

THE BOOK OF 2 CHRONICLES

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INTRODUCTION

In our Bibles today we have 1 and 2 Chronicles as two books but they were originally one book. The Book of 1 Chronicles is a book of narrative history, and genealogies. While the books of 1 and 2 Kings focus on the northern kingdom, Israel, 1 Chronicles focuses on the southern kingdom, Judah.

Nothing is said about the northern kingdom in 2 Chronicles because Jeroboam led the northern tribes after sins that took them away from worshipping God.

For this reason, 1 Chronicles focuses on the kings and events that relate to the southern kingdom, specifically the tribe of Judah. 2 Chronicles covers the history of both 1 and 2 Kings.

The purpose of the book was to encourage the remnant that had come out of the Babylonian captivity and it covers in some extra detail most of the information already covered by 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings.

AUTHOR

No one knows who the author of the book is but Jewish tradition believes that Ezra wrote both 1 and 2 Chronicles, as well as the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The reason for this is because the book of Ezra immediately begins where 2 Chronicles concludes, **2 Chronicles 36:22-23 / Ezra 1:1-3**. Ezra was a priest in the southern kingdom who lived in Jerusalem, **Ezra 7:11**.

DATE

Chronicles tell us about the events in the history of Israel down to the end of their captivity in Babylon and the restoration that was initiated by the Medo-Persian king, Cyrus, **2 Chronicles 36:22-23**.

In view of what the author writes in **2 Chronicles 35:25**, it appears that the book was written after the time of Jeremiah who wrote Lamentations. Most commentators agree that the book was written between 450 and 425 BC.

THE BOOK

2 Chronicles 1-9 speaks about the history of the reign of Solomon and **2 Chronicles 10-36** speaks about the history of the separate kingdom of Judah to the time of the return from the Babylonian Exile.

The author of the book gathers up the threads of the old national life broken by the captivity. The book also mentions public records, registers, and genealogical tables which belonged to the Jews.

These are referred to throughout the book, **1 Chronicles 27:24 / 1 Chronicles 29:29 / 2 Chronicles 9:29 / 2 Chronicles 12:15 / 2 Chronicles 13:22 / 2 Chronicles 20:34 / 2 Chronicles 24:27 / 2 Chronicles 26:22-23 / 2 Chronicles 27:7 / 2 Chronicles 35:25-27**.

There are in within the books, and the books of Samuel and Kings, forty parallels, often verbal, proving that the writer knew and used these records, 1 Chronicles 17:18 / 2 Samuel 7:18-20 / 1 Chronicles 19:1ff / 2 Samuel 10:1ff.

OUTLINE

Solomon. 2 Chronicles 1-9

Commencement of Reign. 2 Chronicles 1

The Temple. 2 Chronicles 2-7

Other Achievements. 2 Chronicles 8-9

Rehoboam to Ahaz. 2 Chronicles 10-28

Rehoboam. 2 Chronicles 10-12

Abijah. 2 Chronicles 13

Asa. 2 Chronicles 14-16

Jehoshaphat. 2 Chronicles 17-20

Jehoram. 2 Chronicles 21

Ahaziah. 2 Chronicles 22

Joash. 2 Chronicles 23-24

Amaziah. 2 Chronicles 25

Uzziah. 2 Chronicles 26

Jotham. 2 Chronicles 27

Ahaz. 2 Chronicles 28

Hezekiah to Judah's End. 2 Chronicles 29-36

Hezekiah. 2 Chronicles 29-32

Manasseh. 2 Chronicles 33

Josiah. 2 Chronicles 34-35

Judah's End. 2 Chronicles 36

CHAPTER 1

‘Solomon son of David established himself firmly over his kingdom, for the LORD his God was with him and made him exceedingly great. Then Solomon spoke to all Israel—to the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, to the judges and to all the leaders in Israel, the heads of families—and Solomon and the whole assembly went to the high place at Gibeon, for God’s tent of meeting was there, which Moses the LORD’s servant had made in the wilderness. Now David had brought up the ark of God from Kiriath Jearim to the place he had prepared for it, because he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem. But the bronze altar that Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made was in Gibeon in front of the tabernacle of the LORD; so Solomon and the assembly inquired of him there. Solomon went up to the bronze altar before the LORD in the tent of meeting and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.’ 2 Chronicles 1:1-6

After the death of his father, David, Solomon, is now king of Israel, 1 Chronicles 29:26-28, and thanks to his father, David, and because God was with him, he got off to a great start, 1 Kings 1:1-11:43. After speaking to all of Israel, they went to the high place at Gibeon because that was where the tabernacle was located.

The tabernacle was made by Moses in the wilderness, the one mentioned here isn’t obviously the original one as Moses made that one 400 years ago, so this tabernacle wouldn’t be the original one. Although the ark of the covenant had been brought to Jerusalem by David, the tabernacle itself remained at Gibeon.

The bronze altar would have been the original, which was made by Bezalel, Exodus 36:1-2, it wouldn’t have worn out like the cloth of the tabernacle over the years.

The wealth of Solomon is seen in the number of offerings he provided and we must note that although Solomon provided the burnt offerings, he didn’t offer them personally, this was the job of the priests.

SOLOMON ASKS FOR WISDOM

‘That night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.” Solomon answered God, “You have shown great kindness to David my father and have made me king in his place. Now, LORD God, let your promise to my father David be confirmed, for you have made me king over a people who are as numerous as the dust of the earth. Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?” God said to Solomon, “Since this is your heart’s desire and you have not asked for wealth, possessions or honour, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king, therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, possessions and honour, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have.” 2 Chronicles 1:7-12

1 Kings 3:5 tells us that God appeared to Solomon in a dream. God often appeared to men in dreams, but that didn’t always mean that God approved that person, we see this Pharaoh, Genesis 41:1-8, and Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel 2:1-9. When God tells Solomon to ask for anything, Matthew 7:7 / John 15:7 / 1 John 5:14, we see in Solomon’s answer to God, that he truly appreciated everything God had done for him.

Solomon understands that his greatest need if he is going to have this huge responsibility to lead God’s people, is wisdom, he knows he needs understanding so that he can lead God’s people with justice. Remember his father, David prayed that Solomon would reign with wisdom and understanding, 1 Chronicles 29:10-20.

Solomon didn’t request anything for himself such as long life or riches, he simply asks for wisdom to rule the people and because of this, God heard his prayer and God was pleased with him, 1 Kings 3:10. God was so pleased with his request, He gives Solomon more than just wisdom, He gives him wealth and honour, 1 Kings 3:5-15.

One of the most famous incidents in the Scriptures where Solomon uses his divine wisdom is seen in the incident between the two mothers who claimed that the baby belonged to them, 1 Kings 3:16-28.

‘Then Solomon went to Jerusalem from the high place at Gibeon, from before the tent of meeting. And he reigned over Israel. Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses,

which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. The king made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig trees in the foothills. Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Kue—the royal merchants purchased them from Kue at the current price. They imported a chariot from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty. They also exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and of the Arameans.' 2 Chronicles 1:13-17

Solomon is reigning over Israel and he accumulated chariots and horses. The famous stables of Solomon show what a vast cavalry he assembled for Israel.

Sadly, it appears that Solomon didn't use his wisdom at this point, as God directly said that the kings of Israel shouldn't acquire a vast amount of horses, **Deuteronomy 17:16**.

Notice also all the silver and gold were as common as stones, **1 Kings 10:26-29 / 2 Chronicles 9:13-28**. This is a vivid description that explained the amount of silver and gold that was amassed by both David and Solomon. Sadly, it appears didn't use his wisdom again here, as this was also forbidden by God, **Deuteronomy 17:14-20**.

Notice also that Solomon had horses imported from Egypt and Kue, that is, Cilicia. This again was total disobedience to God's commands, **Deuteronomy 17:16**.

Matthew Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

'He opened also a trade with Egypt, whence he imported horses and linen-yarn, which he exported again to the kings of Syria, with great advantage no doubt, **2 Chronicles 1:16-17**. This we had before, **1 Kings 10:28 / 1 Kings 10:29**. It is the wisdom of princes to promote industry and encourage trade in their dominions. Perhaps Solomon took the hint of setting up the linen manufacture, bringing linen-yarn out of Egypt, working it into cloth, and then sending that to other nations, from what his mother taught when she specified this as one of the characteristics of the virtuous woman, **Proverbs. 31:24**. In all labour there is profit.'

CHAPTER 2

'Solomon gave orders to build a temple for the Name of the LORD and a royal palace for himself. He conscripted 70,000 men as carriers and 80,000 as stonecutters in the hills and 3,600 as foremen over them. Solomon sent this message to Hiram king of Tyre: "Send me cedar logs as you did for my father David when you sent him cedar to build a palace to live in. Now I am about to build a temple for the Name of the LORD my God and to dedicate it to him for burning fragrant incense before him, for setting out the consecrated bread regularly, and for making burnt offerings every morning and evening and on the Sabbaths, at the New Moons and at the appointed festivals of the LORD our God. This is a lasting ordinance for Israel. "The temple I am going to build will be great, because our God is greater than all other gods. But who is able to build a temple for him, since the heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain him? Who then am I to build a temple for him, except as a place to burn sacrifices before him? "Send me, therefore, a man skilled to work in gold and silver, bronze and iron, and in purple, crimson and blue yarn, and experienced in the art of engraving, to work in Judah and Jerusalem with my skilled workers, whom my father David provided. "Send me also cedar, juniper and algum logs from Lebanon, for I know that your servants are skilled in cutting timber there. My servants will work with yours to provide me with plenty of lumber, because the temple I build must be large and magnificent. I will give your servants, the woodsmen who cut the timber, twenty thousand cors of ground wheat, twenty thousand cors of barley, twenty thousand baths of wine and twenty thousand baths of olive oil." 2 Chronicles 2:1-10

PREPARATIONS FOR BUILDING THE TEMPLE

Solomon gets things moving in relation to having the temple built and a royal palace for himself, 1 Kings 5:1-18 / 1 Kings 7:1-12.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The 153,600 men mentioned here were slaves, composed of, ‘Descendants of those Canaanites whom the children of Israel did not drive out.’ From Kings it is clear that Israelites were also conscripted by Solomon for such slave labour and required to devote one month of every three to his service.’

Hiram was the son of a Danite woman who was married to a man of Tyre. Because most of the men of Israel were basically farmers, he assessed how many skilful men he had in Israel, who could do the job of building the temple. he did this before Solomon sought help from King Hiram.

Bezalel and his helper Oholiab, were also really skilled when it came to constructing the tabernacle, Exodus 31:1-6 / Exodus 35:30-36:2.

It appears that Solomon wanted to build the temple as a nationwide display of how great God was above all other gods. In other words, the stronger, bigger and more grandeur the temple was, the stronger and bigger God was, 1 Kings 6:2.

When the tabernacle was built at Mount Sinai, it was to be only a symbol of the presence of God among His people.

Solomon here, was right when he said 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 an indicator of His presence among His people. Notice also, that the temple was built, not as a place for assembly, but only as a place where sacrifices were brought and offered.

The Israelite servants worked together with the Gentile servants, that is, those of Hiram’s kingdom, so that the temple could be built.

Gill, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the cedar trees, fir trees, and algum trees, out of Lebanon.

‘Of the two first of these, and which Hiram sent, 1 Kings 5:10. The algum trees are the same as the algum trees, 1 Kings 10:11 by a transposition of letters. these could not be coral, as some Jewish writers think, which grows in the sea, for these were in Lebanon, nor Brazil, as Kimchi, so-called from a place of this name, which at this time was not known, though there were trees of algum afterwards brought from Ophir in India, as appears from the above-quoted place, as well as from Arabia.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Purple, crimson, and blue, would be needed for the hangings of the temple, which, in this respect, as in others, was conformed to the pattern of the tabernacle, Exodus 25:4 / Exodus 26:1, etc. Hiram’s power of ‘working in purple, crimson,’ etc., was probably a knowledge of the best modes of dyeing cloth these colours. The Phoenicians, off whose coast the murex was commonly taken, were famous as purple dyers from a very remote period.’

Hiram is happy to go along with the plans suggested by Solomon, but he could have asked for more, 1 Kings 5:6. The barley and the wine are omitted in Kings.

The author of Chronicles probably filled out the statement that the writer of Kings has given in brief; the barley, wine, and ordinary oil would be applied to the sustenance of the foreign labourers.

‘Hiram king of Tyre replied by letter to Solomon: “Because the LORD loves his people, he has made you their king.” And Hiram added: “Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who made heaven and earth! He has given King David a wise son, endowed with intelligence and discernment, who will build a temple for the LORD and a palace for himself. “I am sending you Hiram-Abi, a man of great skill, whose mother was from Dan and whose father was from Tyre. He is trained to work in gold and silver, bronze and iron, stone and wood, and with purple and blue and crimson yarn and fine linen. He is experienced in all kinds of engraving and can execute any design given to him. He will

work with your skilled workers and with those of my lord, David your father. “Now let my lord send his servants the wheat and barley and the olive oil and wine he promised, and we will cut all the logs from Lebanon that you need and will float them as rafts by sea down to Joppa. You can then take them up to Jerusalem.” Solomon took a census of all the foreigners residing in Israel, after the census his father David had taken; and they were found to be 153,600. He assigned 70,000 of them to be carriers and 80,000 to be stonecutters in the hills, with 3,600 foremen over them to keep the people working.’ 2 Chronicles 2:11-18

Notice in Hiram’s reply to Solomon, that he acknowledges the Lord’s love for His people, and as a Gentile king, he recognises Solomon’s kingship.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Hiram’s praising of God.

‘This appears to have been a formula designating the Supreme God with several of the Asiatic nations. In the Persian inscriptions, Ormazd is constantly called ‘the great god, who gave’ (or made) ‘heaven and earth’.’

Hiram-Abi could be translated as ‘Hiram, my Father’s’, or ‘Hiram, my master craftsman’, or ‘Hiram, my trusted counsellor’. Hiram is the workman sent by the king of Tyre and not the king of Tyre’s father, 1 Kings 5:1.

It’s worth noting that most of the labourers who built the temple were made up of Israelites and some Canaanites who came from king Hiram.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following, concerning Hiram-Abi.

‘Critics love to cite this as a discrepancy with 1 Kings 7:14, which refers to her as a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, some even calling it a contradiction. Of course, the two passages teach that Hiram-Abi’s mother was, by birth, of the tribe of Dan, and by the residence of the tribe of Naphtali.’

Joppa was the nearest seaport to Jerusalem, located about 35 miles east of Joppa, with rugged territory in between.

Notice that Solomon took a census, this means that Solomon sinned in taking the census, just as his father, David did before him, 1 Chronicles 21:1-17.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There is no device by which this paragraph could be construed as the Chronicler’s compliment to king Solomon. In fact, right here we have the clue to what was wrong with David’s ‘numbering Israel’, 1 Chronicles 22:2f. Both he and Solomon were actually in the business of enslaving all of the aliens and sojourners in Israel, descendants of the original Canaanites whom Israel did not drive out, for one purpose only, that of forcing them to labour in the building of the temple. Here is also the explanation of the total number given at the head of this chapter, namely, 150,000 workers and 3,600 overseers. The census came first, and Solomon compelled all those numbered to enter his forced labour gangs.’

It was the brutal and heartless wickedness of Solomon in this very particular that precipitated the rebellion of the ten northern tribes in the reign of Solomon’s son Rehoboam. It happened when Rehoboam sent the hated slave-driver Adoram to negotiate with the dissatisfied northern tribes, 1 Kings 12:18.

Gill, in his commentary, says the following.

‘2 Chronicles 2:2 shows us how the above number of strangers were disposed of, 70,000 of them bearers of burdens, 80,000 of them hewers of wood, and 3,600 overseers of the workmen, in all 153,600, an emblem of the Gentiles employed in building the spiritual temple, the church, Zechariah 6:15.’

CHAPTER 3

‘Then Solomon began to build the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David. He began building on the second day of the second month in the fourth year of his reign. The foundation Solomon laid for building the temple of God was sixty cubits long and twenty cubits wide (using the cubit of the old standard). The portico at the front of the temple was twenty cubits long across the width of the building and twenty cubits high. He overlaid the inside with pure gold. He panelled the main hall with juniper and covered it with fine gold and decorated it with palm tree and chain designs. He adorned the temple with precious stones. And the gold he used was gold of Parvaim. He overlaid the ceiling beams, doorframes, walls and doors of the temple with gold, and he carved cherubim on the walls.’ 2 Chronicles 3:1-7

SOLOMON BUILDS THE TEMPLE

The building of the temple began at Mount Moriah, 1 Kings 6:1-38, on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, 1 Chronicles 21:18 / Genesis 22:2.

This was the place which David prepared, 2 Samuel 24:17-25 / 1 Chronicles 21:16-26. The temple was built on Moriah, but the city was built on Zion.

Notice this happened in Solomon’s fourth year of reign, the delay of four years was probably due to the problems in collecting all the materials which were needed to build it, 1 Kings 6:1. It’s hard to determine how long a cubit is but most commentators say it is around 18 inches.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This height, which so much exceeds that of the main building, 1 Kings 6:2, is probably to be corrected by the reading of the Arabic Version and the Alexandrian Septuagint, ‘twenty cubits’, 2 Chronicles 3:9.’

‘He built the Most Holy Place, its length corresponding to the width of the temple—twenty cubits long and twenty cubits wide. He overlaid the inside with six hundred talents of fine gold. The gold nails weighed fifty shekels. He also overlaid the upper parts with gold. For the Most Holy Place he made a pair of sculptured cherubim and overlaid them with gold. The total wingspan of the cherubim was twenty cubits. One wing of the first cherub was five cubits long and touched the temple wall, while its other wing, also five cubits long, touched the wing of the other cherub. Similarly one wing of the second cherub was five cubits long and touched the other temple wall, and its other wing, also five cubits long, touched the wing of the first cherub. The wings of these cherubim extended twenty cubits. They stood on their feet, facing the main hall. He made the curtain of blue, purple and crimson yarn and fine linen, with cherubim worked into it.’ 2 Chronicles 3:8-14

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The upper chambers mentioned here do not conform to any architectural description, either of their utility, or their exact location. The whole chapter appears to have a strange mixture of things that Solomon was instructed to do, and did not do, and of things which he did contrary to God’s will.’

The cherubim symbolised protection and they were located above the ark in order to symbolise God’s protection of the covenant, Exodus 25:20 / Psalms 80:1 / Isaiah 37:16 / Ezekiel 10:3.

It also had a veil in place, which was made of the exact same colours as the veil of the tabernacle, Exodus 26:31 / Matthew 27:51 / Hebrews 10:19-20.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These colossal figures violated all of Moses’ instructions regarding their use in the tabernacle. They were not supposed to fill up the house but were intended to decorate the mercy seat, which was in fact a lid for the ark of the covenant. Furthermore, they were not supposed to ‘face the house’ but to be in a posture of peering down intently

into the mercy seat. One may find what these figurines were supposed to be in Exodus 25. They were to face each other, with their wings overshadowing the mercy seat, not to be standing side by side facing the outer sanctuary. Their wings were to pertain not to the whole Holy of Holies, but to the mercy seat alone. The apostle Peter referred to the symbolical significance of these cherubim in 1 Peter 1:12.

Notice there was gold everywhere, but especially in the Most Holy Place. The walls were covered with gold, 1 Kings 6:20-22, the floor was covered with gold, 1 Kings 6:30, and gold was hammered into the carvings on the doors, 1 Kings 6:32.

‘For the front of the temple he made two pillars, which together were thirty-five cubits long, each with a capital five cubits high. He made interwoven chains and put them on top of the pillars. He also made a hundred pomegranates and attached them to the chains. He erected the pillars in the front of the temple, one to the south and one to the north. The one to the south he named Jakin and the one to the north Boaz.’ 2 Chronicles 3:15-17

Notice there were two pillars put in place, 1 Kings 7:15 / 2 Kings 25:17 / Jeremiah 52:21. There is a difference in the pillars’ heights between this account and that given in the Kings, however, although the accounts in Kings and Chronicles vary as to the exact dimensions of these pillars, they will sinful anyway.

The name Jachin means ‘He will establish’ and the name Boaz means ‘In it is strength’, 1 Kings 3:17.

Pomegranates were very small in size but their fruit is very refreshing, 1 Samuel 14:2. The pomegranate was used in the temple as decorative pieces, 1 Kings 7:18 / 1 Kings 7:20 / Exodus 28:31 / Exodus 28:33-34. Their shape came to symbolise the fertility of the promised Land, Numbers 13:23 / Deuteronomy 8:3.

CHAPTER 4

‘He made a bronze altar twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide and ten cubits high. He made the Sea of cast metal, circular in shape, measuring ten cubits from rim to rim and five cubits high. It took a line of thirty cubits to measure around it. Below the rim, figures of bulls encircled it—ten to a cubit. The bulls were cast in two rows in one piece with the Sea. The Sea stood on twelve bulls, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south and three facing east. The Sea rested on top of them, and their hindquarters were toward the centre. It was a handbreadth in thickness, and its rim was like the rim of a cup, like a lily blossom. It held three thousand baths. He then made ten basins for washing and placed five on the south side and five on the north. In them the things to be used for the burnt offerings were rinsed, but the Sea was to be used by the priests for washing. He made ten gold lampstands according to the specifications for them and placed them in the temple, five on the south side and five on the north. He made ten tables and placed them in the temple, five on the south side and five on the north. He also made a hundred gold sprinkling bowls. He made the courtyard of the priests, and the large court and the doors for the court and overlaid the doors with bronze. He placed the Sea on the south side, at the southeast corner.’ 2 Chronicles 4:1-10

THE TEMPLE’S FURNISHINGS

As Solomon continues to furnish the temple, we soon discover there are a few problems with what’s he’s doing, 1 Kings 7:15-51.

Because he built the bronze altar, 1 Kings 7:23-50 / Ezekiel 43:13-17, twenty cubits high, this meant he also needed steps for the priests to use when they were making their sacrifices. However, God specifically commanded that they shouldn’t up to his altar on steps, go to his altar on steps, Exodus 20:26.

He made the Sea of cast metal in a circular shape, which measured ten cubits from rim to rim and five cubits high, 1 Kings 7:23-29.

Notice also he had figures and images of bulls made, surely this was against God's command, [Exodus 20:4](#). Bulls were the usual images under which the old Canaanite fertility god Baal was worshipped. He placed the bulls under the laver, these were for the washing of the priests during and after the sacrifices.

Notice again, how he had the candlesticks made, he made them with ten branches instead of seven as God had originally commanded. Instead of putting the lampstand on the south side of the holy place, he put five on one side, and five on the other, [Exodus 25:31-40](#) / [Exodus 37:17-24](#).

He changed the table of showbread into ten tables and places five of them on the north side and five of them on the south side, [Exodus 25:23-30](#) / [2 Chronicles 4:19](#).

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 Kings 6:36](#) / [1 Kings 7:12](#).

'And Hiram also made the pots and shovels and sprinkling bowls. So Hiram finished the work he had undertaken for King Solomon in the temple of God: the two pillars; the two bowl-shaped capitals on top of the pillars; the two sets of network decorating the two bowl-shaped capitals on top of the pillars; the four hundred pomegranates for the two sets of network (two rows of pomegranates for each network, decorating the bowl-shaped capitals on top of the pillars); the stands with their basins; the Sea and the twelve bulls under it; the pots, shovels, meat forks and all related articles.

All the objects that Hiram-Abi made for King Solomon for the temple of the LORD were of polished bronze. The king had them cast in clay moulds in the plain of the Jordan between Sukkoth and Zarethan. All these things that Solomon made amounted to so much that the weight of the bronze could not be calculated. Solomon also made all the furnishings that were in God's temple: the golden altar; the tables on which was the bread of the Presence; the lampstands of pure gold with their lamps, to burn in front of the inner sanctuary as prescribed; the gold floral work and lamps and tongs (they were solid gold); the pure gold wick trimmers, sprinkling bowls, dishes and censers; and the gold doors of the temple: the inner doors to the Most Holy Place and the doors of the main hall.' [2 Chronicles 4:11-22](#)

The building of Solomon's palace and all the furnishes was a remarkable undertaking, [2 Chronicles 4:17-22](#) / [2 Chronicles 5:1](#) / [2 Chronicles 4:6](#) / [2 Chronicles 4:10-5:1](#).

There's no doubt that Solomon chose wisely in hiring Hiram to help with the furnishings of the temple because he was a very talented skilled metal worker, [1 Kings 7:40-47](#).

Some translations use the word 'bronze', and other translations use the word 'brass', but this doesn't really matter, because brass is a term that is used to describe any copper alloy. Solomon had them cast between Succoth and Zarethan, these places were queries where he had mined the huge amount of copper needed for all the furnishings.

There was also an article of gold within the temple, [2 Chronicles 4:7-8](#) / [2 Chronicles 4:19-22](#), some of this gold along with some silver came from all the kingdoms which David had earlier conquered, [2 Samuel 8:9-12](#).

Notice that the gold lampstands Solomon had made for the temple had ten branches. We don't know why Solomon did this because [Exodus 25:31-32](#) tells us that God asked for the lampstands to have only three branches on each side. When the Jews rebuilt the temple after the Babylonian captivity, they not only put the veil that Solomon didn't make, back to where it belongs between the holy place and the most holy place, [Exodus 26:31-35](#) / [Matthew 27:51](#), but they also put in a seven-branched lampstand.

CHAPTER 5

'When all the work Solomon had done for the temple of the LORD was finished, he brought in the things his father David had dedicated—the silver and gold and all the furnishings—and he placed them in the treasuries of God's temple.' [2 Chronicles 5:1](#)

Solomon had brought everything David had dedicated and placed them in the treasuries of the Lord's temple. This gives us the impression that the temple also functioned as some kind of national treasury.

