizes this best. To seek the Lord meant to seek to please Him by trusting and obeying Him.

Unfortunately Uzziah took personal credit for what God had given him (v. 16). Note the recurrence of the record that Uzziah was strong (vv. 8, 15, 16). His pride led to self-exaltation; he put himself over God.

"If he had only remembered the message of his names, that he was powerful because of the Lord's help, he would not have fallen."<sup>78</sup>

The Mosaic Law permitted only the priests to offer incense in the temple (Exod. 30:1-10; Num. 3:10, 38; 16:40; 18:1-7). The Davidic kings could offer sacrifices on the bronze altar in the temple courtyard, and they could enter the temple. Uzziah's offering incense manifested rebellion against God. For this reason God struck him with leprosy (v. 19).<sup>79</sup>

"He had not been one of the weak kings of Judah who was easily swayed by others (like Jehoshaphat) or too open and accommodating with the leaders in the north. But as is often the case with strong leaders, this virtue gave way to a headstrong, I-can-do-no-wrong attitude. It was precisely his strength that blinded him to the effrontery of his action."<sup>80</sup>

Uzziah's leprosy meant he could no longer enjoy personal worship at the temple (v. 21). Rather than caring for the temple and building it up as God had said David's son would do, Uzziah could not even enter its courtyard. The king's leprosy was an outward evidence of his inward uncleanness (cf. Isa. 6:5).

Uzziah's reign was the third in a "royal trilogy" of kings who began well but ended poorly: Joash, Amaziah, and Uzziah. Their histories show the reader how difficult yet how important it is to hold the confidence we had at the beginning of our lives firm until the end (Heb. 3:14).<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, p. 203.

<sup>78</sup>Thompson, p. 330.

<sup>79</sup>See E. V. Hulse, "The Nature of Biblical Leprosy," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 107 (1975):87-105.

<sup>80</sup>Thompson, p. 331.

<sup>81</sup>Allen, p. 345.

**K. JOTHAM CH. 27**

Jotham was also a good king. He built up the temple and so contributed to the greater glory of Yahweh (v. 3). Consequently his neighbors to the east submitted to him and paid him tribute (v. 5). The Chronicler stated the reason Jotham became strong clearly (v. 6).

However, Jotham appears to have failed to lead his people in righteousness (v. 2). There was no reformation of abuses or revival during his reign as far as we know.

Evidently the reference to Jotham not entering the temple (v. 2) means he did not inappropriately violate the holy place as his father had done (26:16).

**L. AHAZ CH. 28**

With the reign of Ahaz the Chronicler introduced a new interest, the prospect of captivity for Judah, which he again called Israel, the true Israel, twice in this chapter (vv. 19, 23).

Why did Israel go into captivity? Why did the perfectly obedient King not appear? Ahaz's behavior helps explain the reason. The writer selected three major events from his reign: the king's idolatry (vv. 2-15), his appeal for help to Assyria (vv. 16-21), and his sacrifices to foreign gods (vv. 22-25).

Ahaz's heart was far from God. He was more like Saul in this respect than like David. Even though he failed to obey God, like the other kings, there is no mention of his ever repenting when God chastened him. Instead he hardened his heart even more (v. 22). The reason for Israel's exile was the hardness of heart that Ahaz exemplified. At this time in her history the nation needed a faithful Son of David more than ever. A prophet who spoke in Ahaz's reign promised that He would appear (Isa. 7:1—12:6).

In Ahaz's day the army of Israel threatened to capture the people of Judah and lead them into slavery (vv. 8, 10). While God prevented this (vv. 9-15) the threat of captivity by another foreign foe became more of a realistic possibility. The Edomites even captured some Judahites and took them to Edom (v. 17). The Philistines took some of Judah's glory captive during the Philistine conquest (v. 18), and Ahaz gave more of it away to Tiglath-Pileser III (v. 21). Ahaz's personal disregard for Yahweh mirrored his disrespect for the temple.