We know that the temple functioned as a community centre for the people and so the people would deposit their valuables there.

THE ARK BROUGHT TO THE TEMPLE

'Then Solomon summoned to Jerusalem the elders of Israel, all the heads of the tribes and the chiefs of the Israelite families, to bring up the ark of the LORD's covenant from Zion, the City of David. And all the Israelites came together to the king at the time of the festival in the seventh month. When all the elders of Israel had arrived, the Levites took up the ark, and they brought up the ark and the tent of meeting and all the sacred furnishings in it. The Levitical priests carried them up; and King Solomon and the entire assembly of Israel that had gathered about him were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and cattle that they could not be recorded or counted. The priests then brought the ark of the LORD's covenant to its place in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the Most Holy Place, and put it beneath the wings of the cherubim. The cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark and covered the ark and its carrying poles. These poles were so long that their ends, extending from the ark, could be seen from in front of the inner sanctuary, but not from outside the Holy Place; and they are still there today. There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt. The priests then withdrew from the Holy Place. All the priests who were there had consecrated themselves, regardless of their divisions. All the Levites who were musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives—stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets. The trumpeters and musicians joined in unison to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever." Then the temple of the LORD was filled with the cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God.' 2 Chronicles 5:2-14

Solomon requests that the ark of the covenant be brought from the tabernacle which was located in the city of David and placed inside the temple, when the temple was finished being built, 2 Chronicles 5:2-6:11.

The festival in the month of Ethanim was the feast of tabernacles, Deuteronomy 16:13, this was one of the great feasts that everyone was required to attend.

It would have been roughly a year between the dedication of the temple and the complete work of finishing it. The feast of tabernacles took place on the seventh month, and Solomon had finished the building works on the temple on the eighth month, 1 Kings 6:37-38.

When the Israelites returned from Babylonian captivity the month of Ethanim, would be changed to the month of Tishri.

After sacrificing so many sheep and cattle, which couldn't be counted the priests lay the ark in the inner sanctuary of the temple. After the ark of the covenant was placed inside the inner sanctuary, the text tells us that 'the cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark'.

These cherubim described here were different from the ones from the time of Moses, the ones in the time of Moses were firmly fixed to the lid of the ark, Exodus 37:7.

Notice that the poles, which were used to carry the ark were so long, that they could be seen from the Holy Place. This again, tells us that Solomon never put a curtain between the holy place and the most holy place, Exodus 26:31-35 / 2 Samuel 7:2 / Matthew 27:51.

Notice also that inside the ark were only two stone tablets, these would have been the ten commandments which Moses received at Mount Sinai, Exodus 25:16.

It's possible that Aaron's staff, Numbers 17:10 / Hebrews 9:4, and the golden pot of hidden manna, Exodus 16:33-34 / Hebrews 9:4, were placed in front of the ark, Exodus 16:33-34 / Numbers 17:25.

The priests could perform their service because of the Lord's glory, the cloud represented God's presence, Exodus 40:34-38. It appears that the Lord's glory was too much for the priests, just as it was for Moses, Leviticus 16:2-13 / Deuteronomy 4:24 / Exodus 40:35.

Solomon says, 'the LORD has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud', 1 Kings 8:12. It would be dark in the holy of holies because there were no windows, and here this darkness is associated with the dark storm cloud which came over Mount Horeb at the giving of the Law, Exodus 20:18 / Psalms 18:10-11.

CHAPTER 6

'Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud; I have built a magnificent temple for you, a place for you to dwell forever." While the whole assembly of Israel was standing there, the king turned around and blessed them. Then he said: "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his hands has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to my father David. For he said, 'Since the day I brought my people out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city in any tribe of Israel to have a temple built so that my Name might be there, nor have I chosen anyone to be ruler over my people Israel. But now I have chosen Jerusalem for my Name to be there, and I have chosen David to rule my people Israel.' "My father David had it in his heart to build a temple for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. But the LORD said to my father David, 'You did well to have it in your heart to build a temple for my Name. Nevertheless, you are not the one to build the temple, but your son, your own flesh and blood—he is the one who will build the temple for my Name.' "The LORD has kept the promise he made. I have succeeded David my father and now I sit on the throne of Israel, just as the LORD promised, and I have built the temple for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. There I have placed the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD that he made with the people of Israel." 2 Chronicles 6:1-11

Common sense tells us that God wouldn't literally dwell in the temple, 1 Kings 8:27-30 / Acts 7:48. Solomon is basically saying that the temple would represent God's presence among His people.

After blessing the people, Solomon then goes on to quote God's words to his father, David, 1 Kings 8:14-21 / 2 Samuel 2:13. However, if God had originally planned to choose a city and build a temple in the land of one of the tribes, then that tribe would have taken ownership of a visible symbol of God's presence, but it never was God's plan. God didn't want a temple in the first place, 2 Samuel 7:5-7, this temple was built for Solomon's father, David because it was David's dream to build one, 2 Samuel 7:1-2.

Solomon's throne wasn't established forever and the temple he built which bore God's Name, was claimed to be such by Solomon and the Israelites and God appears to allow the temple to be built and used for worship at this time, but the house which God was speaking about was referring to the Lord's church, Acts 15:16-18.

Solomon goes ahead and expresses his gratitude that he was set upon the throne of David in fulfilment of the promise that God made to David, 1 Chronicles 28:6.

SOLOMON'S PRAYER OF DEDICATION

'Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of the whole assembly of Israel and spread out his hands. Now he had made a bronze platform, five cubits long, five cubits wide and three cubits high, and had placed it in the centre of the outer court. He stood on the platform and then knelt down before the whole assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven. He said: "LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven or on earth—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way. You have

kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it—as it is today. “Now, LORD, the God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, ‘You shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before me according to my law, as you have done.’ And now, LORD, the God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David come true. “But will God really dwell on earth with humans? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! Yet, LORD my God, give attention to your servant’s prayer and his plea for mercy. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence. May your eyes be open toward this temple day and night, this place of which you said you would put your Name there. May you hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place. Hear the supplications of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place; and when you hear, forgive.’ 2 Chronicles 6:12-21

In 1 Kings 8:22-53, we read about Solomon’s prayer of dedication. Some suggest that Solomon prayed for the wrong thing, instead of praying that God will keep His word, he should have prayed and he and his son would keep the Lord’s Word.

It’s possible that his prayer was written down and kept in The Book of the Acts of Solomon, 1 Kings 11:41, or in The Book of Nathan the Prophet, 2 Chronicles 9:20.

It’s incredible to think that here, Solomon openly declares that ‘there is no God like you’, but as he approaches his later years of reign, he commits idolatry, 1 Kings 11:5-12.

He also quotes God’s words again in saying, ‘you shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel’, this, of course, was God’s promise to David, that from him only God would recognise someone as the rightful king of Israel.

Although Solomon declared earlier that the temple will be God’s dwelling place forever, 1 Kings 8:13, now Solomon answers his own question when he asks, ‘will God really dwell on the earth?’ He certainly knows that no one can confine God to one place, never mind a temple, Deuteronomy 10:14 / 2 Chronicles 6:18 / Acts 17:22-31.

The name of God, or authority of God, was once displayed through the presence of the tabernacle, and now Solomon asks God to display His Name through the presence of the temple.

The problem, however, is seen in this, if the temple demonstrated God’s presence and it also displayed God’s authority over His people, then all the nations around could claim the same thing about their temples.

‘When anyone wrongs their neighbour and is required to take an oath and they come and swear the oath before your altar in this temple, then hear from heaven and act. Judge between your servants, condemning the guilty and bringing down on their heads what they have done, and vindicating the innocent by treating them in accordance with their innocence. When your people Israel have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you and when they turn back and give praise to your name, praying and making supplication before you in this temple, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them back to the land you gave to them and their ancestors. “When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray toward this place and give praise to your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the right way to live and send rain on the land you gave your people for an inheritance. When famine or plague comes to the land, or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers, or when enemies besiege them in any of their cities, whatever disaster or disease may come, and when a prayer or plea is made by anyone among your people Israel—being aware of their afflictions and pains and spreading out their hands toward this temple—then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Forgive, and deal with everyone according to all they do, since you know their hearts (for you alone know the human heart), so that they will fear you and walk in obedience to you all the time they live in the land you gave our ancestors. As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm—when they come and pray toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name. When your people go to war against their enemies, wherever you send them, and when they pray to you toward this city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name, then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause. When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you become

angry with them and give them over to the enemy, who takes them captive to a land far away or near; and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captivity and say, ‘We have sinned, we have done wrong and acted wickedly’; and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their captivity where they were taken, and pray toward the land you gave their ancestors, toward the city you have chosen and toward the temple I have built for your Name; then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their pleas, and uphold their cause. And forgive your people, who have sinned against you.’ 2 Chronicles 6:22-39

The text here is basically saying if the Israelites don’t remain faithful to God and His Word, then there will be consequences to pay, famines, plagues exile etc, 1 Kings 8:31-53.

The terms and conditions that a person is in the presence of the temple to swear an oath or repent couldn’t be a condition for making binding oaths or bringing about personal repentance, simply because the temple was far away from most of the other Israelites.

Notice Solomon asks God to hear their prayers when they are facing the temple, this is mentioned four times in his prayer, but we know God doesn’t ask us to pray in any specific direction, He hears our prayers wherever we are and in whatever direction we’re facing.

Over and over again throughout these verses, Solomon speaks about God’s dwelling place as heaven, not the temple or any other physical place. Solomon asks that the beautiful temple which he has built be used as evidence of the existence of God when foreigners pass by.

The sending of the rain is in correspondence with their obedience to the Law of God, and so, if they were disobedient, they would be taken into captivity. Solomon says that no one can say they haven’t sinned, and that is still true today, Romans 3:23 / 1 John 1:10.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following about Solomon’s prayer.

1. The omnipotence of God is evident in his conviction that God was able to hear and answer prayer in any land on earth ‘far or near,’ 1 Kings 8:46.
2. Although God’s name was associated with the house Solomon built, God’s ‘dwelling place’ is emphatically declared to be ‘in heaven’, 1 Kings 8:32 / 1 Kings 8:34 / 1 Kings 8:36 / 1 Kings 8:39 / 1 Kings 8:43 / 1 Kings 8:45 / 1 Kings 8:48, that’s no less than seven times.
3. Both the ubiquitousness and the omniscience of God appear in the declaration that God knows ‘every human heart’, 1 Kings 8:39. Also in the view that ‘the heavens, even the highest heaven’, 1 Kings 8:27, cannot contain Him, there is further evidence that God is everywhere throughout his whole universe.
4. The fact of God’s displeasure with sin and the certainty of his punishing it appears in such verses as 1 Kings 8:33 / 1 Kings 8:35 and 1 Kings 8:46.
5. That God’s forgiveness is contingent upon the condition of the sinner’s turning away from his transgressions is a major thesis of the prayer, 1 Kings 8:33 / 1 Kings 8:35 / 1 Kings 8:48.
6. That God is not merely the God of the Jews but of all the peoples of the earth is the burden of 1 Kings 8:41-43.
7. God’s forgiveness of sins is repeatedly promised upon the condition of its being prayed for. ‘If they make supplication, 1 Kings 8:33 / 1 Kings 8:47, ‘if they pray’, 1 Kings 8:35 / 1 Kings 8:48, ‘when he shall pray’, 1 Kings 8:42, ‘if your people pray’, 1 Kings 8:44.

Solomon’s profoundly beautiful and correct thoughts regarding God’s nature and character were recorded in The Acts of Solomon, 1 Kings 11:41.

‘Now, my God, may your eyes be open and your ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. “Now arise, LORD God, and come to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. May your priests, LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and may your faithful people rejoice in your goodness. LORD God, do not reject your anointed one. Remember the great love promised to David your servant.” 2 Chronicles 6:40-42

In conclusion, Solomon asks God to open His eyes and ears when prayers are offered in the temple. Not that the ark was in the temple, this represented the presence of God being in the temple, Numbers 10:35-36.

Solomon asks God that His priests be clothed in salvation, in other words, the conduct of the religious leaders must be according to the righteousness of God.

He asks God not to reject His anointed one, that is, Solomon himself. He doesn't want God to hide His face through shame at having his prayers rejected, 1 Kings 2:16.

CHAPTER 7

‘When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. The priests could not enter the temple of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled it. When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, “He is good; his love endures forever.” 2 Chronicles 7:1-3

THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

After praying to God, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offerings and sacrifices.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Other Biblical accounts of fire coming down from heaven to consume sacrifices are. 1. At the Mosaic tabernacle, Leviticus 9:24. 2. Before Manoah, Judges 13:20. 3. At the Davidic altar on Mount Moriah, 1 Chronicles 21:26.’

Notice that the glory of the Lord filled the temple, this was God's way of demonstrating that He accepted the offering that was made. It's no wonder that everyone knelt, worshipped and thanked God, for His goodness and His enduring love.

‘Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD. And King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand head of cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep and goats. So the king and all the people dedicated the temple of God. The priests took their positions, as did the Levites with the LORD's musical instruments, which King David had made for praising the LORD and which were used when he gave thanks, saying, “His love endures forever.” Opposite the Levites, the priests blew their trumpets, and all the Israelites were standing. Solomon consecrated the middle part of the courtyard in front of the temple of the LORD, and there he offered burnt offerings and the fat of the fellowship offerings, because the bronze altar he had made could not hold the burnt offerings, the grain offerings and the fat portions. So Solomon observed the festival at that time for seven days, and all Israel with him—a vast assembly, people from Lebo Hamath to the Wadi of Egypt. On the eighth day they held an assembly, for they had celebrated the dedication of the altar for seven days and the festival for seven days more. On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people to their homes, joyful and glad in heart for the good things the LORD had done for David and Solomon and for his people Israel.’ 2 Chronicles 7:4-10

When we read about the number of sacrifices being made here, there's no doubt that Israel at this point in time anyway, was totally committed to God and His laws, 1 Kings 8:62-66 / 2 Chronicles 7:1-10.

Lebo Hamath was the northern region of Palestine between Mount Hermon and Lebanon and the Wadi of Egypt was a small river south of Gaza in the southern part of Palestine.

They celebrated for a total of fourteen days, this would be seven days of celebration at the Feast of Dedication and seven more days of celebration for the feast of Tabernacles.

THE LORD APPEARS TO SOLOMON

‘When Solomon had finished the temple of the LORD and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the LORD and in his own palace, the LORD appeared to him at night and said: “I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices. “When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there. “As for you, if you walk before me faithfully as David your father did, and do all I command, and observe my decrees and laws, I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father when I said, ‘You shall never fail to have a successor to rule over Israel.’ “But if you turn away and forsake the decrees and commands I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will uproot Israel from my land, which I have given them, and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. I will make it a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples. This temple will become a heap of rubble. All who pass by will be appalled and say, ‘Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land and to this temple?’ People will answer, ‘Because they have forsaken the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who brought them out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshiping and serving them—that is why he brought all this disaster on them.’” 2 Chronicles 7:11-22

After completing the building work of the temple and his royal palace, Solomon achieved all he had desired to do. Although it was never God’s desire to have a temple built, 2 Samuel 7:5-7, God accepts it and so the temple was consecrated with the presence of God, 1 Kings 9:1-9.

However, when God appears to Solomon, God once again lays down the terms and conditions, Solomon had to walk faithfully with the Lord, if he wanted to continue to be David’s successor, then he had to obey God’s commands, 1 Kings 8:24-26.

God also tells him if he or his descendants turn away from God, disobey His commands and decrees, serve other gods and worship them, then God will cut off His people, and reject the temple. Sadly, this is exactly what Israel did under Solomon’s reign and through Solomon’s example, 1 Kings 11:5-12.

Notice the consequences of breaking God’s terms and conditions, Israel will be cut off from the land, the temple will become rubble, and people will mock and scoff at them.

God really wants Israel to understand just how bad things will get for them if they commit idolatry, Jeremiah 26:18 / Micah 3:12.

CHAPTER 8

‘At the end of twenty years, during which Solomon built the temple of the LORD and his own palace, Solomon rebuilt the villages that Hiram had given him, and settled Israelites in them. Solomon then went to Hamath Zobah and captured it. He also built up Tadmor in the desert and all the store cities he had built in Hamath. He rebuilt Upper Beth Horon and Lower Beth Horon as fortified cities, with walls and with gates and bars, as well as Baalath and all his store cities, and all the cities for his chariots and for his horses—whatever he desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon and throughout all the territory he ruled. There were still people left from the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (these people were not Israelites). Solomon conscripted the descendants of all these people

remaining in the land—whom the Israelites had not destroyed—to serve as slave labour, as it is to this day. But Solomon did not make slaves of the Israelites for his work; they were his fighting men, commanders of his captains, and commanders of his chariots and charioteers. They were also King Solomon’s chief officials—two hundred and fifty officials supervising the men.’ 2 Chronicles 8:1-10

SOLOMON’S OTHER ACTIVITIES

It took Solomon seven years to build the temple and thirteen years to build his palace. At the end of these twenty years, his kingdom was secure, stable, and blessed.

This didn’t stop him from continuing to build though, he went on to build new cities, storage cities, fortifications, chariot cities, and cities of the cavalry.

Selman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A problem comes in reconciling the mention of the cities that Hiram gave to Solomon because 1 Kings 9:11-14 indicates that they were given by Solomon to Hiram. While textual disturbance is possible, it seems more probable that they had been returned to Solomon, either because they were unacceptable, 1 Kings 9:12-13, or because they had been collateral for a loan, 1 Kings 9:14.’

It appears when Solomon conquered a nation he put them under slave labour, the forced labourers were Canaanites, 1 Kings 5:15-18 / 1 Kings 9:15-22, the very people God had asked Israel to totally destroy when entering the promised land, but Israel failed to do so, Joshua 16:10 / Judges 1:29. The Israelites were used to help build the temple but they weren’t forced to do so, 1 Kings 5:13-14.

‘Solomon brought Pharaoh’s daughter up from the City of David to the palace he had built for her, for he said, “My wife must not live in the palace of David king of Israel, because the places the ark of the LORD has entered are holy.” On the altar of the LORD that he had built in front of the portico, Solomon sacrificed burnt offerings to the LORD, according to the daily requirement for offerings commanded by Moses for the Sabbaths, the New Moons and the three annual festivals—the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks and the Festival of Tabernacles.

In keeping with the ordinance of his father David, he appointed the divisions of the priests for their duties, and the Levites to lead the praise and to assist the priests according to each day’s requirement. He also appointed the gatekeepers by divisions for the various gates, because this was what David the man of God had ordered. They did not deviate from the king’s commands to the priests or to the Levites in any matter, including that of the treasuries.

All Solomon’s work was carried out, from the day the foundation of the temple of the LORD was laid until its completion. So the temple of the LORD was finished. Then Solomon went to Ezion Geber and Elath on the coast of Edom. And Hiram sent him ships commanded by his own men, sailors who knew the sea. These, with Solomon’s men, sailed to Ophir and brought back four hundred and fifty talents of gold, which they delivered to King Solomon.’
2 Chronicles 8:11-28

After all the building work was complete, it was time for people to move in, this would include Pharaoh’s daughter, 1 Kings 9:23-28, one of his many wives, 1 Kings 11:1-3.

It’s incredible to think that Solomon openly admits his wife was an unbeliever and unholy, yet, he marries her anyway, and as we know this didn’t go well, 1 Kings 11:4-8.

Three times a year three feasts were celebrated and sacrifices were made, the feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles, Numbers 28:1-8. Notice Solomon arranged the whole temple service according to how David wanted it, 1 Chronicles 24.

Ezion Geber was on the shore of the Red Sea and Hiram’s men served as sailors along with Solomon’s men, Numbers 33:35-36 / Deuteronomy 2:8. Some believe that from Ezion Geber, Solomon sent his ships on voyages to Ophir to get gold.

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 Kings 9:26-28](#).

No one knows exactly where Ophir was located, some suggest Africa, others suggest Arabia, [Job 22:24](#), and some suggest India, [1 Kings 10:22](#).

CHAPTER 9

‘When the queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's fame, she came to Jerusalem to test him with hard questions. Arriving with a very great caravan—with camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones—she came to Solomon and talked with him about all she had on her mind. Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too hard for him to explain to her. When the queen of Sheba saw the wisdom of Solomon, as well as the palace he had built, the food on his table, the seating of his officials, the attending servants in their robes, the cupbearers in their robes and the burnt offerings he made at the temple of the LORD, she was overwhelmed. She said to the king, “The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. But I did not believe what they said until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half the greatness of your wisdom was told me; you have far exceeded the report I heard. How happy your people must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Praise be to the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on his throne as king to rule for the LORD your God. Because of the love of your God for Israel and his desire to uphold them forever, he has made you king over them, to maintain justice and righteousness.” Then she gave the king 120 talents of gold, large quantities of spices, and precious stones. There had never been such spices as those the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. (The servants of Hiram and the servants of Solomon brought gold from Ophir; they also brought algumwood and precious stones. The king used the algumwood to make steps for the temple of the LORD and for the royal palace, and to make harps and lyres for the musicians. Nothing like them had ever been seen in Judah.) King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired and asked for; he gave her more than she had brought to him. Then she left and returned with her retinue to her own country.’ 2 Chronicles 9:1-12

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA VISITS SOLOMON

Solomon's fame is now beginning to spread, not only his fame but his relationship with the Lord. He was famous because of his great wealth and the wisdom he got from the Lord, [1 Kings 3:7-12](#).

His fame reached the ears of the Queen of Sheba, who was possibly from southern Arabia, Egypt or Ethiopia, [1 Kings 10:1-25](#) / [1 Kings 11:41-43](#) / [Matthew 12:42](#). She wanted to visit Solomon and see him and hear him for herself.

After answering all of the queen's questions, and seeing Solomon's great wealth, she says that ‘not even half was told me in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard’. In other words, she now knows that Solomon's reputation wasn't exaggerated and as a result, she was overwhelmed.

Solomon never asked God for wealth or fame but because he only asked God for wisdom, God blessed him with wisdom, wealth and fame, and rightly so, God was given the credit for blessing Solomon with these, [1 Kings 3:10-13](#). The queen was well aware that it was God who had given Solomon everything he has and so, she gives praise to God for everything He has done for Solomon, including making him king of Israel. She blessed Solomon and gives him gifts of gold, precious stones and many spices.

‘The weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents, not including the revenues brought in by merchants and traders. Also all the kings of Arabia and the governors of the territories brought gold and silver to Solomon. King Solomon made two hundred large shields of hammered gold; six hundred shekels of hammered gold

went into each shield. He also made three hundred small shields of hammered gold, with three hundred shekels of gold in each shield. The king put them in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. Then the king made a great throne covered with ivory and overlaid with pure gold. The throne had six steps, and a footstool of gold was attached to it. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with a lion standing beside each of them. Twelve lions stood on the six steps, one at either end of each step. Nothing like it had ever been made for any other kingdom. All King Solomon's goblets were gold, and all the household articles in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Nothing was made of silver, because silver was considered of little value in Solomon's day. The king had a fleet of trading ships manned by Hiram's servants. Once every three years it returned, carrying gold, silver and ivory, and apes and baboons. King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. All the kings of the earth sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart. Year after year, everyone who came brought a gift—articles of silver and gold, and robes, weapons and spices, and horses and mules. Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. He ruled over all the kings from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig trees in the foothills. Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and all other countries.' 2 Chronicles 9:13-28

SOLOMON'S SPLENDOUR

It appears that Solomon's taxation brought him even more gold, and wealth, and make no mistake about it, this is a huge sum of money, 2 Chronicles 1:14-17 / 1 Kings 10:14-29.

The gold shields the bodyguards used came in two sizes, 1 Kings 14:27-28 / 2 Chronicles 12:10, the larger ones which were used for full-body protection cost 600 shekels of gold and the smaller ones, which were used for close-up combat, cost three minas of gold.

Solomon places them in the 'Palace of the Forest of Lebanon,' which is possibly a reference to the temple, 1 Kings 5:6-8. Because Solomon had a great throne made which was covered in ivory, this tells us that he was trading with those in Africa who were slaughtering elephants for their ivory tusks.

Notice also that this great throne he made for himself was made of gold and ivory but it was also decorated with lions figures. The images of the lions that decorated Solomon's throne were made in violation of God's commands, Exodus 20:4.

Solomon's wealth is seen in these verses, and it appears that because there was so much gold, the price of silver must have been very cheap and of little value. Although silver was worth very little at this time, it was still being used widely, especially in Jerusalem.

The king had a fleet of 'trading ships', but some translations use the words 'ships of Tarshish', the actual Hebrew word for Tarshish means refinery.

This means that Tarshish isn't the location but the process of refining metals, 1 Kings 9:26-28. In other words, these trading ships carried refined metals, which are precious metals.

As Solomon's reputation for wisdom grows throughout the land, so does his wealth. Solomon not only acquired a lot of gold but he also acquired a great number of horses and chariots, 1 Kings 4:16 / 1 Kings 9:19.

Through the king's traders, the horses were exported to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria. It appears that once again that Solomon forgot about God and His commandments because this accumulation of gold, horses and chariots was a complete violation of God's commands, Deuteronomy 17:16-17.

Solomon had become so wealthy, he had more wealth than any other king who was living at the time.

'As for the other events of Solomon's reign, from beginning to end, are they not written in the records of Nathan the prophet, in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam son of

Nebat? Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. Then he rested with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David his father. And Rehoboam his son succeeded him as king.' 2 Chronicles 9:29-31

SOLOMON'S DEATH

These verses don't tell us anything about how Solomon actually died, but they do tell us he died and he had reigned for forty years, 1 Kings 11:41-43.

There's a lot of debate as to whether or not Solomon actually repented of all his idolatrous actions before he died, some suggest the Bible doesn't tell us and others look at the Book of Proverbs and the book of Ecclesiastes and suggest that he did.

Solomon's son, Rehoboam took over as ruler of the United Kingdom of Israel, sadly his reign really didn't last very long. He followed his father's example which ended up being one of the reasons the United Kingdom of Israel became the Divided Kingdom.

CHAPTER 10

The death of Solomon ended the greatest period in the history of Israel, the United Kingdom. This was followed by the Divided Kingdom which lasted 388 years.

At Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam ascended the throne. His subjects had long chafed under the heavy taxation of Solomon. Led by Jeroboam, a general of Solomon's, they asked Rehoboam to lighten their load.

Rehoboam foolishly replied, 'My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke.' 1 Kings 12:14. The people were so angry with this reply that ten of the twelve tribes revolted against Rehoboam and crowned Jeroboam as their king. Jeroboam's kingdom became known as the northern kingdom of Israel.

Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained with Rehoboam in the southern kingdom of Judah. (The little tribe of Benjamin was so small it was virtually swallowed up by the tribe of Judah.) 2 Kings and the last part of 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles tell the complete story of the Divided Kingdom.

THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

The story of the northern kingdom is not a happy one. During its 253 years of history, it had one bad ruler after another, not a single one of its 19 kings actually being 'good'. Nine dynasties or families of kings reigned during this time.

Several kings were murdered and their places were taken by usurpers. Jeroboam was so afraid that the people would go back to Jerusalem in Judah to worship and desire Rehoboam for their king that he set up two golden calves at Dan and Bethel for them to worship.

So angered was God at his action that He sent Ahijah to him to predict the downfall of Jeroboam's house and the doom of Israel. The prophet declared, 'The Lord shall smite Israel and he shall root up Israel out of this good land and shall scatter them beyond the river.' **2 Kings 14:15.**

After Jeroboam's death, idolatry became even more rampant than before, and under Ahab, the seventh king, worship of the idol god Baal was introduced. During its first eighty years, the northern kingdom was almost continuously at war with Judah.

The ascension of Ahab to the throne sank Israel to its lowest depths. Ahab married a foreign woman, Jezebel, daughter of the king of Tyre. She brought along her idols and soon abolished the worship of Jehovah in Israel.

It is doubtful that a more evil, unscrupulous woman is described in the entire Bible and Ahab was so spineless that he yielded to his wife's evil designs. God sent the prophet Elijah to cry out again this idolatry.

Elijah conducted a contest with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, and when they were proved false he had them slain. This intensified their determination of Jezebel to kill Elijah, but she never succeeded in her attempt.

Perhaps the best of all the kings of Israel was Jehu who succeeded Ahab's son as king. With a ruthless determination, he had Jezebel killed and Baal worship abolished. But his zeal ran out and he never did away with the golden calves set up by Jeroboam. Of most of the kings who followed Jehu, it is said they 'departed not from the sins of Jeroboam.'

Israel's political strength reached its greatest height since Solomon under Jeroboam II, but idolatry again grew worse. God carried out His promise made by Ahijah to punish and scatter Israel. In 722 B.C. the powerful Assyrian king carried the people of Israel into Assyria. They never returned. From this point, the story of the Jews is that of the Kingdom of Judah.

THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH

Judah was smaller and weaker than Israel. Yet, through its 388 years of history, it remained much closer to God.

Several kings were very good and on the whole, the bad were not as evil as those of Israel. All were of the family of David. Judah began to decline under Rehoboam, but during the reigns of good kings Asa and Jehoshaphat, a great revival swept the land.

In the following years, Judah borrowed the religion of Baal from Israel. It remained for King Hezekiah to completely root out idolatry. He and his great-grandson Josiah were the two best kings to rule Judah.

But Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, was as evil as Hezekiah was good. In his fifty-five year reign, he introduced every form of idol worship he could think of and even burned his own children with fire as a religious rite. This caused God to promise through the prophets that Judah would be sorely punished for its idolatry.

After Josiah became king he set out to bring the people back to God. When the lost book of the law was found in the temple, Josiah instituted such a religious revival as his people had never seen.

Following Josiah's death, Judah descended rapidly. All the remaining kings were bad and weak. Judah was soon made a 'satellite' of Babylon, and when the kings dared to rebel, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 606 B.C. carried most of the people into captivity as the Assyrians had done with Israel over 100 years before.

Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, governed a few that remained, but in 587 B.C. he too and most of the rest were also carried into Babylon. This punishment of God taught the Jews a lesson. Never again did they return to idolatry.

‘Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone there to make him king. When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard this (he was in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), he returned from Egypt. So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and all Israel went to Rehoboam and said to him: “Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labour and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you.” Rehoboam answered, “Come back to me in three days.” So the people went away.’ 2 Chronicles 10:1-5

ISRAEL REBELS AGAINST REHOBAM

Rehoboam goes to Shechem which was north of Jerusalem to meet with the people so that he can be made king.

Jeroboam probably remembers what Ahijah the prophet told him concerning him reigning over ten tribes, 1 Kings 11:29-33, and so, he had earlier ran away to Egypt because Solomon had tried to kill him, 1 Kings 11:40, comes with a request that Rehoboam lightens the harsh labour and heavy yoke from his people that Solomon had put on the people, 1 Kings 12:1-5.

Solomon’s taxes were just too much for the people and so the northern tribes had every right to make this request because most of the money from taxes came from the northern tribes and most of it was spent in the south in Judah and Jerusalem.

‘Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. “How would you advise me to answer these people?” he asked. They replied, “If you will be kind to these people and please them and give them a favourable answer, they will always be your servants.” But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him. He asked them, “What is your advice? How should we answer these people who say to me, ‘Lighten the yoke your father put on us’?” The young men who had grown up with him replied, “The people have said to you, ‘Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter.’ Now tell them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist. My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.’” Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said, “Come back to me in three days.” The king answered them harshly. Rejecting the advice of the elders, he followed the advice of the young men and said, “My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.” So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from God, to fulfil the word the LORD had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite. When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king: “What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse’s son? To your tents, Israel! Look after your own house, David!” So all the Israelites went home. But as for the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah, Rehoboam still ruled over them. King Rehoboam sent out Adoniram, who was in charge of forced labour, but the Israelites stoned him to death. King Rehoboam, however, managed to get into his chariot and escape to Jerusalem. So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.’ 2 Chronicles 10:6-19

Rehoboam speaks to the elders, these were the men who stood before Solomon when he was alive and reigned as king, and it appears that Solomon never listened to their complaints. It appears that Solomon was a bit of a dictator who refused to listen to the counsel of the elders.

The young men appear to be very dictatorial in their attitude toward the people, no doubt they were like this because they were spoiled by the king whilst living in the king’s court. In other words, they didn’t want to give up their lavish lifestyles.

We can see from Rehoboam’s decision that he wanted to follow in his father’s footsteps and rule as a dictator so that he can continue to live in luxury as king.

As always, with this type of leadership, the rich get richer and the poor pay more taxes which results in them becoming poorer. It's very clear that all Rehoboam is interested in is looking after himself, he didn't care about anyone else.

When Israel saw that the Rehoboam refused to listen to them, they ask, 'what share do we have in David, what part of Jesse's son?' They were basically saying if the northern tribes were to be burdened with heavy taxation that would only go to David's house in the south, then the northern tribes would feel that they could no longer be loyal to any descendant of David who was king, **1 Kings 12:16-20**.

There were several devout Israelites who emigrated to Judah so that they could remain under the rule of Rehoboam but also so that they can worship God in the manner in which God wanted to be worshipped in Jerusalem, **2 Chronicles 11:16**.

Adoniram was probably the same officer we read of in **1 Kings 4:6**, and some believe that he might have been either a son or grandson of David's Adoniram.

Rehoboam tried to regain his reign in the northern tribes by sending Adoniram so that he could put them into forced labour, however, he was stoned to death. By doing this, the northern tribes sent a clear message to Rehoboam that they were rebelling against him and they have now officially split from Judah and Rehoboam.

CHAPTER 11

'When Rehoboam arrived in Jerusalem, he mustered Judah and Benjamin—a hundred and eighty thousand able young men—to go to war against Israel and to regain the kingdom for Rehoboam. But this word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God: "Say to Rehoboam son of Solomon king of Judah and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, 'This is what the LORD says: Do not go up to fight against your fellow Israelites. Go home, every one of you, for this is my doing.' " So they obeyed the words of the LORD and turned back from marching against Jeroboam.' **2 Chronicles 11:1-4**

When we read about the southern tribe of Judah, we must remember to include the tribe of Benjamin because most of them were absorbed into Judah.

Because the land of Simeon was divided between the north and south, much of the tribe of Simeon was also included in Judah. The northern kingdom was to be known as Israel and the southern kingdom was to be known as Judah.

Whilst Rehoboam gathered as much men together as he could to go to war against the northern king, he receives a message from God through Shemaiah the man of God. The message was simple, Rehoboam must give up his plans in trying to conquer the northern tribes.

The reason for this is because it was God's plan to divide the kingdom, **1 Kings 11:26-39**, and Rehoboam will fail in his quest to try and unite them again because he would be going against God's will.

Rehoboam wisely listens to what God says and obeys Him and everyone returned home, **1 Kings 12:21-24**.

REHOBAM FORTIFIES JUDAH

'Rehoboam lived in Jerusalem and built up towns for defence in Judah: Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, Beth Zur, Soko, Adullam, Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, Zorah, Aijalon and Hebron. These were fortified cities in Judah and Benjamin. He strengthened their defences and put commanders in them, with supplies of food, olive oil

and wine. He put shields and spears in all the cities and made them very strong. So Judah and Benjamin were his.’ 2 Chronicles 11:5-12

Whilst living in Jerusalem, Rehoboam builds cities for the defence of Judah, this was because the kingdom was now divided, and so, Judah was left very vulnerable. He builds or fortifies fifteen key cities to protect all trading routes, as well as put in place defensive measures against the northern kingdom.

At this point in time, his greatest threat wasn’t going to come from his brothers in the north, but from the southeast, that is, from Egypt.

‘The priests and Levites from all their districts throughout Israel sided with him. The Levites even abandoned their pasturelands and property and came to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons had rejected them as priests of the LORD when he appointed his own priests for the high places and for the goat and calf idols he had made. Those from every tribe of Israel who set their hearts on seeking the LORD, the God of Israel, followed the Levites to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to the LORD, the God of their ancestors. They strengthened the kingdom of Judah and supported Rehoboam son of Solomon three years, following the ways of David and Solomon during this time.’ 2 Chronicles 11:13-17

When the kingdom was divided, Jeroboam built places for sacrifices in Bethel and Dan, and by doing this, he kept the people from going to the temple in Jerusalem.

This move didn’t go well with the priests and Levites, and so, they forsook the apostasy of Jeroboam. That’s why they left and abandoned everything, it was because of the idolatry of Jeroboam, 1 Kings 12:26-33.

Jeroboam subsequently established his own paid priesthood, 1 Kings 12:31 / 1 Kings 13:33. There wasn’t a shortage of people around who would gladly take a pay to act as a priest, and so, he had no problem in finding false priests to administer the sacrifices at Bethel and Dan, 1 Kings 12:25-33. Those who were genuine priests were rejected by Jeroboam and his men.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Jeroboam’s ‘casting off’ of the Levites, his images of the he-goats, and the fact of the Levites losing their possessions in order to live in Judah are not mentioned in Kings. Thus the Chronicler makes it clear enough that there was absolutely nothing whatever honourable or legitimate in the sinful worship Jeroboam installed in Israel. The priests and Levites who were deposed could still have kept their lands, but they relinquished them in order to live in Judah where they could carry on their calling. They were accompanied by laymen who shared their disillusionment.’

Moses told us what this worship of the he-goats was like, when he forbade it to Israel, Leviticus 17:7. There can be little doubt that the golden calves set up by Jeroboam were also used in the same licentious manner, 1 Kings 12:25-33.

Notice that ‘those from every tribe of Israel who set their hearts on seeking the LORD, followed the Levites to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to the LORD’.

A remnant of all twelve tribes took lived in the territory of Judah, which 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.

Rehoboam’s kingdom was strong for three years, that is, until Shishak came from Egypt, defeated him, and took all of the treasures of the temple and royal house back to Egypt, 2 Chronicles 12.

They walked in the way of David and Solomon for three years, however, this didn’t last much longer, because Rehoboam’s general started to go towards ungodliness.

REHOBAM'S FAMILY

‘Rehoboam married Mahalath, who was the daughter of David’s son Jerimoth and of Abihail, the daughter of Jesse’s son Eliab. She bore him sons: Jeush, Shemariah and Zaham. Then he married Maakah daughter of Absalom, who bore him Abijah, Attai, Ziza and Shelomith. Rehoboam loved Maakah daughter of Absalom more than any of his other wives and concubines. In all, he had eighteen wives and sixty concubines, twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters. Rehoboam appointed Abijah son of Maakah as crown prince among his brothers, in order to make him king. He acted wisely, dispersing some of his sons throughout the districts of Judah and Benjamin, and to all the fortified cities. He gave them abundant provisions and took many wives for them.’ 2 Chronicles 11:18-23

Rehoboam, sadly followed his father, Solomon’s footsteps, when it came to marriage, he had 18 wives and 60 concubines, who together gave him 28 sons and 60 daughters, Deuteronomy 17:17.

He chose Abijah to be his successor. Abijah was the son of Maakah who was the daughter of Absalom.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Abijah certainly was not the first-born of Rehoboam, but as he loved Maakah more than any of his wives, so he preferred her son, probably through his mother’s influence. It was true policy to disperse his own sons through the different provinces who were not likely to form any league with Jeroboam against their father.’

CHAPTER 12

‘After Rehoboam’s position as king was established and he had become strong, he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the LORD. Because they had been unfaithful to the LORD, Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem in the fifth year of King Rehoboam. With twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand horsemen and the innumerable troops of Libyans, Sukkites and Cushites that came with him from Egypt, he captured the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem. Then the prophet Shemaiah came to Rehoboam and to the leaders of Judah who had assembled in Jerusalem for fear of Shishak, and he said to them, “This is what the LORD says, ‘You have abandoned me; therefore, I now abandon you to Shishak.’” The leaders of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, “The LORD is just.” When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, this word of the LORD came to Shemaiah: “Since they have humbled themselves, I will not destroy them but will soon give them deliverance. My wrath will not be poured out on Jerusalem through Shishak. They will, however, become subject to him, so that they may learn the difference between serving me and serving the kings of other lands.” When Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem, he carried off the treasures of the temple of the LORD and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including the gold shields Solomon had made. So King Rehoboam made bronze shields to replace them and assigned these to the commanders of the guard on duty at the entrance to the royal palace. Whenever the king went to the LORD’s temple, the guards went with him, bearing the shields, and afterward, they returned them to the guardroom. Because Rehoboam humbled himself, the LORD’s anger turned from him, and he was not totally destroyed. Indeed, there was some good in Judah. King Rehoboam established himself firmly in Jerusalem and continued as king. He was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel in which to put his Name. His mother’s name was Naamah; she was an Ammonite. He did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the LORD. As for the events of Rehoboam’s reign, from beginning to end, are they not written in the records of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer that deal with genealogies? There was continual warfare between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. Rehoboam rested with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David. And Abijah his son succeeded him as king.’ 2 Chronicles 12:1-16

SHISHAK ATTACKS JERUSALEM

The reason why Shishak went to war against Jerusalem was because Israel was unfaithful to God. In other words, it was God Himself who caused this to happen because Israel rebelled against God's law, 1 Kings 14:25-28. They would now know the difference between serving God and serving Shishak, 1 Kings 14:25-26.

Shishak carried off the treasures of the house of the Lord. Pharaoh Sheshonk I is probably the Shishak that's mentioned in this text. He was the one who provided refuge for Jeroboam when he fled from Solomon, 1 Kings 11:40. However, after the kingdom of Israel was divided, Jeroboam possibly fell out of approval with the Egyptian Pharaoh.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'The Chronicler did not dwell unnecessarily upon the details of Rehoboam's wickedness, but it was very great indeed. His wickedness exceeded anything that his fathers had done before him. The sodomites were brought into the land, the high places were built, and Israel even sinned beyond that of the ancient Canaanites who preceded Israel in Palestine. A fuller account of all this is in 1 Kings 14:21-24.

God had forbidden the Israelites to intermarry with foreigners, but Rehoboam's mother was an Ammonitess.

What's really sad about all this is after David and Solomon had gathered all this 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

'In the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam, Abijah became king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother's name was Maakah, a daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. Abijah went into battle with an army of four hundred thousand able fighting men, and Jeroboam drew up a battle line against him with eight hundred thousand able troops. Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, "Jeroboam and all Israel, listen to me! Don't you know that the LORD, the God of Israel, has given the kingship of Israel to David and his descendants forever by a covenant of salt? Yet Jeroboam son of Nebat, an official of Solomon son of David, rebelled against his master. Some worthless scoundrels gathered around him and opposed Rehoboam son of Solomon when he was young and indecisive and not strong enough to resist them. "And now you plan to resist the kingdom of the LORD, which is in the hands of David's descendants. You are indeed a vast army and have with you the golden calves that Jeroboam made to be your gods. But didn't you drive out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and make priests of your own as the peoples of other lands do? Whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams may become a priest of what are not gods. "As for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him. The priests who serve the LORD are sons of Aaron, and the Levites assist them. Every morning and evening they present burnt offerings and fragrant incense to the LORD. They set out the bread on the ceremonially clean table and light the lamps on the gold lampstand every evening. We are observing the requirements of the LORD our God. But you have forsaken him. God is with us; he is our leader. His priests with their trumpets will sound the battle cry against you. People of Israel, do not fight against the LORD, the God of your ancestors, for you will not succeed." Now Jeroboam had sent troops around to the rear, so that while he was in front of Judah the ambush was behind them. Judah turned and saw that they were being attacked at both front and rear. Then they cried out to the LORD. The priests blew their trumpets and the men of Judah raised the battle cry. At the sound of their battle cry, God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. The Israelites fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their hands. Abijah and his troops inflicted heavy losses on them, so that there were five hundred thousand casualties among Israel's able men. The Israelites were subdued on that occasion, and the people of Judah were victorious because they relied on the LORD, the God of their ancestors. Abijah pursued Jeroboam and took from him the towns of Bethel, Jeshanah and Ephron, with their surrounding villages. Jeroboam did not regain power during the time of Abijah. And the LORD struck him down and he died. But Abijah grew in strength. He married fourteen wives and had twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters. The other events of Abijah's reign, what he did and what he said, are written in the annotations of the prophet Iddo.' 2 Chronicles

ABIJAH KING OF JUDAH

Abijah reigned over Judah in the south from 913-911 B.C., [2 Chronicles 1:22-14](#) / [1 Kings 15:1-8](#). Some translations have his name as Abijam.

He just like Rehoboam, continued to lead God's people in idolatry and it's clear that he simply wanted to please the people around him because his heart wasn't devoted to God.

For David's sake, [1 Samuel 13:14](#) / [Acts 13:22](#), Abijah's son, Asa was given the right to rule as king in Jerusalem by God. God did this in order that the seed promise of the Messiah would be fulfilled, [Genesis 12:3](#).

Once again we read about war, this war was between the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom, this is brother against brother.

The covenant of salt was a continuous covenant between God and Israel, [Leviticus 2:13](#). As far as Abijah was concerned, he thought the northern tribes no longer honour this covenant, because of the division of Israel. He basically accused them of rejecting the covenant and hiring priests who weren't Levites.

Jeroboam sets up an ambush to go around behind them, however, when the battle lines unexpectedly changed, knew that a surprise attack from an army twice as large as them left them in a very dangerous place.

The only thing they could do was cry out to God. They cried out to God and God struck the army of Israel and Judah won, simply because they relied on God.

Since Jeroboam had taken the northern tribes further away from God and since he became king over the northern tribes, God fought for Abijah. This resulted in the death of 500,000 Israelites and the defeat was so great that the north under the rule of Jeroboam was never able to regain military strength, [1 Kings 14:20](#) / [1 Kings 15:9](#). Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'It has been proposed to change the numbers, here and in [2 Chronicles 13:17](#), into 40,000, 80,000, and 50,000 respectively, partly because these smaller numbers are found in many early editions of the Vulgate, but mainly because the larger ones are thought to be incredible. The numbers accord well, however, with the census of the people taken in the reign of David [1 Chronicles 21:5](#), joined to the fact which the writer has related [2 Chronicles 11:13-17](#), of a considerable subsequent emigration from the northern kingdom into the southern one. The total adult male population at the time of the census was 1,570, 000. The total of the fighting men now is 1,200,000. This would allow for the aged and infirm 370, 000, or nearly a fourth of the whole. And in [2 Chronicles 13:17](#), our author may be understood to mean that this was the entire Israelite loss in the course of the war, which probably continued through the whole reign of Abijah.'

Jeroboam rebelled against his lord, that is, the house of David because God had given him the right to reign over the northern ten tribes. If anyone came with a bull and seven rams, he could be a priest, [Exodus 29:1](#) / [Leviticus 8:2](#). In other words, Jeroboam was selling the office of a priest.

Abijah speaks against the northern tribes and tells them they will not succeed because they have moved too far away from God's will. Although God had given the ten northern tribes to Jeroboam, Jeroboam took them into idol worship.

Notice God struck Jeroboam down and killed him, in other words, God used the army of Judah to judge the northern tribes because they followed Jeroboam.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Jeroboam’s death was a judgment upon him for his sins. Chronologically speaking, his death is here out of place, for he outlived Abijah at least two years, compared to the marginal reference and 1 Kings 15:9, but the writer, not intending to recur to his history, is naturally led to carry it on to its termination.’

Abijah grew in strength, 1 Kings 15:3, and here again, we find a reference to the annotations of the prophet Iddo, which have a record of Abijah’s reign and everything he said and did, 1 Kings 15:7.

CHAPTER 14

‘And Abijah rested with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David. Asa his son succeeded him as king, and in his days the country was at peace for ten years. Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God. He removed the foreign altars and the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and to obey his laws and commands. He removed the high places and incense altars in every town in Judah, and the kingdom was at peace under him. He built up the fortified cities of Judah, since the land was at peace. No one was at war with him during those years, for the LORD gave him rest. “Let us build up these towns,” he said to Judah, “and put walls around them, with towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, because we have sought the LORD our God; we sought him and he has given us rest on every side.” So they built and prospered. Asa had an army of three hundred thousand men from Judah, equipped with large shields and with spears, and two hundred and eighty thousand from Benjamin, armed with small shields and with bows. All these were brave fighting men.’ 2 Chronicles 14:1-8

ASA KING OF JUDAH

Asa reigned as king of Judah from 911-to 870 B.C. Maakah was the grandmother of Asa, 2 Chronicles 13:2, and she was the favourite wife of Rehoboam, and, as may be inferred from the statement in 1 Kings 15:9-10, she held the important post of queen-mother, a very distinctive office in the Jewish government. It’s important to note that the Jews called any female ancestor mother and any male ancestor father.

Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, 1 Kings 15:11, he was obedient to God because he rejected the idolatrous practices and everything related to those practices, 1 Kings 15:12.

He removed his mother from her political position 1 Kings 15:11-15, because she had the audacity of making an image of the Canaanite goddess Asherah. Asa destroyed all these images as God commanded, Deuteronomy 16:21-22 / Deuteronomy 7:5 / Deuteronomy 12:3.

It appears that the reforms that Asa made at the beginning of his reign weren’t effective in ridding Judah of all the places of worship where people went to pay homage to false gods, 2 Chronicles 15:17.

When Asa initially reigned, it was a time of prosperity for Judah, and because it was a time of peace they could easily develop economically, 1 Kings 15:14.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The great blow struck by Abijah, 2 Chronicles 13:15-19, his alliance with Syria, 1 Kings 15:19, and the rapid succession of sovereigns in Israel during the earlier part of Asa’s reign, 1 Kings 15:25-33, would naturally prevent disturbance on the part of the northern kingdom. The tender age of Asa himself would be a bar to warlike enterprises on the part of Judah.’

The men of Judah served as heavy-armed troops, while the Benjamites were light-armed. Their numbers accord well with those of 2 Chronicles 13:3.

As the boundaries of Judah had been enlarged, 2 Chronicles 13:19, and as for ten years at least there had been no war, 2 Chronicles 14:1, the effective force had naturally increased.

Cook, in his commentary, says the following, the vast number in the army.

‘This is the largest collected army of which we read in Scripture but it does not exceed the known numbers of other Oriental armies of ancient times. Darius Codomannus brought into the field of Abela a force of 1,040,000 and Xerxes crossed the Hellespont with more than a million combatants.’

‘Zerah the Cushite marched out against them with an army of thousands upon thousands and three hundred chariots and came as far as Mareshah. Asa went out to meet him, and they took up battle positions in the Valley of Zephathah near Mareshah. Then Asa called to the LORD his God and said, “LORD, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. LORD, you are our God; do not let mere mortals prevail against you.” The LORD struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah. The Cushites fled, and Asa and his army pursued them as far as Gerar. Such a great number of Cushites fell that they could not recover; they were crushed before the LORD and his forces. The men of Judah carried off a large amount of plunder. They destroyed all the villages around Gerar, for the terror of the LORD had fallen on them. They looted all these villages, since there was much plunder there. They also attacked the camps of the herders and carried off droves of sheep and goats and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.’ 2 Chronicles 14:9-15

Zerah the Cushite, marched against Judah, and they were able to stand their ground because God was with them, 2 Chronicles 13:3.