"Under Ahaz, Judah appeared to have reached its nadir. But for the Chronicler there was always hope of tragedy and despair being turned to rejoicing through repentance. Such a return would occur preeminently under Hezekiah, the king most like David (cf. 29:2, 25-30)."<sup>82</sup>

**M. HEZEKIAH CHS. 29—32**

In contrast to Ahaz, we can see Hezekiah's love for Yahweh in how he cared for the temple. Ahaz's reign was full of war, but Hezekiah enjoyed peace. God rewarded Hezekiah's spiritual restoration of Judah with a remarkable military deliverance. Yet

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<sup>82</sup>Thompson, p. 340.

good king Hezekiah was not the completely faithful Son of David whose kingdom God had promised to establish forever (1 Chron. 17:11-14).

"He is the 'golden boy' of Chronicles."<sup>83</sup>

The Chronicler gave more space to Hezekiah's reign than to any others except David and Solomon, to whom he likened Hezekiah.<sup>84</sup>

### **1. The cleansing and rededication of the temple ch. 29**

Ahaz had closed the temple and had set up other centers of worship throughout the land (28:24-25). Hezekiah reopened the temple and cleansed it in preparation for reusing it (vv. 3, 5). Whereas the writer of Kings described Hezekiah's religious reforms in only one verse (2 Kings 18:4), the Chronicler devoted three chapters to them (chs. 29—31). Hezekiah wanted to rededicate the nation to God (v. 10).

"When there is a financial crisis, the first thing we think about is money. When there is a communications crisis, our prime concern is to learn how to talk the language of the modern generation. When there is a church attendance crisis, we make it our chief aim to get numbers up. If Hezekiah had responded to a military threat in a military way, the Assyrians would have understood that. Army would have been matched against army, with dire consequences for Judah. But instead he and his people first look up to God."<sup>85</sup>

Hezekiah carried out his clean-up job hurriedly to prepare for the celebration of the Passover (vv. 17, 26; 30:1). The Kidron Valley was a burial ground, so it was an appropriate place for unclean things. He first offered a sin offering to atone for the guilt of Judah (v. 21). Then he sacrificed burnt offerings of worship (v. 27) and led the people in worship (v. 29), joyful singing (v. 30), and willing sacrificial giving (v. 31). All the people of Judah who revered Yahweh rejoiced over the king's re-establishment of the temple services (vv. 35-36).

### **2. Hezekiah's Passover 30:1—31:1**

"Following the restoration of the temple and its services in ch. 29, the emphasis now falls heavily upon Hezekiah's strenuous efforts to reunite in worship the hitherto separated peoples of the north and south."<sup>86</sup>

Hezekiah wanted all the Israelites, namely, those left in the Northern Kingdom following its captivity, as well as the Judahites, to rededicate themselves to Yahweh (vv. 1-9). Many in Israel had no interest in doing this (v. 10), but some responded positively, as did

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<sup>83</sup>Wilcock, p. 242.

<sup>84</sup>Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, p. 229.

<sup>85</sup>Wilcock, p. 247.

<sup>86</sup>Williamson, *1 and 2 . . .*, p. 360.

most of the people in Judah (vv. 11-12). The complete repentance of the Israelites in the North might have resulted in God setting free many of the captive exiles (v. 9).

"Sometimes people refuse to repent out of a sense of hopelessness, but Hezekiah reminds that it is never too late to return to God."<sup>87</sup>

Large numbers of the people who came to the feast had not prepared themselves as the Mosaic Law specified. This group included priests and Levites who were ashamed of their uncleanness (v. 15). This revelation shows how the people had disregarded the Law. God pardoned ritual uncleanness if the worshipper's heart was right (vv. 18-20; cf. John 7:22-23; 9:14-16). The heart attitude is more important than ritual cleanliness.

The feast was such a success that Hezekiah extended the celebration another week (v. 23). Great joy followed return to the Lord and His temple (v. 26).