Mareshah was in the valley that marks the entrance into the hills, halfway between Gaza and Jerusalem. This was one of the cities that Rehoboam had fortified in anticipation of just such an attack.

In his prayer Asa knows the power of God, he knows the battle belongs to the LORD and so, he calls upon God to defend His honour.

Their battle against the Cushites is 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 for humanity.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The defeat of Zerah is one of the most remarkable events in the history of the Jews. On no other occasion did they meet in the field and overcome the forces of either of the two great monarchies between which they were placed. It was seldom that they ventured to resist, unless behind walls. Shishak, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Nebuchadnezzar, were either unopposed or only opposed in this way. On the one other occasion on which they took the field, under Josiah against Necho, their boldness issued in a most disastrous defeat, 2 Chronicles 35:20-24. Now, however, under Asa, they appear to have gained a complete victory over Egypt. The results which followed were nicest striking. The Southern power could not rally from the blow, and, for above three centuries made no further effort in this direction. Assyria, growing in strength, finally, under Sargon and Sennacherib, penetrated to Egypt itself. All fear of Egypt as an aggressive power ceased and the Israelites learned instead to lean upon the Pharaohs for support, 2 Kings 17:4 / 2 Kings 18:21 / Isaiah 30:2-4, etc.). Friendly ties alone connected the two countries: and it was not until 609 B.C. that an Egyptian force again entered Palestine with a hostile intention.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The spoil was immense because the multitude was prodigious, indeed almost incredible, a million of men in one place is almost too much for the mind to conceive, but there may be some mistake in the numerals, it is evident from the whole account that the number was vast and the spoil great.’

CHAPTER 15

‘The Spirit of God came on Azariah son of Oded. He went out to meet Asa and said to him, “Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach and without the law. But in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, and he was found by them. In those days it was not safe to travel about, for all the inhabitants of the lands were in great turmoil. One nation was being crushed by another and one city by another, because God was troubling them with every kind of distress. But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded.” 2 Chronicles 15:1-7

ASA’S REFORM

Oded was one of the lesser-known prophets in the early years of the Judah, but here, he courageously speaks to a king who was glowing with success after the great victory over the Cushites.

Azariah’s purpose is clearly to encourage God’s people to be constant in their faithfulness to their God because it was their lack of faithfulness which had so frequently resulted in manifold sorrows for them.

Asa recognises that Judah was in trouble because they had reaped the consequences of following other gods. He also recognised that God requires obedience to His will so that the blessings from God be unleashed on Judah.

God was on Asa’s side only when Asa had committed himself to God, [Deuteronomy 4:29](#) / [Jeremiah 29:13](#) / [Matthew 7:7](#), and notice that when they stopped teaching God’s Word to the people, they met trouble from God Himself, [Leviticus 10:11](#) / [Deuteronomy 33:10](#) / [Malachi 2:7](#) / [2 Chronicles 17:7-9](#).

‘When Asa heard these words and the prophecy of Azariah son of Oded the prophet, he took courage. He removed the detestable idols from the whole land of Judah and Benjamin and from the towns he had captured in the hills of Ephraim. He repaired the altar of the LORD that was in front of the portico of the LORD’s temple. Then he assembled all Judah and Benjamin and the people from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon who had settled among them, for large numbers had come over to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him. They assembled at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa’s reign. At that time they sacrificed to the LORD seven hundred head of cattle and seven thousand sheep and goats from the plunder they had brought back. They entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, with all their heart and soul. All who would not seek the LORD, the God of Israel, were to be put to death, whether small or great, man or woman. They took an oath to the LORD with loud acclamation, with shouting and with trumpets and horns. All Judah rejoiced about the oath because they had sworn it wholeheartedly. They sought God eagerly, and he was found by them. So the LORD gave them rest on every side.’ 2 Chronicles 15:8-15

Gill, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Some think that besides the above words of Azariah the son of Oded, a prophecy of Oded his father was related by him, though not recorded but rather Oded here is the same with the son of Oded; and so the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions read Azariah the son of Oded and so does the Alexandrian copy of the Septuagint version.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the third month, [Esther 8:9](#).

‘This was June, Sivan, on the sixth day of which the Feast of Weeks, Pentecost, was observed. The great sacrifices on this occasion included some of the booty they had taken in the war with Zerah and if the conjecture that Zerah came against Asa in his eleventh year is correct, this would indicate that the war lasted four years. However, a great deal of the chronology of all of these Hebrew kings is very uncertain.’

Notice they acknowledge that the victory came from God, hence why they gave back to God from the spoil of the victory over the Cushites, 2 Chronicles 14:12-15.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the number seven.

‘The prevalence of the number ‘seven’ in the religious system of the Jews has been noticed often. Seven bullocks and seven rams were a common offering, Numbers 29:32 / 1 Chronicles 15:26 / 2 Chronicles 29:21 / Job 42:8 / Ezekiel 14:23. At the larger sacrifices, however, it is seldom that we find the number seven at all prominent, 2 Chronicles 30:24 / 2 Chronicles 35:7-9 / 1 Kings 8:63.’

The original covenant between God and His people is recorded in Exodus 24:3-8, it was renewed again at Shechem, Joshua 8:30-35, this was the third ratification and still, another took place in the times of Nehemiah, Nehemiah 10:20.

Anyone who didn’t seek God was to be put to death, Exodus 22:20 / Deuteronomy 13:6-17 / Deuteronomy 17:2-7. Because they entered into a covenant to reform Judah, anyone who wouldn’t join the reformation was threatened with death because they would be seen as hindrances to the reforms.

‘King Asa also deposed his grandmother Maakah from her position as queen mother, because she had made a repulsive image for the worship of Asherah. Asa cut it down, broke it up and burned it in the Kidron Valley. Although he did not remove the high places from Israel, Asa’s heart was fully committed to the LORD all his life. He brought into the temple of God the silver and gold and the articles that he and his father had dedicated. There was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa’s reign.’ 2 Chronicles 15:16-19

He removed his mother from her political position because she had the audacity of making an image of the Canaanite goddess Asherah and placing it in the Kidron Valley near Jerusalem, 1 Kings 15:9-15.

The Asherah was associated with a mixture of different religions, the actual Asherah was probably a grove of trees or wooden idols which were erected in special places of worship, specifically in high places.

Several people went out of their way to destroy these wooden images, Gideon, Judges 6:25-28, Asa, 2 Chronicles 15:16, Hezekiah, 2 Chronicles 31:1, and Josiah, 2 Chronicles 34:3-7.

The text says that Asa didn’t remove the high places from Israel, however, 2 Chronicles 14:3, tells us that he did. This isn’t a contradiction as 2 Chronicles 14:3, mentions that the high places had altars to the foreign gods. In other words, Asa removed the high places that were dedicated to idols, but not the ones that were dedicated to God.

Asa was loyal all his life, he acted against idolatry and corruption, and in his restoration of certain silver and gold utensils to the temple.

Notice there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa’s reign, 1 Kings 15:16.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This cannot be reconciled with the chronology of Kings, 1 Kings 16:8, and the suggestion in the margin implies the adoption of a mode of marking time unknown either to himself or any other Scriptural writer. It is supposed that the figures here and in 2 Chronicles 16:1 are corrupt and that in both verses ‘twentieth’ should replace ‘thirtieth’. The attack of Baasha would then have been made in the last year of Asa’s reign and ten years of peace would have followed Asa’s victory over Zerah.’

CHAPTER 16

‘In the thirty-sixth year of Asa’s reign Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent anyone from leaving or entering the territory of Asa king of Judah. Asa then took the silver and gold out of the

treasuries of the LORD's temple and of his own palace and sent it to Ben-Hadad king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus. "Let there be a treaty between me and you," he said, "as there was between my father and your father. See, I am sending you silver and gold. Now break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so he will withdraw from me." Ben-Hadad agreed with King Asa and sent the commanders of his forces against the towns of Israel. They conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel Maim and all the store cities of Naphtali. When Baasha heard this, he stopped building Ramah and abandoned his work. Then King Asa brought all the men of Judah, and they carried away from Ramah the stones and timber Baasha had been using. With them he built up Geba and Mizpah. At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him: "Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand. Were not the Cushites and Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen? Yet when you relied on the LORD, he delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war." Asa was angry with the seer because of this; he was so enraged that he put him in prison. At the same time Asa brutally oppressed some of the people.' 2 Chronicles 16:1-10

ASA'S LAST YEARS

The United Kingdom Of Israel has truly become the Divided Kingdoms of Israel. Here we read about the continued hostility between the two kingdoms, [2 Chronicles 14:2-3](#) / [2 Chronicles 15:16-16:6](#). The only person that could unite them again was God, but sadly that wasn't going to happen until after their captivity.

Ramah wasn't very far from Jerusalem and in the heart of Benjamin. This shows us just how aggressive Baasha was. He wanted to trap Asa and take the southern kingdom of Judah.

When the Cushites had invaded Judah, Asa asked God for help and guidance, [2 Chronicles 14:9-15](#), but now, he asked for help from the king of Syria in Damascus.

The prophet Hanani condemned Asa for this lack of faith in God and severely rebuked him and Asa responded by placing the prophet in prison, [1 Kings 15:16-24](#) / [Hebrews 11:32-40](#).

Ben-Hadad was the son of Hezion, or Rezon, who was an enemy of Solomon, [1 Kings 11:23-25](#). In order to break the treaty between Baasha and Syria, Asa sacrificed the remainder of the riches of the temple in order to establish an alliance with Ben-Hadad of Syria. Ben Hadad accepted the payment and then broke his alliance with Israel, [2 Chronicles 13:17-20](#).

Because the alliance with Israel was now broken, Baasha focused on defending his northern borders, which actually brought about some relief from the aggression of the northern kingdom.

It's at this point that Asa tears down Ramah and used the materials to construct other cities. Asa's big mistake in all of this, was he didn't put his faith in God to help him, he put his faith in a foreign king.

We don't know much about Hanani the seer, except what he says here to Asa and that he was also a prophet who spoke to Baasha the king of Israel, [1 Kings 16:1](#) / [1 Kings 16:7](#), and to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, [2 Chronicles 19:2](#). Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The rebuke of Hanani and his imprisonment by Asa, omitted by the writer of Kings, are among the most important of the additions to Asa's history for which we are indebted to the author of Chronicles.'

Notice that Asa not only went against Hanani but also against others who were committed to God and could see the king was going wrong.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘One thing that the Chronicler most certainly had in mind here was to show the colossal failure of the whole institution of the monarchy. Even a good king like Asa could not remain uncorrupted while wielding the scepter of unchallenged power. The constant pressure of the flattering sycophants that surround every ruler, and the constantly nourished and promoted conceit of any natural man have the power eventually to break down the strongest heart.’

‘The events of Asa’s reign, from beginning to end, are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the LORD, but only from the physicians. Then in the forty-first year of his reign Asa died and rested with his ancestors. They buried him in the tomb that he had cut out for himself in the City of David. They laid him on a bier covered with spices and various blended perfumes, and they made a huge fire in his honour.’
2 Chronicles 16:11-14

Asa’s reign lasted longer than the reign of Nadab, who was the king of Israel, the northern kingdom, 2 Chronicles 16:11-17:1. In his old age, Asa had some kind of foot disease, which actually began in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, 1 Kings 15:23-24. Whilst he had this foot disease, he once again didn’t ask God for help but asked the local doctors to help him.

Asa did nothing wrong in seeking to be healed by the physicians, Colossians 4:14 / Acts 28:9 / James 5:14-15 / 1 Timothy 5:23, however, when healing power was available from God, he should have sought God’s healing before consulting the physicians.

Asa had in his later 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 honour was given to him.

The huge fire was the burning of many fragrant spices in honour of the king, Jeremiah 34:5 / 2 Chronicles 21:19.

CHAPTER 17

‘Jehoshaphat his son succeeded him as king and strengthened himself against Israel. He stationed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah and put garrisons in Judah and in the towns of Ephraim that his father Asa had captured. The LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the ways of his father David before him. He did not consult the Baals but sought the God of his father and followed his commands rather than the practices of Israel. The LORD established the kingdom under his control; and all Judah brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, so that he had great wealth and honour. His heart was devoted to the ways of the LORD; furthermore, he removed the high places and the Asherah poles from Judah.’ 2 Chronicles 17:1-6

JEHOSHAPHAT KING OF JUDAH

Jehoshaphat now becomes king of Judah, and unlike the idolatrous practices of the northern kingdom, Jehoshaphat refused to get involved in, or even promote any kind of idolatrous practices at this time in the history of the southern kingdom, 1 Kings 22:41-50.

Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Azubah, she was the daughter of Shilhi. He walked in all the ways of Asa his father, doing that which was right in the eyes of God.

Jehoshaphat followed the example set by his father, Asa in his earlier years, 2 Chronicles 14:1-15 / 2 Chronicles 15:1-10. Jehoshaphat was wealthy, his heart was devoted to the ways of God, and he removed all the high places and Asherah poles, 2 Chronicles 15:17 / 2 Chronicles 20:33.

The LORD established the kingdom under his control, which wasn't an easy task. If the descendants of David would seek God first, He promised to take care of their security, Matthew 6:33.

Judah gave gifts to Jehoshaphat, and so he became really wealthy, this all happened because he simply trusted in God, Psalms 37:4.

'In the third year of his reign, he sent his officials Ben-Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel and Micaiah to teach in the towns of Judah. With them were certain Levites—Shemaiah, Nathaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah and Tob-Adonijah—and the priests Elishama and Jehoram. They taught throughout Judah, taking with them the Book of the Law of the LORD; they went around to all the towns of Judah and taught the people.' 2 Chronicles 17:7-9

Jehoshaphat now sends teachers of God's word to different cities throughout Judah, 2 Chronicles 15:3. In the past, the people would bring their offerings and then be taught God's Word by the Levites, however, they stopped coming.

Now Jehoshaphat sends the Levites out to the people to be taught, Malachi 2:7.

Notice they took with them the Book of the Law of the Lord, they weren't to teach philosophies or opinions, but only what God said within His Word and they would encourage everyone to submit to God's will, 2 Kings

23:2 / Nehemiah 8:3-8.

Because the Levites went to different places to teach, then it's obvious that each group of teachers had their own copy of God's Law, that Genesis through to Deuteronomy.

'The fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands surrounding Judah, so that they did not go to war against Jehoshaphat. Some Philistines brought Jehoshaphat gifts and silver as tribute, and the Arabs brought him flocks: seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand seven hundred goats. Jehoshaphat became more and more powerful; he built forts and store cities in Judah and had large supplies in the towns of Judah. He also kept experienced fighting men in Jerusalem. Their enrolment by families was as follows: From Judah, commanders of units of 1,000: Adnah the commander, with 300,000 fighting men; next, Jehohanan the commander, with 280,000; next, Amasiah son of Zikri, who volunteered himself for the service of the LORD, with 200,000. From Benjamin: Eliada, a valiant soldier, with 200,000 men armed with bows and shields; next, Jehozabad, with 180,000 men armed for battle. These were the men who served the king, besides those he stationed in the fortified cities throughout Judah.' 2 Chronicles 17:10-19

The fear of the LORD was spread through Judah and so, no one dared to go to war against them.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Thus the nation became thoroughly instructed in their duty to God, to the king, and to each other. They became, therefore, as one man and against a people thus united, on such principles, no enemy could be successful.'

Even the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat gifts, and silver as a tribute, 2 Samuel 8:2 / 1 Kings 4:21 / 2 Chronicles 14:14. The Arabs brought him thousands of sheep, rams and goats. The Arab tribes who bordered Judaea to the south and the southeast paid Jehoshaphat a fixed tribute in kind, 2 Kings 3:4 / 2 Chronicles 14:15. These nations keeping the peace with Judah is exactly what God promised many years before, Deuteronomy 28:1-13.

Jehoshaphat wanted to maintain peace in his kingdom and so, he had a huge army to ensure that this would happen, so that God's Word could be taught without any hindrances.

We don't know anything about Amasiah, except what is written here, he volunteered himself for the service of the LORD.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This number and those which follow in 2 Chronicles 17:15-18, have been with good reason regarded as corrupt by most critics. For:

1. They imply a minimum population of 1,480 to the square mile, which is more than three times greater than that of any country in the known world (circa 1880s).
2. They produce a total just double that of the next largest estimate of the military force of Judah, the 580, 000 of 2 Chronicles 14:8.
3. They are professedly a statement, not of the whole military force, but of the force maintained at Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 17:13 / 2 Chronicles 17:19.

It is probable that the original numbers have been lost, and that the loss was supplied by a scribe, who took 2 Chronicles 14:8 as his basis.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the army.

‘This represented a standing army of 1,160,000 men, besides the garrisons in the fortified cities and this goes a long way to explaining why the Arabians and the Philistines brought tribute to Jehoshaphat. In ancient times, as in our own day, peace frequently depended upon the strength of those who desired it.’

CHAPTER 18

‘Now Jehoshaphat had great wealth and honour, and he allied himself with Ahab by marriage. Some years later he went down to see Ahab in Samaria. Ahab slaughtered many sheep and cattle for him and the people with him and urged him to attack Ramoth Gilead. Ahab king of Israel asked Jehoshaphat king of Judah, “Will you go with me against Ramoth Gilead?” Jehoshaphat replied, “I am as you are, and my people as your people; we will join you in the war. But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, “First seek the counsel of the LORD.” 2 Chronicles 18:1-4

Jehoshaphat made an alliance with Syria which lasted for three years, 1 Kings 20:26-29, but at the end of those three years, Ahab made an alliance with Jehoshaphat and Judah, so that he could secure himself from the threat of Syria and Assyria in the north, 1 Kings 22:1-38.

He allied himself with Ahab by marriage, which tells us he is trying to unite the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, however, this was the wrong way of going about it. Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, was given in marriage to Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat.

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

Israel made an alliance with Syria which lasted for three years, 1 Kings 20:26-29, but at the end of those three years, Ahab made an alliance with Jehoshaphat and Judah, so that he could secure himself from the threat of Syria and Assyria in the north, 2 Chronicles 18:1-27.

It was to be a huge mistake for Jehoshaphat to go to Ahab because this alliance or any marital alliance was never given approval from God, 2 Chronicles 19:2.

He also ignored the huge differences which were happening between the two kingdoms. This was the first time that a king of Judah, of the house of David, had visited one of the kings who had revolted from that dynasty.

It appears that even though 450 false prophets of Baal were killed at Mount Carmel, 1 Kings 18:19 / 1 Kings 18:40, there were still other false prophets around, Isaiah 9:15 / Jeremiah 5:13 / Jeremiah 5:31 / Jeremiah 23:11 / Jeremiah 23:15-16 / Hosea 4:5 / Micah 3:5-7.

They were ‘ear tickling’ prophets who told Ahab what Ahab wanted to hear, 2 Timothy 4:3. The good news is that Jehoshaphat wasn’t like Ahab, he still relied on God for guidance, hence why he asks, ‘Is there no longer a prophet of the LORD here whom we can inquire of?’ 1 Kings 22:1-12.

MICAIAH PROPHECIES AGAINST AHAB

‘So the king of Israel brought together the prophets—four hundred men—and asked them, “Shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I not?” “Go,” they answered, “for God will give it into the king’s hand.” But Jehoshaphat asked, “Is there no longer a prophet of the LORD here whom we can inquire of?” The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, “There is still one prophet through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah.” “The king should not say such a thing,” Jehoshaphat replied. So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, “Bring Micaiah son of Imlah at once.” Dressed in their royal robes, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them. Now Zedekiah son of Kenaanah had made iron horns, and he declared, “This is what the LORD says: ‘With these you will gore the Arameans until they are destroyed.’” All the other prophets were prophesying the same thing. “Attack Ramoth Gilead and be victorious,” they said, “for the LORD will give it into the king’s hand.” 2 Chronicles 18:5-11

The king of Israel brought four hundred prophets, 1 Kings 22:4-39, however, they were being paid by Ahab, which would mean they would be biased in their political judgments. In other words, what they said couldn’t be trusted and so, it’s not surprising that Jehoshaphat was sceptical about what they said.

Coffman in his commentary says the following.

‘We may be certain that Ahab called Micaiah reluctantly, and that while Micaiah was being summoned the false prophets redoubled their efforts in the hope of convincing Jehoshaphat. The occasion was a spectacular display of the kings on their thrones dressed in all their royal regalia at the gate of Samaria and those four hundred false prophets putting on a vigorous display of their false prophecies. It seems very likely that Micaiah was in prison when Ahab sent for him, this is indicated by the fact of his ready availability to Ahab and his being sent for by a eunuch, the type of officer usually in charge of the harem and of the prison, and likewise by the fact of Zedekiah’s arrogant slap of the defenceless Micaiah.’

Jehoshaphat’s asking for a prophet of God dramatically states that the four hundred prophets of Ahab were not prophets of God. Ahab’s god was Baal and his prophets were automatically prophets of Baal, not of God, 1 Kings 22:53.

He wanted a second opinion and so he goes to a true prophet of God, Micaiah. He knows that Micaiah will only speak the truth, no matter who he is being supported by. Since Ahab was living in wickedness, Micaiah could only say that which was contrary to the wicked wishes of Ahab.

‘The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, “Look, the other prophets without exception are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs and speak favourably.” But Micaiah said, “As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what my God says.” When he arrived, the king asked him, “Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I not?” “Attack and be victorious,” he answered, “for they will be given into your hand.” The king said to him, “How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?” Then Micaiah answered, “I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, ‘These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.’” The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Didn’t I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?” Micaiah continued, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the multitudes of heaven standing on his right and on his left. And the LORD said, ‘Who will entice Ahab king of Israel into attacking

Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?’ “One suggested this, and another that. Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, ‘I will entice him.’ “By what means?’ the LORD asked. “‘I will go and be a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,’ he said. “‘You will succeed in enticing him,’ said the LORD. ‘Go and do it.’ “So now the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouths of these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you.” Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. “Which way did the spirit from the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?” he asked. Micaiah replied, “You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room.” The king of Israel then ordered, “Take Micaiah and send him back to Amon the ruler of the city and to Joash the king’s son, and say, ‘This is what the king says: Put this fellow in prison and give him nothing but bread and water until I return safely.’” Micaiah declared, “If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me.” Then he added, “Mark my words, all you people!” 2 Chronicles 18:12-27

Four hundred paid prophets had preached a united message and a messenger who was sent to Micaiah wanted to intimidate him into conforming to the opinion of the 400. However, Micaiah wasn’t intimidated by them, he only spoke what God told him to say.

It’s clear that the false prophets of Ahab were very confident in what they were saying because Jehoshaphat was present. They obviously assumed that because the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel were united at this point in time, that victory in the battle with the Syrians was certain.

It’s also clear that Ahab was very familiar with Micaiah, because he asks, ‘how many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?’

Ahab was also very familiar with other prophecies which Micaiah had made, [1 Kings 20:13](#) / [1 Kings 20:35](#). Notice that Ahab said that Micaiah never prophesied anything good for him, but this isn’t the case, [1 Kings 20:13-34](#).

After asking that question, Micaiah replies by saying, ‘I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, ‘These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.’ These words are the same words which God told Moses concerning Israel, [Numbers 27:17](#).

Everyone was well aware of the judgment which God brought upon Ahab and Jezebel because of the way they dealt with Naboth in order to steal his inherited vineyard, [1 Kings 21:17-29](#). And so, failure to win this battle would provide the perfect opportunity for God to fulfil his judgment on Ahab.

Micaiah exposed the false prophecies of the false prophets whom Ahab had asked to help him with his desires and at the same time, he also revealed the judgment, which was now coming upon Ahab, [2 Thessalonians 2:10-12](#).

When we go back and look at the attitude of Ahab, [1 Kings 21:25-26](#) / [1 Kings 22:8](#) / [1 Kings 22:19-23](#), it becomes evident that God didn’t in reality command that the false prophets lie to Ahab. He simply permitted them to do so, as they had already been doing.

Micaiah’s vision simply related in figurative language how God would use Ahab’s own false prophets to bring about his downfall. The fact that Ahab was punished shows that Ahab himself was held responsible for rejecting the truth and believing the lie.

God didn’t lie to Ahab nor did He put lies in the mouth of Ahab’s prophets. God simply made use in a providential way of those who were already lying to Ahab. The false prophets lied because they chose to lie and Ahab believed them because he chose to believe them, [Romans 1:24-25](#).

Notice they have Micaiah thrown in prison, this usually happens when people speak the truth and others don’t like it, [Acts 14:22](#) / [2 Timothy 2:8-13](#) / [1 Peter 4:16](#).

AHAB KILLED AT RAMOTH GILEAD

‘So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “I will enter the battle in disguise, but you wear your royal robes.” So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle. Now the king of Aram had ordered his chariot commanders, “Do not fight with anyone, small or great, except the king of Israel.” When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought, “This is the king of Israel.” So they turned to attack him, but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him. God drew them away from him, for when the chariot commanders saw that he was not the king of Israel, they stopped pursuing him. But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the breastplate and the scale armor. The king told the chariot driver, “Wheel around and get me out of the fighting. I’ve been wounded.” All day long the battle raged, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot facing the Arameans until evening. Then at sunset he died.’ 2 Chronicles 18:28-34

The people were frightened to death of Ahab, and because of men like Zedekiah, no one would say anything bad against him. However, when the truth is spoken against what most people believed, the fulfilment of the prophecy was actually proof that the prophecy was from God Himself, [1 Kings 22:24-28](#) / [Deuteronomy 18:18-22](#).

The prophecy was very clear, and everyone present would have heard the words that Ahab would die at Ramoth Gilead. Micaiah accepted the test of all true prophecy, namely, that it will come to pass, [Jeremiah 28:9](#).

Notice God’s protection of Jehoshaphat when He cried out to Him, God helped him and God drew him away from the chariots. In the heat of the battle, a special effort was made to go after someone they thought was Ahab, the king of Israel, Jehoshaphat cried out to the Lord. Jehoshaphat’s prayer was answered immediately and in a direct manner.

When we read [1 Kings 22:29-36](#), it appears that Ahab to a degree anyway, believed what Micaiah has said, because he wants to go into battle in disguise. Because of this, he asks Jehoshaphat to wear his royal robes, so that the Syrians wouldn’t be able to identify him asking of Israel in the battle, [2 Chronicles 18:28-34](#).

Ben-Hadad, the king of Aram commands his men not to fight with anyone, except the king of Israel, [1 Kings 22:35](#). The reason behind this is simple enough to understand, if any king of any nation was captured or killed in battle, then the opposing side would automatically claim the victory. It appears that Ben-Hadad wants his soldiers’ to focus on the king of the northern kingdom, not Jehoshaphat.

Notice that someone drew their bow at ‘random’ and killed Ahab, it’s surely possible that this arrow didn’t randomly hit Ahab but was guided by God Himself.

Remember this was God’s judgment upon Ahab, and although he disguised himself, he couldn’t escape the judgment of God. After news got around the Israelite army that Ahab was dead, every man dispersed and returned to their homes, [1 Kings 22:36](#).

CHAPTER 19

‘When Jehoshaphat king of Judah returned safely to his palace in Jerusalem, Jehu the seer, the son of Hanani, went out to meet him and said to the king, “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, the wrath of the LORD is on you. There is, however, some good in you, for you have rid the land of the Asherah poles and have set your heart on seeking God.” 2 Chronicles 19:1-3

After returning to Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat was met by Jehu, the seer, [1 Kings 16:1](#) / [1 Kings 16:7](#), who asked him, ‘should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD?’ This tells us that his alliance with Ahab was wicked, [2 Chronicles 18:1-4](#) / [1 Kings 20:26-29](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The monarch was therefore rebuked at the earliest possible moment, and in the most effective way, as he was entering his capital at the head of his returning army. Jehu, 35 years previously, had worked in the northern kingdom,

and prophesied against Baasha, 1 Kings 16:1-7, but had now come to Jerusalem, as prophet and historian, 2 Chronicles 20:34.’

Although Jehoshaphat’s intentions were good in trying to bring the two kingdoms together again, he made the mistake of trying to do this through Ahab, who was wicked.

He did a lot of good by getting rid of the Asherah poles within the land of Judah and his set was set on seeking God, Proverbs 16:1 / Philippians 2:13.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In the appraisal of Jehoshaphat’s reign, it was, in a general sense, approved, despite the serious, even sinful, mistakes, one of which was that marriage with the daughter of Ahab which he arranged for his heir and successor to the throne. Also, note that nothing is said here about the removal of the high places, despite the fact that 2 Chronicles 17:6 states that he took away the high places, indicating that the citizens had, in the meanwhile, rebuilt them. This was done many times in the history of Judah.’

JEHOSHAPHAT APPOINTS JUDGES

‘Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem, and he went out again among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim and turned them back to the LORD, the God of their ancestors. He appointed judges in the land, in each of the fortified cities of Judah. He told them, “Consider carefully what you do, because you are not judging for mere mortals but for the LORD, who is with you whenever you give a verdict. Now let the fear of the LORD be on you.

Judge carefully, for with the LORD our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery.” In Jerusalem also, Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites, priests and heads of Israelite families to administer the law of the LORD and to settle disputes. And they lived in Jerusalem. He gave them these orders: “You must serve faithfully and wholeheartedly in the fear of the LORD. In every case that comes before you from your people who live in the cities—whether bloodshed or other concerns of the law, commands, decrees or regulations—you are to warn them not to sin against the LORD; otherwise his wrath will come on you and your people. Do this, and you will not sin.

“Amariah the chief priest will be over you in any matter concerning the LORD, and Zebadiah son of Ishmael, the leader of the tribe of Judah, will be over you in any matter concerning the king, and the Levites will serve as officials before you. Act with courage, and may the LORD be with those who do well.” 2 Chronicles 19:4-11

Jehoshaphat did really well in going to the hill country of Ephraim and bringing the people back to God. After doing so, he appointed judges in each of the fortified cities of Judah.

These judges were using God’s standards for their judgments and so, they were judging the people on God’s behalf, Deuteronomy 16:6-10 / Deuteronomy 16:18-20 / John 14:28.

Gill, in his commentary, says the following, concerning these judges.

‘Inferior judges in lesser courts of judicature than that at Jerusalem, and that in every city, that judgment and justice might be executed everywhere, such was appointed by David but had been neglected, and now restored, 1 Chronicles 26:29.’

To judge correctly, they had to practice justice but not be partial in their judgments or take bribes, Deuteronomy 16:19. In order that civil matters do not interfere with religious matters, Amariah was given put in charge of the judgments in reference to religious matters. Zebadiah was given authority over the king’s administration, which means there was a separation between the matters of faith and state.

Jehoshaphat tells them to ‘act with courage, and may the LORD be with those who do well’. It was the job of the judges to courageously do what was right and to trust that God will be with those who do what is right and good.

CHAPTER 20

‘After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat. Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, “A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar” (that is, En Gedi). Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.’ 2 Chronicles 20:1-4

JEHOSHAPHAT DEFEATS MOAB AND AMMON

This is the first time, since the reign of David, that the Moabites and the Ammonites go to wage war against God’s people, 2 Samuel 8:2 / 2 Samuel 12:26-30.

The full power of the Moabites was mobilised, but only a few Ammonites. Later, we read that the Edomites, those of Mount Seir, were also a part of this coalition against Israel.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the fast, Mark 9:28-29.

‘General fasts had been previously observed by the Israelites, Judges 20:26 / 1 Samuel 7:6, but we don’t hear of any fast having been ‘proclaimed’ by authority before this.’

‘Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard and said: “LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, ‘If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.’ “But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them. See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.’ 2 Chronicles 20:5-13

Jehoshaphat now stands up in the assembly, at the temple in front of the new courtyard, this is probably the outer court of the temple that had been rebuilt, 2 Chronicles 15:8.

Barnes in his commentary, says the following.

‘Jehoshaphat’s appeal is threefold:

1. To God omnipotent, 2 Chronicles 20:6.
2. To ‘our God’.
3. The God especially ‘of this house’ the temple.

Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple, and here, Jehoshaphat calls upon God to answer not only his prayer but also Solomon’s prayer, 2 Chronicles 6:20-25.

Jehoshaphat obviously didn’t know what to do about the threat from the Moabites and the Ammonites and so, in his address to God, he asks the question, ‘did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel?’

The answer to which is yes, He is, it was God who drove out the Canaanites, using the Israelites, Deuteronomy 2:5 / 2 Chronicles 6:28-31.

Jehoshaphat complained that God didn't allow Israel to destroy them when they first came out of Egypt, [Deuteronomy 2:8-9](#) / [Deuteronomy 2:19](#), but now, he complained, the Moabites and Ammonites were trying to cast Israel out of the land that God promised to Israel.

Notice that Abraham is described as 'God's friend', this expression came about because Abraham spoke to God as someone who speaks to his friend, [Genesis 18:23-33](#) / [Exodus 33:11](#).

It appears that this threat was serious because all the families were gathered together to plead with the Lord for His help.

'Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly. He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.'" Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD. Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.' 2 Chronicles 20:14-19

When the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel, God speaks through him and tells the people not to be afraid, which tells us they obviously were afraid. The threat didn't start because they were aggressive towards Moab and Ammon but because the Moabites and the Ammonites were trying to drive Judah out of the land.

Notice Jahaziel tells the people 'the battle is not yours but God's'. In other words, Judah shouldn't stress about the threat because God is going to deal with it, [Exodus 14:13](#). It's no wonder that Jehoshaphat and the people fell down to worship and praise God.

Notice they were told that they were to march down against them, despite God telling them that the battle wasn't theirs but His. In other words, they couldn't just sit back and let it happen, they still had to go.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Here we have the picture of a worshipping, praying Israel as the background of a most remarkable deliverance of God's people from the ravages of a hostile invasion. There cannot be any doubt that many such deliverances of God's people were similarly preceded by this same kind of a spiritual awakening of God's people, and by their most fervent prayers and supplications.'

'Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful." After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendour of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: "Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever." As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another.' 2 Chronicles 20:20-23

As the people were being led out to the Desert of Tekoa, [2 Samuel 14:2](#), Jehoshaphat addresses the people again and tells them to trust God and they will be successful.

God then moved the Moabites and Ammonites to turn on one another and their internal strife with one another was so intense that they destroyed one another.

What started off as a threat to get rid of Judah, ended up with the Moabites and the Ammonites turning on each other and killing each other.

The events which unfold here remind us of the victory of Gideon over the Midianites, Judges 7, in a similar fashion, the invading forces destroyed themselves.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These who lie in wait have been regarded as angels employed by God to confuse the host and cause its destruction, so that the Moabites and Ammonites first united to destroy the Edomites, and then turned upon each other.’

‘When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped. So Jehoshaphat and his men went to carry off their plunder, and they found among them a great amount of equipment and clothing and also articles of value—more than they could take away. There was so much plunder that it took three days to collect it. On the fourth day, they assembled in the Valley of Berakah, where they praised the LORD. This is why it is called the Valley of Berakah to this day. Then, led by Jehoshaphat, all the men of Judah and Jerusalem returned joyfully to Jerusalem, for the LORD had given them cause to rejoice over their enemies. They entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the LORD with harps and lyres and trumpets. The fear of God came on all the surrounding kingdoms when they heard how the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.’ 2 Chronicles 20:24-30

Notice that there was so much spoil taken from the Moabite and Ammonite dead, it took three days to gather it all.

They assembled together to cry out to God for His deliverance on the fourth day, to thank God for what He had done, but they not only thanked God, but they also blessed His Name because of everything He had done.

Word obviously got around about what had happened because all the other nations left Judah in peace.

THE END OF JEHOSEPHAT'S REIGN

‘So Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he became king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-five years. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. He followed the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. The high places, however, were not removed, and the people still had not set their hearts on the God of their ancestors. The other events of Jehoshaphat's reign, from beginning to end, are written in the annals of Jehu son of Hanani, which are recorded in the book of the kings of Israel. Later, Jehoshaphat king of Judah made an alliance with Ahaziah king of Israel, whose ways were wicked. He agreed with him to construct a fleet of trading ships. After these were built at Ezion Geber, Eliezer son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, “Because you have made an alliance with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made.” The ships were wrecked and were not able to set sail to trade.’ 2 Chronicles 20:31-37

Just as Solomon had done before him, 1 Kings 9:26-28, Jehoshaphat, starts the big rebuilding process in the southern kingdom of Israel by sending trading ships to Ophir, 1 Kings 22:49-50.

Although Jehoshaphat achieved much, he didn't remove the high places, which resulted in God's people not being devoted to Him alone. The high places, where idols were worshipped, were taken away, 2 Chronicles 17:6, but not those where sacrifices were offered to God.

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, 2 Chronicles 8:18 / 1 Kings 22:48, that he had built to go to Tarshish, a city somewhere in Spain.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Although, in the general sense, Jehoshaphat did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, there were nevertheless some failures on his part. His failure to remove the high places, which had been removed, of course, but had been rebuilt by the people, again and a again, and his alliance with Ahaziah, mentioned in the final paragraph here, were two examples. A third, which we should mention, was his choice of a wife for his son and heir Jehoram. Jehoshaphat evidently hoped to promote peace between Israel and Judah by arranging for the marriage of Jehoram to the daughter of Jezebel and Ahab. This might not have been considered a sin by some, but it was an unqualified disaster, nevertheless and it resulted in great sorrows for God’s people.’

The account in 1 Kings 22:49-50, speaks of Ahaziah’s attempt to continue as a partner with Jehoshaphat in that ship-building venture, but it is to the great credit of Jehoshaphat that, acting upon the warning of the prophet, he refused to allow it.

CHAPTER 21

‘Then Jehoshaphat rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the City of David. And Jehoram his son succeeded him as king. Jehoram’s brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat, were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariahu, Michael and Shephatiah. All these were sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel. Their father had given them many gifts of silver and gold and articles of value, as well as fortified cities in Judah, but he had given the kingdom to Jehoram because he was his firstborn son.’ 2 Chronicles 21:1-3

Jehoshaphat is now dead, 1 Kings 22:50, his sons are situated at strategic cities throughout Judah and were supported by the centralised government in Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat left Judah well organised, but when his firstborn, Jehoram took over as king of Judah, things began to change.

JEHORAM KING OF JUDAH

‘When Jehoram established himself firmly over his father’s kingdom, he put all his brothers to the sword along with some of the officials of Israel. Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. He followed the ways of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for he married a daughter of Ahab. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD. Nevertheless, because of the covenant the LORD had made with David, the LORD was not willing to destroy the house of David. He had promised to maintain a lamp for him and his descendants forever.’ 2 Chronicles 21:4-7

Jehoram now becomes king of Judah. Although it can be confusing at times, we must remember that the name Jehoram appears in the lists of kings of both Israel and Judah, but they are different people. Joram is a shortened version of the name Jehoram, 2 Kings 1:17.

Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king and reigned in Jerusalem for eight years, however, he followed in the ways of the kings of Israel and like the house of Ahab had done. This means that he committed idolatry and followed the gods of the Canaanites as Ahab did, 1 Kings 16:29-19:18.

This possibly happened because he married the daughter of Ahab, her name was Athaliah, and so, it’s possible that she may have influenced him in some way. In some ways, she not only influenced him but influenced the whole nation, because the idolatrous action of Israel was now happening in Judah.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The very mention of such a thing in this paragraph is a mark of the diabolical threat that existed at this moment in the history of the Chosen People. In these events, Satan was moving swiftly and methodically toward that very goal, the total destruction of the house of David. And when Jehoram’s evil mother Athaliah was finally able to seize power for herself, she all but accomplished it.’

Jehoram did evil in the eyes of God, he committed many acts of sins, one of them was the murdering of his six brothers because he wanted their wealth, 2 Kings 8:16 / 2 Chronicles 21:5-10 / 2 Chronicles 21:20.

Make no mistake about it, God would have wiped them off the face of the earth because of their idolatry, if it wasn’t for David and the promise He made to David, 2 Samuel 7:13-16 / 2 Chronicles 21:12-19.

‘In the time of Jehoram, Edom rebelled against Judah and set up its own king. So Jehoram went there with his officers and all his chariots. The Edomites surrounded him and his chariot commanders, but he rose up and broke through by night. To this day Edom has been in rebellion against Judah. Libnah revolted at the same time, because Jehoram had forsaken the LORD, the God of his ancestors. He had also built high places on the hills of Judah and had caused the people of Jerusalem to prostitute themselves and had led Judah astray.’ 2 Chronicles 21:8-11

Because Jehoram killed his brothers who were in the fortified cities of Judah, he sadly, left Judah vulnerable to attack and so, Edom and Libnah took advantage of the situation and launched their attack in order to gain their freedom from the suppression of Judah.

Notice that although Judah won the battle, Edom and Libnah remained in a state of revolt against Judah to the day the writer wrote these words in the Book of Chronicles.

Jehoram gives in to their desires and builds high places that his father had previously destroyed, he did this probably to gain the favour of the people.

By building these high places, Jehoram caused the people to prostitute themselves, that is, commit idolatry, James 4:4.

‘Jehoram received a letter from Elijah the prophet, which said: “This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: ‘You have not followed the ways of your father Jehoshaphat or of Asa king of Judah. But you have followed the ways of the kings of Israel, and you have led Judah and the people of Jerusalem to prostitute themselves, just as the house of Ahab did. You have also murdered your own brothers, members of your own family, men who were better than you. So now the LORD is about to strike your people, your sons, your wives and everything that is yours, with a heavy blow. You yourself will be very ill with a lingering disease of the bowels, until the disease causes your bowels to come out.’” 2 Chronicles 21:12-15

Remember that Elijah had been taken up in a whirlwind to God before the reign of Jehoram, 2 Kings 2:1. But it appears that Elijah had prophesied concerning the wickedness of Jehoram, even before Jehoram reigned. Elijah had prophesied against Ahab and Jezebel, the parents of Jehoram’s wife, Athaliah.

It’s not the first time in this book, a prophet has spoken about an upcoming disaster, for kings, before it happens, 2 Chronicles 12:5 / 2 Chronicles 16:7 / 2 Chronicles 19:2 / 2 Chronicles 24:20 / 2 Chronicles 26:16. However, some commentators believe that Elijah was still alive at this point in time.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is the only notice which we have of Elijah in Chronicles. As a prophet of the northern kingdom, he engaged but slightly the attention of the historian of the southern one. The notice shows that Elijah did not confine his attention to the affairs of his own state, but strove to check the progress of idolatry in Judah. And it proves that he was alive after the death of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 21:13, a fact bearing.

1. Upon the chronological order of 2 Kings 2:1.

2. Showing that Elisha, who prophesied in the time of Jehoshaphat. 2 Kings 3:11-19 commenced his public ministry before his master's translation.

In an effort to bring the two kingdoms together, Jehoram married Athaliah, but this resulted in evil arising within the family of David in Judah. The prophecy was that Jehoram was struck with a disease in his intestines and Judah suffered from a great plague.

‘The LORD aroused against Jehoram the hostility of the Philistines and of the Arabs who lived near the Cushites. They attacked Judah, invaded it and carried off all the goods found in the king's palace, together with his sons and wives. Not a son was left to him except Ahaziah, the youngest.’ 2 Chronicles 21:16-17

The Philistines and Arabians, like the Edomites and Cushites, also took advantage of Judah's weak condition, despite being suppressed earlier during the reign of Jehoshaphat.

However, notice this was the Lord's doing. They plundered the treasury of Judah and they killed all the descendants of David except for one son, the youngest, Jehoahaz, who was also called Ahaziah, 2 Chronicles 25:23.

It's an amazing thought that through this one son, the seedline promise of the Messiah that God made to David would continue.

‘After all this, the LORD afflicted Jehoram with an incurable disease of the bowels. In the course of time, at the end of the second year, his bowels came out because of the disease, and he died in great pain. His people made no funeral fire in his honour, as they had for his predecessors. Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. He passed away, to no one's regret, and was buried in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.’ 2 Chronicles 21:18-20

The Lord afflicted Jehoram with an incurable disease of the bowel, which resulted in his bowels coming out, Acts 1:18.

Notice when Jehoram died, there wasn't a lot of sympathy for him, there were no regrets, this is seen in that there was no burning of incense for him.

Because there was little respect for him as a person and king, he wasn't given the honour of being buried in the tombs of the kings of Judah, 2 Kings 8:24.

CHAPTER 22

‘The people of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, Jehoram's youngest son, king in his place, since the raiders, who came with the Arabs into the camp, had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign. Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem one year. His mother's name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of Omri. He too followed the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother encouraged him to act wickedly. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, as the house of Ahab had done, for after his father's death they became his advisers, to his undoing. He also followed their counsel when he went with Joram son of Ahab king of Israel to wage war against Hazael king of Aram at Ramoth Gilead. The Arameans wounded Joram; so he returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds they had inflicted on him at Ramoth in his battle with Hazael king of Aram. Then Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to Jezreel to see Joram son of Ahab because he had been wounded.’ 2 Chronicles 22:1-6

AHAZIAH KING OF JUDAH

Ahaziah became king in 841 B.C. and only reigned for one year, 2 Kings 8:25-29. Since his father was 40 years old when he died, many commentators suggest that the account of 2 Kings 8 has the correct reading of 22 years old, 2 Kings 8:26.

Some translations say that Athaliah was the ‘daughter’ of Omri, she would have been the granddaughter of Omri, because she was the daughter of Ahab. The word ‘daughter’ is often used to refer to one as a descendant.

Ahaziah followed in the idolatrous ways of Ahab, 1 Kings 16:29-19:18, and did evil in the eyes of the Lord. War once again breaks out, Ahaziah and Joram, that is, Jehoram, 2 Kings 8:28, king of Israel in the north, go out against Hazael at Ramoth Gilead.

They were trying to reclaim the city that was under Aramean control, 1 Kings 22:29-36. It appears at this point in history, that the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah have a good relationship with one another.

Ahaziah had a good friendship with Joram and because of this friendship, Ahaziah joined in with the house of Ahab’s sinfulness. This is the reason why Jehu said that he too should be killed.

Although God had willed the execution of the house of Omri, to whose dynasty Ahab and his evil family belonged, Jehu’s murderous deeds in their totality were not approved by God.

‘Through Ahaziah’s visit to Joram, God brought about Ahaziah’s downfall. When Ahaziah arrived, he went out with Joram to meet Jehu son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to destroy the house of Ahab. While Jehu was executing judgment on the house of Ahab, he found the officials of Judah and the sons of Ahaziah’s relatives, who had been attending Ahaziah, and he killed them. He then went in search of Ahaziah, and his men captured him while he was hiding in Samaria. He was brought to Jehu and put to death. They buried him, for they said, “He was a son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart.” So there was no one in the house of Ahaziah powerful enough to retain the kingdom.’ 2 Chronicles 22:7-9

The house of Ahab was now on the thrones of both Israel and Judah, but God appears to use Joram’s illness in Jezreel to bring Ahaziah from Jerusalem, in doing so the two branches of Ahab’s house were brought together and brought to an end at the same time.

Coffman says the following in his commentary.

‘Appropriately, the final settlement of God’s account with the house of Ahab would take place at Jezreel, at that very vineyard of Naboth, where through Ahab’s murder of that righteous man, the dogs licked his blood, and, in the next chapter, we shall see how the dogs indeed licked the blood of Ahab in the person of his grandson Ahaziah in the very same place. None of God’s prophecies ever failed!’

Jehu was the new king of Israel whose mission was to completely eradicate the house of Ahab, Hosea 1:3-5. When Jehu came to Jezreel, he killed the house of Ahab, and after finding Ahaziah, he killed him too, 2 Kings 9:30-37. Jehu’s envoys killed him but they allowed his servants to bury him, 2 Kings 9:28.

ATHALIAH AND JOASH

‘When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she proceeded to destroy the whole royal family of the house of Judah. But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram, took Joash son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the royal princes who were about to be murdered and put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Because Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram and wife of the priest Jehoiada, was Ahaziah’s sister, she hid the child from Athaliah so she could not kill him. He remained hidden with them at the temple of God for six years while Athaliah ruled the land.’ 2 Chronicles 22:10-12

Although the text says that ‘Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah’, we must remember that sometimes daughters were called ‘mother’. Here we find that Athaliah was actually the daughter of Ahab, 2 Kings 8:18 / 2 Kings 8:26. She reigned as queen of Judah in the south from 853 to 841 B.C. It appears that because she was Ahab’s daughter, her husband Jehoram didn’t get involved with Jehu when he was killing the descendants of Ahab, 2 Kings 11:1-3. To make sure Athaliah remained in power, she killed all the sons of Jeroham, not the sons of Athaliah, 2 Kings 11:1-3. The royal seed would include the descendants of Jehoshaphat of the Davidic line. Whilst she killed all the sons of Jeroham, Jehosheba, who was Jehoiada’s wife and Joash’s aunt, took Joash away from Athaliah and hid him, her nephew, for six years in the temple.

It was during these 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.

This is clearly God working through Jehosheba, 2 Kings 11:2, as He was preserving the seedline of David, God had promised that through David One would come to sit on his throne, 2 Samuel 7:13.

CHAPTER 23

‘In the seventh year Jehoiada showed his strength. He made a covenant with the commanders of units of a hundred: Azariah son of Jeroham, Ishmael son of Jehohanan, Azariah son of Obed, Maaseiah son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat son of Zikri. They went throughout Judah and gathered the Levites and the heads of Israelite families from all the towns. When they came to Jerusalem, the whole assembly made a covenant with the king at the temple of God. Jehoiada said to them, “The king’s son shall reign, as the LORD promised concerning the descendants of David. Now this is what you are to do: A third of you priests and Levites who are going on duty on the Sabbath are to keep watch at the doors, a third of you at the royal palace and a third at the Foundation Gate, and all the others are to be in the courtyards of the temple of the LORD. No one is to enter the temple of the LORD except the priests and Levites on duty; they may enter because they are consecrated, but all the others are to observe the LORD’s command not to enter. The Levites are to station themselves around the king, each with weapon in hand. Anyone who enters the temple is to be put to death. Stay close to the king wherever he goes.” 2 Chronicles 23:1-7

During this time, Jehoiada made two covenants, the first was a covenant with those who would carry out the plan to take the throne for Joash.

This covenant involved them committing to be loyal to the new king. The second covenant included all those of the first covenant, and so, the covenant promise was by all, to be loyal to Joash as the king.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the names mentioned.

‘The five names do not occur in Kings, only, and incidentally, the five divisions of the royal guard, 2 Kings 11:5.’ The parallel passages written in 2 Kings 11:4-12, tell us that the Carites who were also known as the Kerethites, 1 Kings 1:38, were basically soldiers who were employed by kings as their protectors. They were Philistine soldiers who were very loyal to David and David’s dynasty, 2 Samuel 15:18 / 1 Samuel 30:14 / Ezekiel 25:16 / Zephaniah 2:5.

Jehoiada comes up with a great plan on how he can overthrow Athaliah. He hid Joash until he was older and he goes on to secure the loyalty of the commanders and the palace guard by making a covenant with them.