"Hezekiah is portrayed here as a second Solomon (v. 26), and the celebration of the Passover is a watershed between the disruption of Israel after Solomon's death and a return to the spiritual conditions that existed in Solomon's day."<sup>88</sup>

God paid attention to the prayers of the rededicated Israelites (v. 27). Josiah carried out his Passover (35:1-19) in stricter conformity to the Mosaic Law, but Hezekiah's Passover was the greatest in terms of participation and spiritual renewal since Solomon's reign (v. 26).

### **3. Re-establishment of proper worship 31:2-21**

The king organized the priests and Levites again into the divisions David had specified. Evidently Hezekiah's predecessors had not observed these divisions. He also instituted tithing again as the Mosaic Law commanded (cf. Lev. 27:30; Num. 18:8; Deut. 14:28). Because the people responded obediently there was an abundance of money for temple maintenance and for its servants (v. 10). The principle these reforms illustrate is that when God's people obey His Word they prosper (in some form). God always desires people's welfare. Hezekiah prospered too (v. 21) because he sought God with all his heart, as David had done. In New Testament terms, he did all for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).

### **4. The invasion by Sennacherib 32:1-23**

In a few details this account differs from the one in 2 Kings 18—20 and Isaiah 36—37. It was after Hezekiah's acts of faithfulness that God tested his trust (v. 1). Many of Judah's other good kings had followed God faithfully only to abandon faith in him later in life as a result of pride (e.g., Solomon, Uzziah, et al.). In this respect Hezekiah failed too (v. 25).

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<sup>87</sup>Thompson, p. 353.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 350.

Hezekiah's preparations for Sennacherib's siege did not indicate reliance on the flesh rather than on God, as his praying shows. They were simply wise defensive measures (vv. 1-8).

"It is no denial of one's trust in God if one makes certain precautionary preparations. 'Pray to God and keep your powder dry' is a wise response in the face of danger at any time."<sup>89</sup>

The real difference between the two armies was that while both had a measure of physical strength, Israel possessed an additional spiritual resource (v. 8). This is a difference between a Christian and a non-Christian too.

Sennacherib's fatal mistake was that he regarded Yahweh as only one of many idols (v. 19). This was his undoing. God not only granted a miraculous deliverance to Jerusalem because of Hezekiah's reliance on Him, but many nations brought gifts to the king and Yahweh (vv. 21-23).

### **5. Hezekiah's humility and greatness 32:24-33**

Hezekiah fell short to being the perfect Son of David just like all the rest of Judah's monarchs. Yet when his heart did become proud because of God's blessings, he humbled himself (vv. 25-26). Consequently God postponed his discipline (v. 26).

Hezekiah was immensely wealthy and enjoyed much honor in his day (vv. 27-30; cf. Solomon). God rewarded his faithfulness and commitment. The Chronicler passed over Hezekiah's unwise decision to show the Babylonian envoys his riches with a brief comment (v. 31; cf. 2 Kings 20:12-19). He was not perfect.

King Hezekiah was one of the greatest of Judah's reformers. We can see his zeal for God clearly in his zeal for God's house and the worship it facilitated. Not since Solomon had there been a king who more consistently reflected the heart of David.

". . . the Chronicler has gone out of his way to present Hezekiah as a second Solomon . . ." <sup>90</sup>

### **N. MANASSEH 33:1-20**

Manasseh was one of the few examples of an evil Judean king who turned out good. Nevertheless his years of wickedness made captivity inevitable for Judah (2 Kings 23:26; Jer. 15:4).

"Manasseh's acts are . . . a calculated attempt to throw off the lordship of Yahweh, to claim independence from the Covenant, to drive him from the land which he had given Israel."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 361.

<sup>90</sup>Williamson, *1 and 2 . . .*, pp. 350-51.

<sup>91</sup>McConville, p. 250.