He plans to overthrow the Baal worship in which Athaliah was involved, because of this he was easily able to secure the loyalty of the priests of Jerusalem.

‘The Levites and all the men of Judah did just as Jehoiada the priest ordered. Each one took his men—those who were going on duty on the Sabbath and those who were going off duty—for Jehoiada the priest had not released any of the divisions. Then he gave the commanders of units of a hundred the spears and the large and small shields that had belonged to King David and that were in the temple of God. He stationed all the men, each with his weapon in his hand, around the king—near the altar and the temple, from the south side to the north side of the temple. Jehoiada and his sons brought out the king’s son and put the crown on him; they presented him with a copy of the covenant and proclaimed him king. They anointed him and shouted, “Long live the king!” When Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and cheering the king, she went to them at the temple of the LORD. She looked, and there was the king, standing by his pillar at the entrance. The officers and the trumpeters were beside the king, and all the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets, and musicians with their instruments were leading the praises. Then Athaliah tore her robes and shouted, “Treason! Treason!” Jehoiada the priest sent out the commanders of units of a hundred, who were in charge of the troops, and said to them: “Bring her out between the ranks and put to the sword anyone who follows her.” For the priest had said, “Do not put her to death at the temple of the LORD.” So they seized her as she reached the entrance of the Horse Gate on the palace grounds, and there they put her to death.’ 2 Chronicles 23:8-15

The priests wouldn’t normally have had weapons, but the text tells us that the weapons had been stored in the tabernacle by David, and later placed in the temple by Solomon. The soldiers and the Levites in the temple were probably intermixed in about equal proportions, 2 Kings 11:8 / 2 Kings 11:11.

When the day came for the anointing of Joash as king, he was anointed by the High Priest and an official announcement was made with the approval of the people and so, Joash was now made king at the age of seven years old. The king’s son received praise once he was recognized as their king, ‘long live the king’ they shouted, 1 Samuel 10:24 / 2 Samuel 16:16.

When queen Athaliah heard the noise, she knew what was happening but wasn’t very happy, she tore her robes and cries out ‘treason, treason’, 2 Kings 11:13-16. It’s clear that she was caught totally off guard and as a result, everything she did to try and stop Jehoiada from establishing the kingship of Joash was useless.

In order to keep the temple from becoming desecrated, she is taken outside the temple and killed. Athaliah was very much like her parents, Ahab and Jezebel, she was a murderer and promoted idolatry, Ezekiel 18:4.

‘Jehoiada then made a covenant that he, the people and the king would be the LORD’s people. All the people went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars and idols and killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars. Then Jehoiada placed the oversight of the temple of the LORD in the hands of the Levitical priests, to whom David had made assignments in the temple, to present the burnt offerings of the LORD as written in the Law of Moses, with rejoicing and singing, as David had ordered. He also stationed gatekeepers at the gates of the LORD’s temple so that no one who was in any way unclean might enter. He took with him the commanders of hundreds, the nobles, the rulers of the people and all the people of the land and brought the king down from the temple of the LORD. They went into the palace through the Upper Gate and seated the king on the royal throne. All the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was calm, because Athaliah had been slain with the sword.’ 2 Chronicles 23:16-21

The covenant that Jehoiada made with the Lord, the king and the people, 2 Kings 11:17-21, was simply a renewal of that covenant which the Lord had made with Israel through Moses, Exodus 34:1-27.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It was the duty of the priests alone to offer the burnt offerings, Numbers 18:1-7, and of the Levites alone to praise God with singing and music, 1 Chronicles 23:5 / 1 Chronicles 25:1-7.’

Even though Solomon had built a temple to God, it appears that Baal became so popular that the people demanded that temples be built in order to worship Baal.

In 2 Kings 10 Jehu oversaw the destruction of the temple of Baal in Samaria, but here the temple of Baal in Jerusalem was destroyed by the people. Notice also they destroyed the sacred objects dedicated to Baal and they killed Mattan the priest of Baal, Deuteronomy 13:5-10.

Selman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The people’s rejoicing augmented the joy of temple worship, and sounded a note unheard since the days of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 20:27. That the city was quiet was a sign of God’s blessing, which often followed special acts of faith and obedience, 1 Chronicles 4:40 / 1 Chronicles 22:9 / 2 Chronicles 13:23 / 2 Chronicles 14:4-5 / 2 Chronicles 20:30.’

CHAPTER 24

‘Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem forty years. His mother’s name was Zibiah; she was from Beersheba. Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the years of Jehoiada the priest. Jehoiada chose two wives for him, and he had sons and daughters.’ 2 Chronicles 24:1-3

Joash was now king at the age of seven, however, he was under the wise guidance of Jehoiada and he was a good ruler as long as Jehoiada lived. Some translations use the name Jehoash, but this is simply a variation of the name Joash.

Because Joash was only seven years old when he began to reign, 2 Kings 11:21, he heavily relied on the wise guidance of Jehoiada, who was high priest at the time, 2 Chronicles 24:1-14.

It appears in the early years of Joash’s reign, he stayed in Jerusalem and as a result, Judah didn’t remove all the high places and so, the people continued to sacrifice and burn incense in idolatrous worship, outside of Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 24:15-27.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Jehoiada lived after the accession of Joash at least 23 years, 2 Kings 12:6. Thus the idolatries of Joash, 2 Chronicles 24:18, were confined to his last 10 or 15 years.’

Notice he had two wives, which tells us he didn’t live according to God’s principles of only having one wife.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Athaliah’s destruction of the seed royal had left Joash without a natural successor, and his marriage at the earliest suitable age, was, therefore, a matter of state policy. One of his wives in question was probably ‘Jehoaddan of Jerusalem,’ the mother of Amaziah, 2 Chronicles 25:1, who must have been taken to wife by Joash as early as his 21st year.’

JOASH REPAIRS THE TEMPLE

‘Some time later Joash decided to restore the temple of the LORD. He called together the priests and Levites and said to them, “Go to the towns of Judah and collect the money due annually from all Israel, to repair the temple of your God. Do it now.” But the Levites did not act at once. Therefore the king summoned Jehoiada the chief priest and said to him, “Why haven’t you required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax imposed by Moses the servant of the LORD and by the assembly of Israel for the tent of the covenant law?” Now the sons of that wicked woman Athaliah had broken into the temple of God and had used even its sacred objects for the Baals. At the king’s command, a chest was made and placed outside, at the gate of the temple of the LORD. A proclamation was then issued in Judah and Jerusalem that they should bring to the LORD the tax that Moses the servant of God had required of Israel in the wilderness. All the officials and all the people brought their contributions gladly, dropping them into the chest until it was full. Whenever the chest was brought in by the Levites to the king’s officials and they saw that there was a large amount of money, the royal secretary and the officer of the chief priest would come and empty the chest and carry it back to its place. They did this regularly and collected a great amount of money. The king and

Jehoiada gave it to those who carried out the work required for the temple of the LORD. They hired masons and carpenters to restore the LORD's temple, and also workers in iron and bronze to repair the temple. The men in charge of the work were diligent, and the repairs progressed under them. They rebuilt the temple of God according to its original design and reinforced it. When they had finished, they brought the rest of the money to the king and Jehoiada, and with it were made articles for the LORD's temple: articles for the service and for the burnt offerings, and also dishes and other objects of gold and silver. As long as Jehoiada lived, burnt offerings were presented continually in the temple of the LORD. Now Jehoiada was old and full of years, and he died at the age of a hundred and thirty. He was buried with the kings in the City of David, because of the good he had done in Israel for God and his temple.' 2 Chronicles 24:4-16

When queen Athaliah reigned, she was so obsessed with Baal worship and the upkeep of the temples of Baal, that it's clear that God's temple had been totally neglected.

She had no respect for God or His temple because she removed some items from God's temple and placed them in the temple of Baal, 2 Kings 12:9-16 / 2 Chronicles 24:7.

Because she neglected God's temple, it was now in need of some serious repair, which was going to cost a lot of money. The collection was to be made throughout Judah, with each of the priests and Levites collecting the temple tax in his own region, 2 Chronicles 24:5.

This money was sourced in three ways. 1. The half-shekel is required by the Law, Exodus 30:13. 2. The money paid by those who had devoted themselves or made vows, a variable sum depending on age, sex, and property, Leviticus 27:2-8 / Numbers 18:15-16. 3. The money is offered in the way of free-will offerings.

They tried to raise enough funds to repair the temple but sadly the priests failed to raise enough money, Malachi 2:1-2.

2 Kings 12:9 tells us that Jehoiada took a chest and bored a hole in the lid of it, this is the first mention of a collection box in the Scriptures, Mark 12:42.

A real effort was made by Jehoiada to try and increase the freewill offerings, and so when the people came and saw that the temple was in need of repair due to a lack of funds, they cheerfully put their freewill offerings into the chest.

This tax was originally designated for the purpose of repairing the tabernacle, but in this case, it was used to repair the temple, Exodus 30:12-16 / Numbers 1:50. It appears the Levites were neglectful in keeping the temple in repair because of oppressing kings of the past.

The workers pointed out the repairs which were needed to the people and the people responded by giving their money towards the cost of those repairs, 2 Kings 22:3-7 / Nehemiah 10:32. I believe people will often freely give more when they can see where their freewill offering is going, 2 Corinthians 9:7.

2 Kings 12:13 tells us that 'the money brought into the temple was not spent for making silver basins, wick trimmers, sprinkling bowls, trumpets or any other articles of gold or silver for the temple of the LORD.'

This statement refers to the time when the repairs were being made to the temple, but 2 Chronicles 24:14 tells us it refers to the time when all the repairs were finished, and then these articles for the temple were made. The collection box was placed in a location where it could be easily accessed by the people.

The guilt offerings, and sin offerings, Leviticus 5:15-18 / Numbers 5:8 / Leviticus 6:26-29, weren't taken into the temple, that is this money wasn't to be placed into the chest for the repair work. The money belonged to the priests, it was given to them for their private use and maintenance, Numbers 5:10.

We mustn't underestimate Jehoiada in regards to his respect for God and His ways. God blessed this man with 130 years of life, which was way beyond the average living age for this time period. He was so highly regarded, that he was buried with the kings in Jerusalem.

THE WICKEDNESS OF JOASH

‘After the death of Jehoiada, the officials of Judah came and paid homage to the king, and he listened to them. They abandoned the temple of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and worshiped Asherah poles and idols. Because of their guilt, God’s anger came on Judah and Jerusalem. Although the LORD sent prophets to the people to bring them back to him, and though they testified against them, they would not listen. Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. He stood before the people and said, “This is what God says: ‘Why do you disobey the LORD’s commands? You will not prosper. Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.’” But they plotted against him, and by order of the king they stoned him to death in the courtyard of the LORD’s temple. King Joash did not remember the kindness Zechariah’s father Jehoiada had shown him but killed his son, who said as he lay dying, “May the LORD see this and call you to account.” 2 Chronicles 24:17-22

What we have written here isn’t found in 2 Kings, here we read of a collation of false teachers who remained in the background as the restoration took place when Jehoiada was still alive.

These false teachers waited, as false teachers do, in obscurity, until they had an opportunity to influence the king to move toward their views and support.

Notice they abandoned the temple and worshipped Asherah poles and idols. This tells us where their loyalty lay, they weren’t interested in repairing the temple, they would rather worship false gods. Because the temple was located in Jerusalem, worshipping these false gods became more convenient for them, and they didn’t have so far to travel.

Despite God sending prophets to His people, they wouldn’t listen. The reason for them not listening to the prophets was simply because they had lost their jobs during the restoration from the worship of Baal to the worship of God. They lost their financial support.

By killing only Mattan the priest of Baal, 2 Chronicles 23:17, it’s reasonable to conclude that other Baal prophets also lost their jobs, but not their lives.

Jehoiada’s son Zechariah, stood up, Nehemiah 8:4, and under the influence of the Spirit of God, Judges 6:34 / 1 Chronicles 12:18, pronounced a severe warning but the king’s response was to honour the conspiracy of the evil princes and order the man of God stoned to death within the court of the temple itself.

Zechariah’s prayer was that God would see their terrible crime and pronounce a judgment against them was honoured immediately.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Compare Genesis 9:5 / Genesis 42:22, and contrast the words of Christ, Luke 23:34, and of Stephen, Acts 7:60. Zechariah’s prayer was prophetic, 2 Chronicles 24:23 / 2 Chronicles 24:25 / Luke 11:51.’

Joash looked to Jehoiada as a father and so, 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.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These two paragraphs, 2 Chronicles 24:20-22, reveal that Joash, at heart, was a true descendant of his evil ancestor Ahab. As long as Jehoiada was available as a wise and able counsellor, Joash did very well but as soon as Jehoiada was dead, the princes of Judah seduced him with their flattery and induced him to reopen the high places with their licentious worship of the pagan idols.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, 2 Kings 12:17-21.

‘A conspiracy. Compare the marginal reference Joash, either from suspicion of intended treason or from some other unknown cause, took up his abode in the fortress of Millo, 1 Kings 9:24. This conspiracy was connected with religion. Soon after the death of Jehoiada, Joash had apostatised, had renewed the worship of Baal, and, despite many

prophetic warnings, had persisted in his evil courses, even commanding Zechariah to be slain when he rebuked them, 2 Chronicles 24:18-27. The conspirators, who wished to avenge Zechariah, no doubt wished also to put down the Baal worship. In this, it appears that they succeeded. For, though Amaziah punished the actual murderers after a while, 2 Kings 14:5, yet he appears not to have been a Baal-worshipper. The only idolatries laid to his charge are the maintenance of the high places, 2 Kings 14:4, and a worship of the gods of Edom, 2 Chronicles 25:14-20. Zechariah was murdered in the same place where his father Jehoiada had anointed Joash king, 2 Chronicles 23:10-11.

‘At the turn of the year, the army of Aram marched against Joash; it invaded Judah and Jerusalem and killed all the leaders of the people. They sent all the plunder to their king in Damascus. Although the Aramean army had come with only a few men, the LORD delivered into their hands a much larger army. Because Judah had forsaken the LORD, the God of their ancestors, judgment was executed on Joash. When the Arameans withdrew, they left Joash severely wounded. His officials conspired against him for murdering the son of Jehoiada the priest, and they killed him in his bed. So he died and was buried in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings. Those who conspired against him were Zabad, son of Shimeath an Ammonite woman, and Jehozabad, son of Shimrith a Moabite woman. The account of his sons, the many prophecies about him, and the record of the restoration of the temple of God are written in the annotations on the book of the kings. And Amaziah his son succeeded him as king.’ 2 Chronicles 24:23-27

A few years ago, with half the number of soldiers, Judah was able to be victorious over an army of one million Cushites during the reign of Asa, 2 Chronicles 14:1-12, however, here, because of Judah’s sin, the Arameans with a much smaller army were able to defeat the greater army of Judah.

God empowered the army of Aram to punish Judah for their sin of apostasy, Leviticus 26:8 / Leviticus 26:17 / Leviticus 26:37. It was especially appropriate that the Arameans killed all the princes, the very people who had seduced Joash to accept idolatry.

Significantly, this judgment fell upon Joash and his kingdom within less than a year following the heartless murder of Zechariah. But God was not finished with his judgment against Joash.

We’re not told if Joash was making continuous payments to Hazael, but because Hazael, king of Aram had become such a great threat to Jerusalem, Joash took the treasures of the temple and royal palace and gave them to Hazael as tribute, 2 Kings 12:17-21.

Notice that Joash’s officials conspired against him, it appears that after the death of Jehoiada, Joash may have begun to get involved in idol worship, 2 Chronicles 24:15-22.

After the assassination of Joash, and his burial in the city of David, but not in the tombs of the kings, 2 Kings 12:21, Amaziah his son succeeded him as king.

CHAPTER 25

‘Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother’s name was Jehoaddan; she was from Jerusalem. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not wholeheartedly. After the kingdom was firmly in his control, he executed the officials who had murdered his father the king. Yet he did not put their children to death but acted in accordance with what is written in the Law, in the Book of Moses, where the LORD commanded: “Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor children be put to death for their parents; each will die for their own sin.” 2 Chronicles 25:1-4

AMAZIAH KING OF JUDAH

Amaziah became king of Judah and reigned from 796 B.C. to 767 B.C. His reign was also marred with idolatry, and so, he opposed the true prophets of God.

2 Kings 14:5-7, tells us that after taking full control of the kingdom, Amaziah killed the officials who killed his father, Genesis 9:5-7, but he didn't kill the children, Deuteronomy 24:16.

The writer tells us who wrote the Book of Moses, that is, the first five books of the Bible, it was Moses, 1 Kings 2:3. Notice that 'he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord but not wholeheartedly', 2 Kings 14:1-4. The text doesn't tell us what he did right, but it's possible that he didn't promote the worship of Baal and lead God's people away from Him.

'Amaziah called the people of Judah together and assigned them according to their families to commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds for all Judah and Benjamin. He then mustered those twenty years old or more and found that there were three hundred thousand men fit for military service, able to handle the spear and shield. He also hired a hundred thousand fighting men from Israel for a hundred talents of silver. But a man of God came to him and said, "Your Majesty, these troops from Israel must not march with you, for the LORD is not with Israel—not with any of the people of Ephraim. Even if you go and fight courageously in battle, God will overthrow you before the enemy, for God has the power to help or to overthrow." Amaziah asked the man of God, "But what about the hundred talents I paid for these Israelite troops?" The man of God replied, "The LORD can give you much more than that." So Amaziah dismissed the troops who had come to him from Ephraim and sent them home. They were furious with Judah and left for home in a great rage. Amaziah then marshalled his strength and led his army to the Valley of Salt, where he killed ten thousand men of Seir. The army of Judah also captured ten thousand men alive, took them to the top of a cliff and threw them down so that all were dashed to pieces. Meanwhile the troops that Amaziah had sent back and had not allowed to take part in the war raided towns belonging to Judah from Samaria to Beth Horon. They killed three thousand people and carried off great quantities of plunder.' 2 Chronicles 25:5-13

So that he could strengthen his kingdom and defeat the Edomites, Amaziah gathered together an army of men from Judah. When Amaziah was preparing to invade Edom, he paid a hundred talents in silver to hire some soldiers from the tribe of Ephraim, 2 Kings 14:8-16.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Asa's army had been near twice as numerous, amounting to 580,000, 2 Chronicles 14:8. The diminution was due, in part, to wars, 2 Chronicles 21:8 / 2 Chronicles 21:16 / 2 Chronicles 24:23-24, in part, to the general decadence of the kingdom.'

Despite being warned not to do this, because it would result in bringing the idolatrous northern mercenaries into contact with those of Judah.

If he didn't listen to the warning, then he would reap the punishment of God. The good news is, upon the advice of a prophet he sent them back home, which they took as an insult.

The Edomites were descendants of Esau, Jacob's twin brother and their hatred for one another went on for centuries. They were constantly at war with Israel as a whole, 1 Kings 11:15 / Ezekiel 25:12 / Obadiah 1:14.

Amaziah went to war and captured Sela, 2 Kings 14:5-7. Sela was the capital city of Edom, Isaiah 16:1, which today is referred to as Petra, Obadiah 1-4. As a result of Amaziah taking Sela, Edom now belonged to Judah.

Notice what happened after the mercenaries were sent home, in anger and filled with rage against Judah, these very same men plundered the cities of Judah on their way home. In a sense, this was his punishment from God, for them hiring them in the first place.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning, 2 Chronicles 25:7.

'The man of God here made it plain that the rebellion of the northern tribes against the Davidic dynasty had forfeited their further identity as God's Chosen People. This is the reason that the Chronicler completely ignored, in as much as it was possible, the entire Northern Israel, focusing his attention completely upon the fortunes of Judah.'

‘When Amaziah returned from slaughtering the Edomites, he brought back the gods of the people of Seir. He set them up as his own gods, bowed down to them and burned sacrifices to them. The anger of the LORD burned against Amaziah, and he sent a prophet to him, who said, “Why do you consult this people’s gods, which could not save their own people from your hand?” While he was still speaking, the king said to him, “Have we appointed you an adviser to the king? Stop! Why be struck down?” So the prophet stopped but said, “I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel.” 2 Chronicles 25:14-16

It is clear though that he didn’t serve God with all his heart, because he didn’t remove the high places of worship, 2 Kings 14:1-6. He also followed the example of his father, Joash, which according to 2 Chronicles 25:14-28, involved him bringing back the pagan gods of Edom to worship them, 1 Samuel 5:1-2.

These people’s gods Seir weren’t able to defend or help the Edomites, yet Amaziah worshipped them, hence, why God sends a prophet to make this point clear to Amaziah.

Ellison, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Amaziah held the debased view that Jehovah was the supreme God, but yet was only one god among many gods. His purpose in carrying away the gods of Edom, of whom we know nothing, was perhaps that of depriving the Edomites of any support they might have been supposed to give Edom. Amaziah’s worshipping them and burning incense to them was a cardinal violation of the Law of Moses and the Decalogue, ‘thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, that is, images’, Exodus 20:5.’

‘After Amaziah king of Judah consulted his advisers, he sent this challenge to Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, king of Israel: “Come, let us face each other in battle.” But Jehoash king of Israel replied to Amaziah king of Judah: “A thistle in Lebanon sent a message to a cedar in Lebanon, ‘Give your daughter to my son in marriage.’ Then a wild beast in Lebanon came along and trampled the thistle underfoot. You say to yourself that you have defeated Edom, and now you are arrogant and proud. But stay at home! Why ask for trouble and cause your own downfall and that of Judah also?” Amaziah, however, would not listen, for God so worked that he might deliver them into the hands of Jehoash, because they sought the gods of Edom. So Jehoash king of Israel attacked. He and Amaziah king of Judah faced each other at Beth Shemesh in Judah. Judah was routed by Israel, and every man fled to his home. Jehoash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, the son of Ahaziah, at Beth Shemesh. Then Jehoash brought him to Jerusalem and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate—a section about four hundred cubits long. He took all the gold and silver and all the articles found in the temple of God that had been in the care of Obed-Edom, together with the palace treasures and the hostages, and returned to Samaria.’ 2 Chronicles 25:17-24

2 Kings 14:8-16, tells us that Amaziah sends messengers to Jehoash, king of Israel asking for a face to face battle. Amaziah wanted to punish those who had plundered the cities of Judah and so, he calls upon Joash of Israel to battle. He was very confident he could win, after all, with an army of 300,000 men, he just killed 20,000 Edomites, 2 Chronicles 25:5 / 2 Chronicles 25:11-12.

Jehoahaz of Israel appeared very weak, having only 50 horsemen, 10 chariots, and 10,000-foot soldiers after being defeated by the Arameans, 2 Kings 13:7. It’s not surprising he’s confident.

The war didn’t go well for Amaziah as Joash defeated his army, took him 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.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Amaziah could not resist the temptation to secure loyalty by honouring the gods of those who resisted him. This was both intended and understood to be a declaration of war. Joash properly understood the arrogant and egotistical intentions of Amaziah and warned him of the fate that would overtake him but Amaziah would not hearken to any sound advice.’

Adam Clarke says the following, in his commentary about the parable.

‘The thistle’ that was in Lebanon, Amaziah, king of Judah, sent to ‘the cedar’ that was in Lebanon, Jehoash, king of Israel, saying, ‘Give thy daughter’, a part of thy kingdom, ‘to my son to wife’, to be united to, and possessed by the kings of Judah. And there passed by a ‘wild beast’, Jehoash and his enraged army, and ‘trod down the thistle’, utterly discomfited Amaziah and his troops, ‘pillaged the temple, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem’, 2 Kings 14:12-14. Probably Amaziah had required certain cities of Israel to be given up to Judah, if so, this accounts for that part of the parable, ‘Give thy daughter to my son to wife’.

The parable was given to Amaziah so that he would back down from his threat but it appears that Amaziah was overconfident, probably because he just defeated the Edomites.

Amaziah refused to listen and so Jehoash defeated Amaziah’s army and chased them all the way to Jerusalem. Jehoash then goes on to plunder the treasury of the royal palace and the temple.

The two kingdoms of Israel and Judah were now beyond the point of reconciliation, and because Israel was now at war within itself, they became easy targets for the Assyrians. The Northern Kingdom of Israel were soon to go into captivity in Assyria because of their apostasy.

‘Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah lived for fifteen years after the death of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel. As for the other events of Amaziah’s reign, from beginning to end, are they not written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel? From the time that Amaziah turned away from following the LORD, they conspired against him in Jerusalem and he fled to Lachish, but they sent men after him to Lachish and killed him there. He was brought back by horse and was buried with his ancestors in the City of Judah.’ 2 Chronicles 25:25-28

2 Kings 14:17-22 tells us because Amaziah was defeated by Jehoash and because the royal treasury and temple had been plumaged, it’s no wonder that Amaziah had become very unpopular.

He fled to Lachish, which tells us how unpopular he had become, he was later killed in Lachish, Micah 1:13. He was assassinated, just like his father was, 2 Kings 12:20-21, and his death was a complete fulfilment of the prophecy of 2 Chronicles 25:16. The last fifteen years of his life were filled with trouble and distress.

In 2 Kings, we read about a conspiracy but we’re not told the reason behind it. However, here, the text tells us that many in Judah were still trying to be faithful to the Lord, this may have been the centre of the conspiracy.

It was Amaziah’s apostasy from the Lord in bringing in those pagan deities from Edom, 2 Kings 14:17-22, that caused the opposition to take his life.

CHAPTER 26

‘Then all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in place of his father Amaziah. He was the one who rebuilt Elath and restored it to Judah after Amaziah rested with his ancestors. Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-two years. His mother’s name was Jekoliah; she was from Jerusalem. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done. He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. As long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success.’ 2 Chronicles 26:1-5

UZZIAH KING OF JUDAH

Uzziah, 1 Chronicles 3:12 / Isaiah 1:1 / Isaiah 6:1, also known as Azariah in 2 Kings, began to reign in the Southern Kingdom of Judah from 767 B.C. to 740 B.C. Jeroboam II of the northern kingdom reigned at the same time as Uzziah.

Some commentators suggest that Azariah was his throne name, and Uzziah was his adopted name. We do know that the name Azariah means the Lord helps, and the name Uzziah means the Lord strengthens.

In 2 Kings 14:22, the writer tells us that Uzziah rebuilt Elath which was Solomon's port city on the shore of the Red Sea, 1 Kings 9:26. We also know that Uzziah led Israel with a strong army, 2 Chronicles 26:6-15. He did what was right in God's eyes, which was rewarded with a long reign of 52 years, however, he didn't removed the high places. These high places had become very important both socially and religiously for the Northern and Southern kingdoms. They were places where sacrifices were made and offerings were made to the false gods.

In effect these high places took God's people away from God, hence why both kingdoms fell into idolatry over and over again. Yes, the temples of Baal were destroyed but these high places remained, 2 Kings 15:1-4. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'His was a long and powerful reign indeed. He successfully defended Judah against the belligerent Ammonites, Philistines and Arabians, developed a strong standing army, and rebuilt the nation's fortifications. He even reopened the Red Sea port of Elath, and promoted commerce. Elath is the same as Ezion-Geber.'

'He went to war against the Philistines and broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod. He then rebuilt towns near Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines. God helped him against the Philistines and against the Arabs who lived in Gur Baal and against the Meunites. The Ammonites brought tribute to Uzziah, and his fame spread as far as the border of Egypt, because he had become very powerful. Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate and at the angle of the wall, and he fortified them. He also built towers in the wilderness and dug many cisterns, because he had much livestock in the foothills and in the plain. He had people working his fields and vineyards in the hills and in the fertile lands, for he loved the soil. Uzziah had a well-trained army, ready to go out by divisions according to their numbers as mustered by Jeiel the secretary and Maaseiah the officer under the direction of Hananiah, one of the royal officials. The total number of family leaders over the fighting men was 2,600. Under their command was an army of 307,500 men trained for war, a powerful force to support the king against his enemies. Uzziah provided shields, spears, helmets, coats of armor, bows and slingstones for the entire army. In Jerusalem he made devices invented for use on the towers and on the corner defences so that soldiers could shoot arrows and hurl large stones from the walls. His fame spread far and wide, for he was greatly helped until he became powerful.' 2 Chronicles 26:6-15

The military accomplishments of Uzziah were fearsome. He suppressed the Philistines, 2 Chronicles 21:16, Arabians, 2 Chronicles 20:1, Meunites, Judges 10:12, and the Ammonites.

In an effort to secure the land 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.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Refuges for the flocks and the herdsmen in the wild pasture country on the borders of the holy land, especially toward the south and southeast. Judaea depends largely for its water-supply on reservoirs in which the rain-fall is stored. These are generally cut in the natural rock, and covered at top.'

Notice that Uzziah didn't add much to the military strength of the nation by his conquests. His army exceeds that of his father Amaziah by 7,500 men only, 2 Chronicles 25:5.

He provided, shields, spears, coats of armour, bow and slingstones for the whole army. The slingstones were used in war by the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks, Romans, and others. The Benjamites used them, Judges 20:16, and by the ten tribes, a century before Uzziah, 2 Kings 3:25.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the devices he invented.

‘This is the very first imitation on record of any warlike engines for the attack or defence of besieged places and this account is long prior to any thing of the kind among either the Greeks or the Romans. The Jews alone were the inventors of such engines and the invention took place in the reign of Uzziah, about eight hundred years before the Christian era. It is no wonder that, in the consequence of this, his name spread far abroad, and struck terror into his enemies.’

‘But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the LORD his God and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. Azariah the priest with eighty other courageous priests of the LORD followed him in. They confronted King Uzziah and said, “It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD. That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who have been consecrated to burn incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful; and you will not be honoured by the LORD God.” Uzziah, who had a censer in his hand ready to burn incense, became angry. While he was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in the LORD’s temple, leprosy broke out on his forehead. When Azariah the chief priest and all the other priests looked at him, they saw that he had leprosy on his forehead, so they hurried him out. Indeed, he himself was eager to leave, because the LORD had afflicted him. King Uzziah had leprosy until the day he died. He lived in a separate house—leprosy and banned from the temple of the LORD. Jotham his son had charge of the palace and governed the people of the land. The other events of Uzziah’s reign, from beginning to end, are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. Uzziah rested with his ancestors and was buried near them in a cemetery that belonged to the kings, for people said, “He had leprosy.” And Jotham his son succeeded him as king.’ 2 Chronicles 26:16-23

Power appears to have gone to Uzziah’s head and as a result he became unfaithful to God, 1 Chronicles 10:13, it was this same pride and unfaithfulness that would lead the entire nation into exile, 1 Chronicles 5:25 / 1 Chronicles 9:1 / 2 Chronicles 33:19 / 2 Chronicles 36:14.

Uzziah appears to have deliberately determined to invade the priest’s office, and so, repeating the sin of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Numbers 16:1-35. He has obviously become arrogant and full of himself because of all the victories he has won.

His arrogance led him to assume the authority of the Levitical priests and their work in the temple. He stood against eighty priests who tried to stop him from burning the incense, which was only allowed by the priests, Numbers 16:35 / Numbers 18:7.

God struck Uzziah with leprosy because he wasn’t a priest and he wasn’t authorised to burn incense in the temple, 2 Chronicles 26:16-23 / 1 Samuel 13:13.

Notice that he lived in a separate house, this was common practice for those who had leprosy, Leviticus 13:45-46. Because God struck him with leprosy, Jotham, his son, administrated both his house and the nation in his later years. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘What Uzziah actually violated here was the divine instructions of God himself through Moses in the Pentateuch, Exodus 29:29. Saul lost his kingship for failing to respect those very restrictions.’

He died in the year when Isaiah had his vision, Isaiah 6:1, he wasn’t buried with his ancestors, but near them, 2 Kings 15:7, this too was common practice for those who had leprosy as they were classed as unclean. When Uzziah died, Jotham became the king of Judah, 2 Kings 15:5.

CHAPTER 27

‘Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. His mother’s name was Jerusha daughter of Zadok. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Uzziah had done, but unlike him he did not enter the temple of the LORD. The people, however, continued their corrupt

practices. Jotham rebuilt the Upper Gate of the temple of the LORD and did extensive work on the wall at the hill of Ophel. He built towns in the hill country of Judah and forts and towers in the wooded areas. Jotham waged war against the king of the Ammonites and conquered them. That year the Ammonites paid him a hundred talents of silver, ten thousand cors of wheat and ten thousand cors of barley. The Ammonites brought him the same amount also in the second and third years. Jotham grew powerful because he walked steadfastly before the LORD his God. The other events in Jotham's reign, including all his wars and the other things he did, are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Jotham rested with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David. And Ahaz his son succeeded him as king.' 2 Chronicles 27:1-9

JOTHAM KING OF JUDAH

Jotham becomes king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, he reigned together with Uzziah from 740 B.C. to 732 B.C., 1 Kings 15:32-38 / 2 Chronicles 1:7-9. He did what was right in God's eyes but he didn't remove the high places, 1 Kings 15:35.

These high places had become very important both socially and religiously for the Northern and Southern kingdoms. They were places where sacrifices were made and offerings were made to the false gods.

In effect, these high places took God's people away from God, hence why both kingdoms fell into idolatry over and over again. Yes, the temples of Baal were destroyed but these high places remained, 2 Kings 15:1-4.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the wall of Ophel.

'This wall was part of the old Jebusite city, a very important part of Jerusalem, also called 'the City of David'. Jotham's fortifying of this part of Jerusalem, indicated that he feared an external attack, probably from Assyria and Samaria. This faithless trust which Judah at that time put in fortifications was rebuked by the prophets, Hosea 8:14 / Isaiah 2:15.'

Ammon had been subject to Uzziah, Jotham's father, but they rebelled against Jotham who put down their insurrection and exacted a heavy toll for three years.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The Ammonites, who had submitted to Uzziah, 2 Chronicles 26:8, revolted against Jotham. This revolt he firmly repressed; and, to punish it, he exacted a high rate of tribute for the three years following the termination of the war. The productiveness of the Ammonite country in grain, which is here indicated, has been remarked upon as extraordinary by modern travellers.'

In 1 Kings 15:37, we find the words, 'In those days the LORD began to send Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah against Judah'.

This is the first intimation of the hostile feelings of the kings of Israel and Syria, toward Judah, which led them to form an alliance and make joint preparations for war, 2 Chronicles 27:5. However, war wasn't actually waged until the reign of Ahaz.

Adam Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It was about this time that the Assyrian wars, so ruinous to the Jews, began, but it was in the following reigns that they arrived at their highest pitch of disaster to those unfaithful and unfortunate people. However much we may blame the Jews for their disobedience and obstinacy, yet we cannot help feeling for them under their severe afflictions. Grievously they have sinned, and grievously have they suffered for it.'

Jotham became and remained strong because he did right in the eyes of the Lord, sadly, his reign wasn't very long because the people around him were corrupt.

However, unlike the previous three kings, he was buried with his ancestors and buried in the city of David, that is Jerusalem. His son, Ahaz now becomes king of Judah.

CHAPTER 28

'Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD. He followed the ways of the kings of Israel and also made idols for worshiping the Baals. He burned sacrifices in the Valley of Ben Hinnom and sacrificed his children in the fire, engaging in the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places, on the hilltops and under every spreading tree.' 2 Chronicles 28:1-4

AHAZ KING OF JUDAH

Ahaz becomes king of Judah at the age of twenty and he reigned in Judah from 732 B.C. to 716 B.C. 2 Kings 16:1-9. The writer informs us that he did three things wrong as leader and king of Judah.

1. He didn't walk in the way of David, that is, a man after God's own heart, who was obedient to God, Acts 13:22.
2. He offered his son as a burnt offering to Molech, 1 Kings 11:7 / 2 Kings 3:27, which was condemned by the prophets, 2 Kings 23:10 / Psalms 106:38 / Jeremiah 7:31 / Ezekiel 16:21.
3. He participated in the immoral worship in the high places, although just before he died, he did close the temple hall and suspended the temple worship, 2 Chronicles 28:24.

The kings before him accepted Canaanite worship in the high places, but Ahaz is the first king to actually get involved in it. When we compare the words, 'under every spreading tree' used here, with the way Jeremiah uses the phrase over in Jeremiah 3:6, we quickly learn that this phrase is used metaphorically for prostitution, which gives us an insight into the kind of worship Ahaz was involved with.

'Therefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hands of the king of Aram. The Arameans defeated him and took many of his people as prisoners and brought them to Damascus. He was also given into the hands of the king of Israel, who inflicted heavy casualties on him. In one day Pekah son of Remaliah killed a hundred and twenty thousand soldiers in Judah—because Judah had forsaken the LORD, the God of their ancestors. Zikri, an Ephraimite warrior, killed Maaseiah the king's son, Azrikam the officer in charge of the palace, and Elkanah, second to the king. The men of Israel took captive from their fellow Israelites who were from Judah two hundred thousand wives, sons and daughters. They also took a great deal of plunder, which they carried back to Samaria. But a prophet of the LORD named Oded was there, and he went out to meet the army when it returned to Samaria. He said to them, "Because the LORD, the God of your ancestors, was angry with Judah, he gave them into your hand. But you have slaughtered them in a rage that reaches to heaven. And now you intend to make the men and women of Judah and Jerusalem your slaves. But aren't you also guilty of sins against the LORD your God? Now listen to me! Send back your fellow Israelites you have taken as prisoners, for the LORD's fierce anger rests on you." Then some of the leaders in Ephraim—Azariah son of Jehohanan, Berekiah son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah son of Shallum, and Amasa son of Hadlai—confronted those who were arriving from the war. "You must not bring those prisoners here," they said, "or we will be guilty before the LORD. Do you intend to add to our sin and guilt? For our guilt is already great, and his fierce anger rests on Israel." So the soldiers gave up the prisoners and plunder in the presence of the officials and all the assembly. The men designated by name took the prisoners, and from the plunder they clothed all who were naked. They provided them with clothes and sandals, food and drink, and healing balm. All those who were

weak they put on donkeys. So they took them back to their fellow Israelites at Jericho, the City of Palms, and returned to Samaria.’ 2 Chronicles 28:5-15

God had warned both the northern and southern kingdoms that they would eventually be carried away into captivity if they didn’t obey His law.

This whole disaster came upon Judah because of their alliance with Rezin, the king of Aram, and Pekah, the king of Israel, 2 Kings 16:5-6.

Isaiah makes it clear that the goal of this attack was to dethrone Ahaz and set up a Syrian king over Judah, a certain son of Tabeel, Isaiah 7:6.

They almost succeeded in capturing Ahaz, but they couldn’t actually overcome him. However, they did carry away two hundred thousand captives and much spoil.

When Israel defeated Judah, Israel wanted to take into captivity and make slaves of 120,000 Judean soldiers and 200,000 civilian hostages, but this wasn’t to be.

Notice God sent the prophet, Oded, straight away to inform Israel that they were able to defeat their brethren because God was punishing Judah for her sin.

They were to return the captives they took out of Judah and they listened to what Oded had said, and afterwards fed, clothed and allowed the captives to return to their homes in Judah.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the prophet, Obed.

‘God never stopped his pleading with the northern tribes through his holy prophets, despite the fact that within a decade, or a little less time, the Northern Israel would be destroyed and many of them transported as captives by Assyria in 722 B.C. The reign of Ahaz, 735-715 B.C. would not close until after the fall of Samaria. Thus this change of heart by some of the men of Ephraim came at a time when it was already too late. This act of mercy on their part must therefore be viewed, not as any fundamental change in the apostate Israel, but as an act of God’s mercy upon Judah, even in his judgment against them. Significantly, Nothing is known of this prophet Obed, except what is written here. There may have been many such prophets whom God sent in his futile efforts to win back from their rebellion the northern kingdom.’

‘At that time King Ahaz sent to the kings of Assyria for help. The Edomites had again come and attacked Judah and carried away prisoners, while the Philistines had raided towns in the foothills and in the Negev of Judah. They captured and occupied Beth Shemesh, Aijalon and Gederot, as well as Soko, Timnah and Gimzo, with their surrounding villages. The LORD had humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had promoted wickedness in Judah and had been most unfaithful to the LORD. Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came to him, but he gave him trouble instead of help. Ahaz took some of the things from the temple of the LORD and from the royal palace and from the officials and presented them to the king of Assyria, but that did not help him. In his time of trouble King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the LORD. He offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus, who had defeated him; for he thought, “Since the gods of the kings of Aram have helped them, I will sacrifice to them so they will help me.” But they were his downfall and the downfall of all Israel. Ahaz gathered together the furnishings from the temple of God and cut them in pieces. He shut the doors of the LORD’s temple and set up altars at every street corner in Jerusalem. In every town in Judah he built high places to burn sacrifices to other gods and aroused the anger of the LORD, the God of his ancestors. The other events of his reign and all his ways, from beginning to end, are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. Ahaz rested with his ancestors and was buried in the city of Jerusalem, but he was not placed in the tombs of the kings of Israel. And Hezekiah his son succeeded him as king.’ 2 Chronicles 28:16-27

Ahaz now seeks help from the kings of Syria, which is ironic, since they would eventually take them into captivity. 2 Kings 16:5-9 tells us that Rezin and Pekah weren’t successful in their attack against Jerusalem because of the strong fortifications of the city.

Although most translations have the word Edomites, some translations use the word Syrians, but it really doesn't make any difference as to how they are described. They took captive those of Judah and the Philistines attacked and became successful in defeating the Judean army.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'The long-time sins and apostasies of the Chosen People had all but completely erased from their hearts those basic truths and the final result of that shameful development would be rapidly revealed in the defeat and deportation, first, of Northern Israel to Assyria, 722 B.C., and later, in the defeat and captivity of Judah in Babylon, 586 B.C.'

Ahaz took the gold and silver he found in the temple, throughout Israel's history, the stores of wealth in Jerusalem were often plundered by foreign kings or used by the kings of Judah to buy the allegiance of foreign powers, 1 Kings 14:26 / 1 Kings 15:18 / 2 Kings 12:18.

Ahaz refused to seek help from God, despite being given a sign of assurance from Isaiah that God would help him, Isaiah 7:1-12. The sad thing concerning Ahaz is that he could have easily avoided all of this if he had listened to and taken Isaiah's advice, Isaiah 7:4-25.

Notice that God, Himself humbled Judah because of Ahaz, 2 Kings 16:7 / Isaiah 7:10-16, and it appears that Ahaz couldn't get the message of doom that was sent to him from God, and so chaos ruled.

Sadly, because of his arrogance, he wouldn't lead the people into repentance, and so, the result was a punishment from God upon the whole nation.

Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came to him, but he gave him trouble instead of help, 2 Kings 15:29. 2 Kings 16:10-20 tells us that Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria and he saw a pagan god altar. However, he didn't just like the altar, he went as far as having a copy of it made and placed in the courtyard of the temple in Jerusalem. It's possible that he is now introducing these foreign gods to Israel as a way of showing his allegiance to the Assyrians and the Syrians.

Uriah the priest built the altar, he is mentioned as a witness in Isaiah 8:2, but make no mistake about it, by building this altar, he was demonstrating how evil as a priest he really was. He should have refused to build it, just as Azariah did when he refused to obey the king, 1 Chronicles 26:17.

The bronze altar was the original bronze altar found within the temple, Exodus 25:40 / Exodus 26:30 / 1 Chronicles 28:19. It wasn't destroyed as some commentators suggest, Jeremiah 52:17-20, but it appears that all of its purposes were transferred to the new altar designed after Ahaz's orders.

It appears that the original bronze altar now has second place, in the eyes of Ahaz, he moves it to a place where he can inquire of the Lord, Ezekiel 21:36.

After Tiglath-Pileser defeated both Syria and the northern kingdom, Judah was subject to pay tribute. However, despite God sending a warning through the prophets, continued to be arrogant.

He blatantly carries on building altars to false gods and he blatantly encourages the people to be apostates. He brings Judah into such a spiritual state, that even the people wouldn't bury him in the tombs of the kings when he died.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'His adoption of the Syrian gods, Hadad, Rimmon, and others, as objects of worship, no doubt preceded the destruction of Damascus by the Assyrians, 2 Kings 16:9.'

Ahaz was arguably the worst of Judah and after his death, his son, Hezekiah, now becomes king.

CHAPTER 29

‘Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother’s name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done.’ 2 Chronicles 29:1-2

HEZEKIAH PURIFIES THE TEMPLE

Whilst the Northern Kingdom of Israel was taken into captivity, 2 Kings 17:5, Hezekiah now becomes king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah at the age of twenty-five. His mother was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah, who is probably the person mentioned by Isaiah, as a ‘faithful witness’, Isaiah 8:2.

He reigned for twenty-nine years, from 716 B.C. to 687 B.C. When we read Isaiah 36-37, we soon discover that we have a parallel account of what we have recorded here in 2 Kings 18 and 2 Kings 19, it’s almost word for word. Hezekiah did what was right in the eyes of God, he trusted God and restored Judah back to God. He also made reforms in the cities, but also in the rural areas as he removed the high places of the false gods by destroying them, 2 Kings 18:4 / 2 Chronicles 31:20-21.

‘In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the temple of the LORD and repaired them. He brought in the priests and the Levites, assembled them in the square on the east side and said: “Listen to me, Levites! Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the temple of the LORD, the God of your ancestors. Remove all defilement from the sanctuary. Our parents were unfaithful; they did evil in the eyes of the LORD our God and forsook him. They turned their faces away from the LORD’s dwelling place and turned their backs on him. They also shut the doors of the portico and put out the lamps. They did not burn incense or present any burnt offerings at the sanctuary to the God of Israel. Therefore, the anger of the LORD has fallen on Judah and Jerusalem; he has made them an object of dread and horror and scorn, as you can see with your own eyes. This is why our fathers have fallen by the sword and why our sons and daughters and our wives are in captivity. Now I intend to make a covenant with the LORD, the God of Israel, so that his fierce anger will turn away from us. My sons, do not be negligent now, for the LORD has chosen you to stand before him and serve him, to minister before him and to burn incense.” Then these Levites set to work: from the Kohathites, Mahath son of Amasai and Joel son of Azariah; from the Merarites, Kish son of Abdi and Azariah son of Jehallelel; from the Gershonites, Joah son of Zimmah and Eden son of Joah; from the descendants of Elizaphan, Shimri and Jeiel; from the descendants of Asaph, Zechariah and Mattaniah; from the descendants of Heman, Jehiel and Shimei; from the descendants of Jeduthun, Shemaiah and Uzziel. When they had assembled their fellow Levites and consecrated themselves, they went in to purify the temple of the LORD, as the king had ordered, following the word of the LORD. The priests went into the sanctuary of the LORD to purify it. They brought out to the courtyard of the LORD’s temple everything unclean that they found in the temple of the LORD. The Levites took it and carried it out to the Kidron Valley. They began the consecration on the first day of the first month, and by the eighth day of the month they reached the portico of the LORD. For eight more days they consecrated the temple of the LORD itself, finishing on the sixteenth day of the first month. Then they went in to King Hezekiah and reported: “We have purified the entire temple of the LORD, the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the table for setting out the consecrated bread, with all its articles. We have prepared and consecrated all the articles that King Ahaz removed in his unfaithfulness while he was king. They are now in front of the LORD’s altar.” 2 Chronicles 29:3-19

Whitcomb, in his commentary, gives us a detailed account of exactly what Hezekiah did.

1. He opened the temple doors which Ahaz had closed, 2 Chronicles 28:24 / 2 Chronicles 29:3.
2. He ordered the cleansing of the temple, 2 Chronicles 29:4-19.
3. He offered appropriate sacrifices, 2 Chronicles 29:20-36.
4. He invited Israelites of every tribe to come to Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 30:5-12.

5. He also celebrated a Passover that had to be delayed a month to allow the worshippers to become clean, 2 Chronicles 30:1-12.

Hezekiah set the example for others by destroying the bronze serpent of Moses known as Nehushtan when it became an idol, 2 Kings 18:4.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the altar.

‘But does not 2 Kings 16:14-16 state that Ahaz himself made offerings on that special altar? Yes, indeed, but there is no contradiction here. The Chronicler is merely telling us, and those Levites, that those sacrifices that Ahaz offered on an Assyrian altar, were, in no sense, offered unto the God of Israel, but were actually sacrifices to Assyrian gods.’ In doing all these things, he did what the kings before him failed to achieve, Isaiah 52:11. No wonder the Lord was with Hezekiah, he was committed to serving God and restoring the people of Judah back to God and God was committed to being with him.

‘Early the next morning King Hezekiah gathered the city officials together and went up to the temple of the LORD. They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven male lambs and seven male goats as a sin offering for the kingdom, for the sanctuary and for Judah. The king commanded the priests, the descendants of Aaron, to offer these on the altar of the LORD. So they slaughtered the bulls, and the priests took the blood and splashed it against the altar; next they slaughtered the rams and splashed their blood against the altar; then they slaughtered the lambs and splashed their blood against the altar. The goats for the sin offering were brought before the king and the assembly, and they laid their hands on them. The priests then slaughtered the goats and presented their blood on the altar for a sin offering to atone for all Israel, because the king had ordered the burnt offering and the sin offering for all Israel. He stationed the Levites in the temple of the LORD with cymbals, harps and lyres in the way prescribed by David and Gad the king’s seer and Nathan the prophet; this was commanded by the LORD through his prophets. So the Levites stood ready with David’s instruments, and the priests with their trumpets. Hezekiah gave the order to sacrifice the burnt offering on the altar. As the offering began, singing to the LORD began also, accompanied by trumpets and the instruments of David king of Israel. The whole assembly bowed in worship, while the musicians played and the trumpets sounded. All this continued until the sacrifice of the burnt offering was completed. When the offerings were finished, the king and everyone present with him knelt down and worshiped. King Hezekiah and his officials ordered the Levites to praise the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness and bowed down and worshiped.’ 2 Chronicles 29:20-30

After the temple had been cleaned up and cleansed, those who were responsible for the ministry of the temple service were back at work and so, the offerings were instituted again with the ministry of the priests.

Coffman, in his commentary, points out the following.

1. The wrath of Jehovah was upon Judah, 2 Chronicles 29:8. This word, ‘wrath’ is used in Deuteronomy 28:25, where Moses had predicted this very disaster that befell Judah.
2. For Jehovah hath chosen you, 2 Chronicles 29:11. This is stated in Numbers 3:6 / Numbers 8:6 and Deuteronomy 10:8.
3. They brought seven bullocks, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven he-goats for a sin-offering for the Kingdom, 2 Chronicles 29:21. The use of these animals for that purpose was authorized in Leviticus 1:3f / Leviticus 14:20 and Leviticus 16:24. Seven victims were offered because seven was a sacred number.
4. The use of seven victims instead of one in certain sacrifices was authorized in Numbers 28:11ff.
5. The priests received the blood and sprinkled it upon the altar, 2 Chronicles 29:22. The ritual for this action is found in the law of Moses in Exodus 29:16 and Leviticus 1:5 / Leviticus 1:11.
6. The king and the assembly laid their hands upon them, the sacrifices, 2 Chronicles 29:23. This ceremony is described in Leviticus 1:4.
7. And they made a sin-offering with their blood upon the altar, 2 Chronicles 29:24. In Leviticus 4:25 / Leviticus 4:34 is found the description of exactly how this was done.