"If Manasseh had searched the Scriptures for practices that would most anger the Lord and then intentionally committed them, he could not have achieved that result any more effectively than he did."<sup>92</sup>

The Babylonians captured Manasseh but released him after he turned back to Yahweh. The Assyrian king in view (v. 11) was Ashurbanipal.<sup>93</sup>

His experience would have been an encouragement to the returned exiles who first read Chronicles. If God had had mercy on Manasseh and had reestablished him in the land, He could do the same for them (cf. 7:14). The writer emphasized the results of the king's repentance. He magnified the grace of God rather than the rebellion of the sinner.

". . . in terms of the experience of an individual, Manasseh furnishes the most explicit and dramatic example of the efficacy of repentance in the whole of the Chronicler's work."<sup>94</sup>

"Manasseh's sin is repeated, in essence, whenever man uses or manipulates his fellow-men for some supposedly higher good than their own welfare—or, indeed, uses any part of God's creation for purposes other than those which God intends."<sup>95</sup>

"The Chronicler is as concerned as his predecessor [the writer of Kings] was to point out the effects of sin. Both historians note the moral consequences of the actions of men. But the Chronicler regularly deals in immediate consequences: 'the soul that sins shall die' (Ezek. 18:4, 20). Though it is true that one man's sin can cause others to suffer sixty years after he is dead and gone, this is not the kind of lesson which Chronicles as a whole aims to teach . . . What Manasseh's sin leads to is not the fall of Jerusalem long after his death, as Samuel/Kings say, but 'distress' for him himself, as he is taken by Assyrian forces 'with hooks . . . and fetters of bronze' to Babylon (33:11-12)."<sup>96</sup>

In spite of Manasseh's repentance, the people still sacrificed in the high places, though only to Yahweh (v. 17).

"A half century of paganism could not be overcome by a half-dozen years of reform."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>Thompson, p. 368.

<sup>93</sup>Cf. Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, p. 435.

<sup>94</sup>Williamson, *1 and 2 . . .*, p. 389. On a larger scale, the reigns of Ahaz (ch. 28) and Hezekiah (chs. 29—32) illustrate the same thing prefiguring exile and restoration.

<sup>95</sup>Wilcock, p. 257.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>97</sup>Payne, "Second Chronicles," p. 417

### **O. AMON 33:21-25**

Amon was an evil king, as Manasseh was, but he did not repent as his father had done. Consequently rather than experiencing forgiveness and restoration he died prematurely. He represented the other alternative the returned exiles could take. His fate would have been, and is, a warning to seek the Lord.

### **P. JOSIAH CHS. 34—35**

Like Amon's death, Josiah's was unnecessarily premature. However, unlike Amon, Josiah was one of Judah's reformers.

"Josiah instituted the most thorough of all the OT reforms . . ."98

"Despite this, however, Josiah is not so significant a monarch overall for the Chronicler as he is for the earlier historian [i.e., the writer of Kings]. Much that he records is now to be understood as recapitulation of Hezekiah's work, who stands out as the real innovator in Chronicles."99

#### **1. Josiah's reforms ch. 34**

The godly in Judah may have regarded Josiah as the most likely candidate to fulfill the promises God had given to David. His early life and reign were spiritually exemplary (vv. 2-3). He sought to purge idolatry from the whole territory of Israel as well as Judah (vv. 4-7). Many of the Simeonites (v. 6) had allied themselves with Israel religiously (cf. 15:9).100

In Jerusalem, Josiah embarked on a renovation of the temple because Manasseh and Amon had abused it (vv. 8-13). The "book of the law" that Hilkiah found (v. 14) may have been the Book of Deuteronomy,<sup>101</sup> another portion of the Pentateuch, or the whole Pentateuch.<sup>102</sup>

It may be hard for us to understand how the people could have lost the Law of Moses and how they could have forgotten it in just two generations. However written copies were scarce. Moreover parents and the Levites conducted most instruction orally (17:9). Only one generation separated the people from ignorance of God's will (cf. Deut. 6:6-7; 17:18). This has been true throughout history. Josiah's response to the reading of Torah (the Law) shows his heart to please God (vv. 19, 27).

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<sup>98</sup>Idem, "1, 2 Chronicles," p. 549.

<sup>99</sup>Williamson, *1 and 2 . . .*, p. 396.

<sup>100</sup>Keil, p. 431.

<sup>101</sup>See Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, p. 280, for seven supporting reasons. Most scholars believe the book found was Deuteronomy.

<sup>102</sup>Payne, "Second Chronicles," p. 418.

Huldah announced that God had decreed captivity for Judah (v. 25). Nevertheless Josiah would experience mercy because of his tender heart and humility (v. 27). He would die before Judah went into captivity (v. 28).<sup>103</sup>

The announcement of God's coming judgment led the king and the nation to commit themselves anew to follow God's Word (vv. 29-33). Perhaps He would postpone captivity.

Note that the temple had been the protector of the Law (v. 14) as it had earlier protected David's heir, Joash (22:10-12). It had preserved the two foundational elements in Israel's life: God's Word and God's vice-regent. As I mentioned before, the temple represented God. The preservation of these two essential elements was an act of Israel's faithful God. Concern for the things of God resulted in the discovery of God's will.

### **2. Josiah's Passover 35:1-19**

As Hezekiah had done, Josiah led his people in observing the Passover, that greatest feast of Israel that commemorated her redemption from Egyptian slavery. Josiah's Passover was even greater than Hezekiah's, which Hezekiah had put together quickly (v. 18; cf. 29:36). Josiah offered almost twice as many sacrifices as Hezekiah had (30:24) but far fewer than Solomon had at the temple dedication (7:5). The writer's attention to detail reflects his intense interest in Josiah's concern that the people worship Yahweh properly.<sup>104</sup> All that the writer recorded between 34:8 and 35:19 happened when Josiah was 26 years old.<sup>105</sup>

### **3. Josiah's death 35:20-27**

Josiah died at Megiddo in 609 B.C. when he interrupted Pharaoh Neco's military advance against the Babylonians.

"Fearing the advance of the Babylonians, Pharaoh Neco and the Egyptian army were on their way to assist the Assyrians. Josiah, who apparently was an ally of the Babylonians (or at least an opponent of the Assyrians), attempted to impede the march of Neco."<sup>106</sup>

Quite clearly Pharaoh's word to him to turn back was from the Lord (v. 22). Probably the writer included this event in his narrative because Josiah came closer to the Davidic ideal than any other king since Solomon. Yet he too was disobedient to God. Thus David's greatest Son was yet to come. When He comes back to the earth He will win the battle that will be raging at the very place Josiah died, the Plain of Megiddo (i.e., Armageddon, lit. the mountain of Megiddo).<sup>107</sup>

<sup>103</sup>Another view of the prediction that he would die in peace is that it refers to what would have happened if Josiah had not violated the will of God by engaging Neco in battle. See McConville, p. 264.

<sup>104</sup>See Lyle Eslinger, "Josiah and the Torah Book: Comparison of 2 Kgs 22:1—23:28 and 2 Chr 34:1—35:19," *Hebrew Annual Review* 10 (1986):37-62.

<sup>105</sup>The phrase "in the eighteenth year of his reign" forms an *inclusio* for the section.

<sup>106</sup>Thompson, p. 385. This is similar to what Ahab had done years earlier (cf. 18:1-34).

<sup>107</sup>See H. G. M. Williamson, "The Death of Josiah and the Continuing Development of the Deuteromic History," *Vetus Testamentum* 32:2 (April 1982):242-48.

"He [Josiah] was a shepherd whose flock never really accepted or understood him, though his concern was for its own welfare . . ." <sup>108</sup>

Josiah's death is another example of immediate retribution for sin, of which we have seen many in Chronicles. He is one more king who began well but ended up doing something wrong (cf. Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah). He was not the only king to hear a warning before his tragic military error (cf. 11:1-4; 18:16-22). Like the other reforming kings (Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah), he sensed a military threat by an external enemy following his religious reforms. <sup>109</sup>

### **Q. THE LAST FOUR KINGS 36:1-21**

The sovereignty of the Davidic kings over Judah had ended. Instead of working *through* them as His instruments Yahweh was now working *on* them in discipline. He used other more powerful kings and kingdoms to punish His people. The temple motif in Chronicles also climaxes in this section with its destruction.

#### **1. Jehoahaz 36:1-4**

In these few verses the will of the king of Egypt contrasts with the will of Judah's people. Whereas the people still held out hope that a descendant of David would lead them to the great glories predicted for David's greatest Son (e.g., Ps. 2), such was not to be the case then. Other superpowers now dominated Judah's affairs. God had given His people over into their hands in discipline (cf. Deut. 28:32-57). This king of Judah rather than lifting the Davidic dynasty to its greatest glories ended his life as a prisoner in Egypt, the original prison-house of Israel.

#### **2. Jehoiakim 36:5-8**

Not only did the Babylonians take Jehoiakim captive to Babylon, but they also took some of the glory of the temple and of the God it represented with him.

"Taking temple objects was common in times such as this, as it represented the complete military and religious conquest of a city (cf. Dan 1:1-2; Ezra 1:7)." <sup>110</sup>

Jehoiakim's conduct did nothing to retard the inevitable conquest of Jerusalem. Judah's captivity was one step closer as Babylon replaced Egypt as the controller of God's people.

#### **3. Jehoiachin 36:9-10**

Like his father Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin was under Nebuchadnezzar's thumb. He too suffered deportation to Babylon, and with him went more of the glory of Israel.

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<sup>108</sup>Wilcock, p. 270.

<sup>109</sup>Christopher T. Begg, "The Death of Josiah in Chronicles: Another View," *Vetus Testamentum* 37:1 (Januray 1987):1-3.

<sup>110</sup>Thompson, p. 388.

#### **4. Zedekiah 36:11-21**

In Zedekiah's reign Judah bottomed out spiritually. The king refused to humble himself before either Yahweh or Nebuchadnezzar even though God repeatedly sent messages and messengers urging him to do so. Hardness of heart now characterized the Davidic king as it had characterized the Pharaoh of the Exodus. God humbled this king against his will as He had previously humbled that Pharaoh.

The last verses of this section are very sermoniac (vv. 14-21). Yet the Chronicler did not set them off as a sermon but caused them to flow out of what he had said about Zedekiah. The writer gave reasons for the conquest of Jerusalem and the exile of the Israelites. The burning of the temple symbolized the end of God's glory and presence among His people in the land that He had given them to occupy.

"What constitutes the greatest evil for the Chronicler—and it is a theme that is taken up elsewhere in the Bible—is not wrongdoing in and of itself, but wrongdoing in defiance of the clear knowledge of what is right (Mark 12:1-2; Luke 16:31; Isa. 1:2f.)."<sup>111</sup>

"The real tragedy of the exile was not the removal of the people nor even the utter destruction of the city and the temple. It was the departure of their God from their midst, an absence symbolized in one of Ezekiel's visions by the movement of the Shekinah from the temple to the summit of the Mount of Olives (Ezek. 11:23)."<sup>112</sup>

God had descended on the temple in a cloud. Now He left it in smoke. Had the Chronicler ended here there would have been little hope for the future. He justified God's treatment of His vice-regent amply. The returned exiles could not accuse Yahweh of being unfair or impatient. Rather His grace stands out, though it had now run out.

"The fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. meant the loss of the three major mainstays of Israelite life: temple, monarchy, and land."<sup>113</sup>

#### **R. THE EDICT OF CYRUS 36:22-23**

These two verses determine the whole mood of Chronicles. Rather than ending with the failure of man the writer concluded by focusing our attention on the faithfulness of God (cf. Lam. 3:22-23). God was in control of the Persian king as He had controlled the kings of Babylon, Egypt, and Israel. God had promised Israel a future as a nation. His people would experience this future under the rule of a perfect Davidic Son. Yahweh was moving now after 70 years of captivity to bring that future to pass (cf. Isa. 9:7). Even though the Babylonian army had burned Yahweh's temple to the ground (v. 19) it would rise again (v. 23).

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<sup>111</sup>McConville, p. 268.

<sup>112</sup>Merrill, *Kingdom of . . .*, p. 470.

<sup>113</sup>C. Hassell Bullock, "The Priestly Era in the Light of Prophetic Thought," in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*, p. 71.

The message to the returned exiles was clear. God would respond to their repentance (6:36-39). He would forgive their sin and heal their land (7:14). Moreover He would raise up a descendant of David who would rule over not only Israel but all the nations forever (1 Chron. 17:11-14).

"Now that Cyrus had decreed the rebuilding of the temple (36:22-23), here was prima facie evidence that God had not annulled His covenant with Israel nor the Levitical system revealed at Sinai."<sup>114</sup>

The closing words of Chronicles are identical to the opening ones in Ezra.<sup>115</sup>

"Unlike the Book of Kings, with its central message of stern moral judgments . . . Chronicles exists essentially as a book of hope, grounded on the grace of our sovereign Lord."<sup>116</sup>

"If Chronicles in its last chapter tells us that God acted in mercy by restoring his people Judah, Ezra-Nehemiah will reveal to us how they fared upon their return, privileged with a new opportunity to be God's people in their own land."<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>George Harton, "Fulfillment of Deuteronomy 28—30 in History and in Eschatology" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1981), p. 190.

<sup>115</sup>See Menahem Haran, "Explaining the Identical Lines at the End of Chronicles and the Beginning of Ezra," *Bible Review* 2:3 (Fall 1986):18-20, for one explanation, and Edwin Yamauchi, "Ezra-Nehemiah," in *I Kings—Job*, vol. 4 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 573, for another.

<sup>116</sup>Payne, "1, 2 Chronicles," p. 559.

<sup>117</sup>J. G. McConville, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, p. 1.

## Conclusion

The writer of Chronicles built his history around the records of David and Solomon's reigns. He flanked these with a long introduction and a longer sequel that span history from Adam to Anani, the eighth generation after Jehoiachin. The Chronicler himself lived after Cyrus' edict that dates to 538 B.C. It is really a long sermon intended to point all of its readers into the future and to give them hope.

In view of what God promised David, there must be a great King coming. History shows that God blessed all of David's descendants who followed Him faithfully in proportion to their obedience. Consequently the coming King's reign must be greater than anything history has yet seen since He will carry out God's will completely.

The responsibility of every reader is to follow the example of David. He realized that he was the recipient of great grace. He responded to that grace by submitting himself to the authority of the Giver. He put the interests of his Benefactor before his own selfish ambitions and desires. This was his heart for God. God responded by blessing him and by making him a channel of blessing to God's people and to the nations of the world.

"The great theological burden of Chronicles is the assertion that Yahweh, through covenant establishment with the Davidic dynasty, has offered to all peoples a model of His dominion and a means of their participation in it. David, the royal priest and son of God, was chosen both to reign over Israel, 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,' and to typify that messianic sovereign of his descent whose dominion would be forever. Every effort is bent, therefore, to the task of centralizing this integrating theme. The genealogies provide for David by linking him to creation and the patriarchal promises; the campaigns and conquest of the king validate his election to his redemptive role; the establishment of an elaborate cultus witnesses to the priestly nature of that calling; and the promises of historical and eschatological restoration of the nation and its Davidic kinship attest to the permanency of God's saving purposes. The people of the covenant might (and did) fail in Old Testament times, but Yahweh has reserved a day when, as He said, 'I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be' (Amos 9:11). This is the message of Chronicles."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>Eugene H. Merrill, "A Theology of Chronicles," in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 187.

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