8. Come near, and bring thank-offerings into the house of Jehovah, 2 Chronicles 29:31. The thanksgiving here was for the joy over the renewal of the worship of Jehovah. Instructions for the offerings and ceremonies for such an occasion are found in Leviticus 7:12ff.

9. The burnt offerings, with the fat of the peace offerings, and with the drink offerings for every burnt offering, so the service for the house of Jehovah was set in order, 2 Chronicles 29:35. The drink offerings were of wine and probably poured like the blood at the base of the altar. Very complete and detailed instructions for these sacrifices, including the drink offerings, are found in Numbers 15:1-15.

Hezekiah undone everything Ahaz had done and now he is ready to start working on reforming the ears outside of Jerusalem.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, concerning, the offering to atone for all of Israel.

‘Hezekiah aimed at reuniting once more the whole people of Israel, if not into a single state, yet, at any rate, into a single religious communion. The northern kingdom was in a condition approaching to anarchy. The end was evidently approaching. Hoshea, the king contemporary with Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18:1, ruled, not as an independent monarch, but as an Assyrian feudatory, 2 Kings 17:3. Under these circumstances Hezekiah designed to invite the revolted tribes to return, if not to their old temporal, at least to their old spiritual, allegiance, 2 Chronicles 30:5-10. In order, therefore, to prepare the way for this return, he included ‘all Israel’ in the expiatory sacrifice, by which he prefaced his restoration of the old worship.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the use of musical instruments, 2 Chronicles 29:25.

‘This is the passage in the Old Testament which is supposed to justify the use of mechanical instruments of music in the ancient worship of the Jews; but it should be observed that the commandment which is here said to have come from God is not specifically identified in this key sentence and the Syriac and Arabic versions in this place do not support what is written here. Both those versions make the commandment which came of God through his prophets applicable exclusively to the order that the Levites should praise God; And the Hebrew text certainly supports such a rendition. Note that there is a distinction made in this very passage between the instruments of David, 2 Chronicles 29:26, and the song of Jehovah, 2 Chronicles 29:27.’

‘Then Hezekiah said, “You have now dedicated yourselves to the LORD. Come and bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the temple of the LORD.” So the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and all whose hearts were willing brought burnt offerings. The number of burnt offerings the assembly brought was seventy bulls, a hundred rams and two hundred male lambs—all of them for burnt offerings to the LORD. The animals consecrated as sacrifices amounted to six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep and goats. The priests, however, were too few to skin all the burnt offerings; so their relatives the Levites helped them until the task was finished and until other priests had been consecrated, for the Levites had been more conscientious in consecrating themselves than the priests had been. There were burnt offerings in abundance, together with the fat of the fellowship offerings and the drink offerings that accompanied the burnt offerings. So the service of the temple of the LORD was re-established. Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced at what God had brought about for his people, because it was done so quickly.’ 2 Chronicles 29:31-36

The offerings which were brought for eating, were brought for the priests and Levites, however, there were so many animals brought that the priests couldn’t prepare all the animals for cooking. Therefore, the Levites helped in the preparation of the animals.

Notice before Hezekiah could bring reformation to the country, he first had to put God’s house, that is, the temple in order. The priests and Levites had to assume their responsibilities and 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.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, 2 Chronicles 29:34.

‘Urijah, the high priest, had participated to some extent in the impieties of Ahaz, 2 Kings 16:10-16. He and many of the priests may, therefore, have looked coldly on the reforming zeal of Hezekiah.’

Hezekiah first led the leaders in a spiritual restoration, and then he led the leaders to restore as many as possible of his fellow Israelites. The result of all these things being done was an acknowledgement that only God could make all this happen so quickly and everyone rejoiced.

CHAPTER 30

‘Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, inviting them to come to the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel. The king and his officials and the whole assembly in Jerusalem decided to celebrate the Passover in the second month. They had not been able to celebrate it at the regular time because not enough priests had consecrated themselves and the people had not assembled in Jerusalem. The plan seemed right both to the king and to the whole assembly. They decided to send a proclamation throughout Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, calling the people to come to Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel. It had not been celebrated in large numbers according to what was written. At the king’s command, couriers went throughout Israel and Judah with letters from the king and from his officials, which read: “People of Israel, return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, that he may return to you who are left, who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. Do not be like your parents and your fellow Israelites, who were unfaithful to the LORD, the God of their ancestors, so that he made them an object of horror, as you see. Do not be stiff-necked, as your ancestors were; submit to the LORD. Come to his sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever. Serve the LORD your God, so that his fierce anger will turn away from you. If you return to the LORD, then your fellow Israelites and your children will be shown compassion by their captors and will return to this land, for the LORD your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him.”

2 Chronicles 30:1-9

HEZEKIAH CELEBRATES THE PASSOVER

Hezekiah sends out an invitation to all of Israel and Judah and even wrote a letter of invitation to Ephraim and Manasseh to come to Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover.

Hezekiah’s invitation 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.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This wonderful invitation from Hezekiah is a remarkable testimony. It came following the fall of Northern Israel to Assyria in 722 B.C., a disaster that Hezekiah attributed to their forsaking the true worship of God in Jerusalem. This is proof that long before the times of Josiah God had commanded the centralization of his worship in Jerusalem.’

Some commentators suggest that Hezekiah appears to have been so eager about gathering the people together to celebrate the Passover, that he actually violated God’s law.

Notice he wants everyone to celebrate the Passover in the second month, whilst God said it should be celebrated in the first month, Exodus 12:1-3 / Deuteronomy 16:1.

We must note that Passover was to be celebrated in the first month, Numbers 9:1-5, but there were times when it could be celebrated in the second month, Numbers 9:5-14.

Notice also the priests of Judah and Jerusalem hadn't bothered to sanctify themselves for the legal Passover a month earlier.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'It was, therefore, determined to defer it to the 14th of the second month, which allowed time for the priests generally to purify themselves, and for the proclamation of the festival to be made throughout all Israel.'

Because the Passover hadn't been celebrated for such a long time, Exodus 23:14-17, Hezekiah wanted to put things right again.

'The couriers went from town to town in Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun, but people scorned and ridiculed them. Nevertheless, some from Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and went to Jerusalem. Also in Judah the hand of God was on the people to give them unity of mind to carry out what the king and his officials had ordered, following the word of the LORD.' 2 Chronicles 30:10-12

Notice that the couriers were scorned and ridiculed by some people when they were given the invitation to come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. This tells just how far from God and His ways, some of those in the Northern Kingdom had gone. Their relationship with Him simply didn't exist anymore.

However, some from the tribes of Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun came to Jerusalem, believing that their brethren who had been taken captive would return from captivity if they repented, Exodus 34:6. Notice they humbled themselves, this tells us that at least some in the Northern Kingdom still wanted to serve God and live by His will.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Five of the ten tribes certainly sent representatives. Two, Reuben and Gad were in captivity. One, Dan was absorbed into Judah. Simeon and Naphtali, which alone remained, seem to have been more than ordinarily idolatrous, 2 Chronicles 34:6.'

'A very large crowd of people assembled in Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread in the second month. They removed the altars in Jerusalem and cleared away the incense altars and threw them into the Kidron Valley. They slaughtered the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the second month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed and consecrated themselves and brought burnt offerings to the temple of the LORD. Then they took up their regular positions as prescribed in the Law of Moses the man of God. The priests splashed against the altar the blood handed to them by the Levites. Since many in the crowd had not consecrated themselves, the Levites had to kill the Passover lambs for all those who were not ceremonially clean and could not consecrate their lambs to the LORD.

Although most of the many people who came from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover, contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "May the LORD, who is good, pardon everyone who sets their heart on seeking God—the LORD, the God of their ancestors—even if they are not clean according to the rules of the sanctuary." And the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people. The Israelites who were present in Jerusalem celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great rejoicing, while the Levites and priests praised the LORD every day with resounding instruments dedicated to the LORD. Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites, who showed good understanding of the service of the LORD. For the seven days they ate their assigned portion and offered fellowship offerings and praised the LORD, the God of their ancestors. The whole assembly then agreed to celebrate the festival seven more days; so for another seven days they celebrated joyfully. Hezekiah king of Judah provided a thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep and goats for the assembly, and the officials provided them with a thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep and goats. A great number of priests consecrated themselves. The entire assembly of Judah rejoiced, along with the priests and Levites and all who had assembled from Israel, including the foreigners who had come from Israel and also those who resided in Judah. There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the days of Solomon son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. The priests and the Levites stood to bless the people, and God heard them, for their prayer reached heaven, his holy dwelling place.' 2 Chronicles 30:13-27

A large crowd gathered to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread, Exodus 12:18, this festival followed the eating of the Passover lamb. They removed the altars in Jerusalem, these altars would have been the altars which were used for Baal worship.

They slaughtered the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the second month, as God instructed Moses, Numbers 9:5-14.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The priests in their place, and the Levites in theirs, in which they were ordered to stand when they offered sacrifice, the priests sprinkled the blood, which they received of the hand of the Levites, the blood either of the burnt offerings before mentioned, or of the Passover lambs, which the Levites slew, and received the blood of them in basins and which the priests took of them, and sprinkled, not on the doorposts of houses, as in Egypt, but on the altar round about, and which none but priests might do, Leviticus 1:5.’

Notice that not only was the temple cleansed, but also the whole city of Jerusalem was cleansed, however, because this whole celebration was organised so quickly, a lot of people were still unclean and so because they were unclean, they couldn’t eat the Passover, John 18:28.

In Hezekiah’s prayer, we learn that 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. When God heard Hezekiah’s prayer, we read that God ‘healed’ the people, for this very special occasion, Matthew 12:1-8.

They sacrificed their offering to God and made confessions, which could be either confessing their sins, Leviticus 5:5 / Leviticus 16:21, or confessing God’s greatness, 1 Chronicles 16:8 / 1 Chronicles 16:24.

The celebrations lasted a total of fourteen days, this was one of the few times when Israel was actually united as the twelve tribes again. There was great joy in Jerusalem and nothing like this had happened since the days Solomon finished the construction of the temple around 230 years ago.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was a voluntary addition to the requirements of the Law, the fruit and sign of the abounding zeal which characterized the time. Hezekiah and the princes probably proposed it to the people, and presented them with sacrificial animals.’

After blessing the people, Numbers 6:22-27, and despite being the temple, the priests and the Levites knew that God didn’t dwell within it, they knew that God dwelt in heaven, hence why the text said, their prayer reached heaven.

CHAPTER 31

‘When all this had ended, the Israelites who were there went out to the towns of Judah, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. They destroyed the high places and the altars throughout Judah and Benjamin and in Ephraim and Manasseh. After they had destroyed all of them, the Israelites returned to their own towns and to their own property.’ 2 Chronicles 31:1

After celebrating the Passover in the previous chapter, Hezekiah now gets down to some serious business of removing all the idolatrous sacred stones and Asherah poles through the land of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh, 2 Chronicles 29:15-19 / 2 Chronicles 30:14 / 2 Kings 18:4 / 2 Kings 18:22.

This was a joint effort which we haven’t seen up to this point, which tells us that the celebrating of the Passover, must have seriously moved people’s hearts toward God and His ways.

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR WORSHIP

‘Hezekiah assigned the priests and Levites to divisions—each of them according to their duties as priests or Levites—to offer burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, to minister, to give thanks and to sing praises at the gates of the LORD’s dwelling. The king contributed from his own possessions for the morning and evening burnt offerings and for the burnt offerings on the Sabbaths, at the New Moons and at the appointed festivals as written in the Law of the LORD. He ordered the people living in Jerusalem to give the portion due the priests and Levites so they could devote themselves to the Law of the LORD. As soon as the order went out, the Israelites generously gave the firstfruits of their grain, new wine, olive oil and honey and all that the fields produced. They brought a great amount, a tithe of everything. The people of Israel and Judah who lived in the towns of Judah also brought a tithe of their herds and flocks and a tithe of the holy things dedicated to the LORD their God, and they piled them in heaps. They began doing this in the third month and finished in the seventh month. When Hezekiah and his officials came and saw the heaps, they praised the LORD and blessed his people Israel. Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites about the heaps; and Azariah the chief priest, from the family of Zadok, answered, “Since the people began to bring their contributions to the temple of the LORD, we have had enough to eat and plenty to spare, because the LORD has blessed his people, and this great amount is left over.” Hezekiah gave orders to prepare storerooms in the temple of the LORD, and this was done. Then they faithfully brought in the contributions, tithes and dedicated gifts. Konaniah, a Levite, was the overseer in charge of these things, and his brother Shimei was next in rank. Jehiel, Azariah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismakiah, Mahath and Benaiah were assistants of Konaniah and Shimei his brother. All these served by appointment of King Hezekiah and Azariah the official in charge of the temple of God. Kore son of Imnah the Levite, keeper of the East Gate, was in charge of the freewill offerings given to God, distributing the contributions made to the LORD and also the consecrated gifts. Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah and Shekaniah assisted him faithfully in the towns of the priests, distributing to their fellow priests according to their divisions, old and young alike. In addition, they distributed to the males three years old or more whose names were in the genealogical records—all who would enter the temple of the LORD to perform the daily duties of their various tasks, according to their responsibilities and their divisions. And they distributed to the priests enrolled by their families in the genealogical records and likewise to the Levites twenty years old or more, according to their responsibilities and their divisions. They included all the little ones, the wives, and the sons and daughters of the whole community listed in these genealogical records. For they were faithful in consecrating themselves. As for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who lived on the farmlands around their towns or in any other towns, men were designated by name to distribute portions to every male among them and to all who were recorded in the genealogies of the Levites. This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah, doing what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God. In everything that he undertook in the service of God’s temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered.’ 2 Chronicles 31:2-21

Hezekiah’s next move was to organize 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 to the people.

In order to encourage the priests and Levites, they were to devote themselves to work in the temple and teach God’s law, [2 Chronicles 17:7-9](#) / [Nehemiah 13:10-14](#) / [1 Timothy 5:17-18](#).

Gill, in his commentary, says the following.

‘For the burnt offerings, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, the daily sacrifice offered morning and evening, which had been neglected, but now revived and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and the new moons, and for the set feasts, when beside the daily sacrifice there were additional ones, as it is written in the law of the Lord, [Numbers 28:9](#).’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, concerning Azariah the chief priest.

‘If this Azariah was the same as he who resisted Uzziah, [2 Chronicles 26:17-20](#), he must have held his office at least 33 years, [2 Chronicles 27:1](#) / [2 Chronicles 28:1](#).’

Coffman, in commentary, says the following.

‘This paragraph, [2 Chronicles 31:2-10](#), pictures Hezekiah, not only as a second Solomon, but as a second David. There was a wholesale reordering of the religious life and personnel of Israel. The freedom provided by these events

gave the Levites time to devote themselves to the Law of Jehovah, thus making it absolutely certain that during the times of Josiah, less than seventy-five years later, there would be countless persons left in Israel who were thoroughly familiar with the entire Mosaic covenant and the precious ‘Book of Moses’ that attended it.’

Notice that Hezekiah himself gave an offering, which would set the example for everyone else. As a way of encouraging the priests and Levites, he commands that everyone who lives in Jerusalem should also contribute, Numbers 18:21-24, and notice the result when the people willingly gave, 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 / 2 Corinthians 9, the priests and the Levites were greatly encouraged.

They brought tithes, Numbers 18:12-13, tithes of oxen, and sheep, which was in accordance with the law, Leviticus 27:32 / Leviticus 27:30-33 / Numbers 18:31.

When Hezekiah saw the heaps, he simply praised God for working in the hearts of all those who willingly gave support for the priests and Levites, Deuteronomy 12:19 / Deuteronomy 14:22-29.

The distribution of the freewill offerings was well organized, Leviticus 6:25 / Leviticus 7:1-6, as certain people were chosen to ensure the offerings were evenly distributed between the priests and the Levites, Acts 6:1-7.

Gill, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As to the priests registered according to their families from the age before observed, a portion was given so to the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, in their charges, by their courses, for though originally they were not admitted into the tabernacle till twenty-five years of age, nor to officiate till thirty, but in David’s time they were allowed at twenty years of age and upwards, 1 Chronicles 23:24.’

The towns of the priests were actually the Levitical cities. While some had gone into decay, others, as Libnah and Beth-Shemesh, 2 Chronicles 21:10 / 2 Chronicles 28:18, had been lost, so that the original number, thirteen, was now, apparently, reduced to six.

Hezekiah sought God and worked wholeheartedly, in other words, he was totally committed to God and doing His will, 1 Chronicles 22:19 / 1 Chronicles 28:9 / 2 Chronicles 15:17 / 2 Chronicles 22:29 / 2 Chronicles 11:16 / 2 Chronicles 19:3 / Matthew 22:37, and the reward was prosperity.

CHAPTER 32

‘After all that Hezekiah had so faithfully done, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah. He laid siege to the fortified cities, thinking to conquer them for himself. When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and that he intended to wage war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his officials and military staff about blocking off the water from the springs outside the city, and they helped him. They gathered a large group of people who blocked all the springs and the stream that flowed through the land. “Why should the kings of Assyria come and find plenty of water?” they said. Then he worked hard repairing all the broken sections of the wall and building towers on it. He built another wall outside that one and reinforced the terraces of the City of David. He also made large numbers of weapons and shields. He appointed military officers over the people and assembled them before him in the square at the city gate and encouraged them with these words: “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles.” And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said.’ 2 Chronicles 32:1-8

SENNACHERIB THREATENS JERUSALEM

The pulpit commentary, says the following, concerning this chapter.

‘This chapter of thirty-three verses is paralleled by the sixty-one verses that begin with 2 Kings 18:13 and end with 2 Kings 19:37, and by Isaiah 36:1-22 / Isaiah 37:1-38. Our chapter gives, as might be anticipated, but a very partial and somewhat broken account, therefore, of this stretch of Hezekiah’s career, and no adequate impression whatever of the great power of some portions of the parallel. A close comparison of the two places leaves us tolerably clear as to the order and consecutiveness of the history, although perhaps not entirely so. The style of our present chapter betrays the usual marks of disjointedness, in the case of extracts from fuller history, in the indefiniteness of its connecting phrases, found, e.g. in Isaiah 37:1 / Isaiah 37:9 / Isaiah 37:24 / Isaiah 37:31. Our compiler, by omission, seems to shield Hezekiah, probably designedly, from the disrepute that must be felt to attach to his want of faith, courage, and fidelity in his trusteeship of the sacred property of the temple as indicated by what is written in 2 Kings 18:14-16.’

Sennacherib came and entered Judah, 2 Kings 18:13-16, tells us that Hezekiah unwisely tried to bribe Sennacherib with gold and treasures from the temple. This didn’t work and so, and after conquering almost all the fortified cities of Judah, Sennacherib prepared to set a siege against Jerusalem, 2 Kings 18-20.

When Hezekiah found out that Sennacherib had come to wage war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his officials and military staff about blocking off the water from the springs outside the city.

Because Jerusalem’s water supply was open to any attack, and since it was dependent on two springs, Hezekiah’s plan was twofold, to hide the springs outside the city in order to distress the Assyrians, and to convey their water underground into the city, in order to increase his own supply during the siege.

Hezekiah rebuilds the broken parts of the wall, which had obviously been neglected over time, 2 Chronicles 28:1-10, and he pulls down houses to use the material to help towards repairing the wall, Isaiah 22:10. Hezekiah encourages everyone to be strong and courageous and not to be afraid or dismayed, Isaiah 22:5-13 / Isaiah 29:3.

Notice he says, what Elisha the prophet said, ‘there is a greater power with us than with him’, 2 Kings 6:16. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was soon proved to be true by the slaughter made by the angel of the Lord in the Assyrian camp, 2 Kings 19:35.’

Hezekiah’s faith is seen when he says concerning Sennacherib, ‘with him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles’. 2 Kings 18:14-16.

‘Later, when Sennacherib king of Assyria and all his forces were laying siege to Lachish, he sent his officers to Jerusalem with this message for Hezekiah king of Judah and for all the people of Judah who were there: “This is what Sennacherib king of Assyria says: On what are you basing your confidence, that you remain in Jerusalem under siege? When Hezekiah says, ‘The LORD our God will save us from the hand of the king of Assyria,’ he is misleading you, to let you die of hunger and thirst. Did not Hezekiah himself remove this god’s high places and altars, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, ‘You must worship before one altar and burn sacrifices on it’? “Do you not know what I and my predecessors have done to all the peoples of the other lands? Were the gods of those nations ever able to deliver their land from my hand? Who of all the gods of these nations that my predecessors destroyed has been able to save his people from me? How then can your god deliver you from my hand? Now do not let Hezekiah deceive you and mislead you like this. Do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or the hand of my predecessors. How much less will your god deliver you from my hand!”

Sennacherib’s officers spoke further against the LORD God and against his servant Hezekiah. The king also wrote letters ridiculing the LORD, the God of Israel, and saying this against him: “Just as the gods of the peoples of the other lands did not rescue their people from my hand, so the god of Hezekiah will not rescue his people from my hand.” Then they called out in Hebrew to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to terrify them and make them afraid in order to capture the city. They spoke about the God of Jerusalem as they did about the gods of the other peoples of the world—the work of human hands. King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz cried out in prayer to heaven about this. And the LORD sent an angel, who annihilated all the fighting men and the commanders and officers in the camp of the Assyrian king. So he withdrew to his own land in disgrace. And when he went into the temple of his god, some of his sons, his own flesh and blood, cut him down with the sword. So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand

of all others. He took care of them on every side. Many brought offerings to Jerusalem for the LORD and valuable gifts for Hezekiah king of Judah. From then on he was highly regarded by all the nations.’ 2 Chronicles 32:9-23

While most of Sennacherib’s army was busy laying siege at Lachish, he sent some men to Jerusalem to prepare for the siege, 2 Kings 18:17-19.

Gill, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was after Hezekiah had given him a large quantity of silver and gold to depart, and he did depart from him, 2 Kings 18:14, but he himself laid siege against Lachish, and all his power with him, one of the cities of Judah, Isaiah 36:2, from hence he dispatched them unto Hezekiah king of Judah, and unto all Judah that were at Jerusalem, who had retired thither for safety, upon the invasion of their country by the king of Assyria.’

Notice Sennacherib’s officers, 2 Kings 18:17, are trying to use psychological warfare, they try and get the people to stop trusting Hezekiah and stop strutting in God.

It appears that Sennacherib knew all the reforms Hezekiah was doing, which included the removal of the high places, 2 Kings 18:3-4.

Notice how arrogant Sennacherib’s officers were, they basically boast about everything they have done in other lands, they say that their god is greater than any other god, and they say Israel’s god won’t be able to save them.

However, they continue to speak against God and Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18:1 / Isaiah 36:1. Notice also that arrogant Sennacherib also wrote a letter, ridiculing God, saying that the god of Hezekiah won’t be able to save Israel, 2 Kings 19:9.

The psychological ridicule continues as the officers cry out to those on the wall, speaking in Hebrew, Isaiah 36:11.

They did this to frighten Israel and cause confusion among the Israelites in an effort to take the city.

The ridicule continued as they spoke against God, in other words, they couldn’t see any difference between Israel’s God and any other god, Isaiah 36:19.

Hezekiah and Isaiah now cry out to God in prayer, 2 Kings 19:1-5 / Isaiah 37:15-20. We don’t read here the actual prayer of Isaiah but there’s little doubt he prayed too.

Isaiah received a message from God, which he sent to Hezekiah, 2 Kings 19:6-7 / Isaiah 37:4. The Lord send an angel, Isaiah 36:1 and 185,000 died at the hand of the angel of God in one night, 2 Kings 19:35.

After this retreat from Judah, Sennacherib commissioned a record, which is preserved in the spectacular Annals of Sennacherib. One of the most significant discoveries that have been made was the discovery of the Sennacherib Prism. This six-sided hexagonal clay prism, commonly known as the Taylor Prism, was discovered among the ruins of Nineveh, the ancient capital of the Assyrian Empire.

It contains the Annals of Sennacherib himself, the Assyrian king who had besieged Jerusalem in 701 BC during the reign of King Hezekiah. On the prism, Sennacherib boasts that he shut up ‘Hezekiah the Judahite’ within Jerusalem his own royal city ‘like a caged bird’.

However, he never claims to have conquered Jerusalem. This prism is among the three accounts discovered so far which have been left by the Assyrian monarch of his campaign against Israel and Judah.

Notice that sometime after he returned home, his own sons killed him. God had taken care of Israel, He protected them and gave them the victory. Offerings were made to the lord and gifts were brought for Hezekiah because the people knew that God was with him.

HEZEKIAH’S PRIDE, SUCCESS AND DEATH

‘In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. He prayed to the LORD, who answered him and gave him a miraculous sign. But Hezekiah’s heart was proud and he did not respond to the kindness shown him; therefore the LORD’s wrath was on him and on Judah and Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah repented of the pride of his heart, as did the people of Jerusalem; therefore the LORD’s wrath did not come on them during the days of Hezekiah.

Hezekiah had very great wealth and honour, and he made treasuries for his silver and gold and for his precious stones, spices, shields and all kinds of valuables. He also made buildings to store the harvest of grain, new wine and olive oil; and he made stalls for various kinds of cattle, and pens for the flocks. He built villages and acquired great numbers of flocks and herds, for God had given him very great riches. It was Hezekiah who blocked the upper outlet of the Gihon spring and channelled the water down to the west side of the City of David. He succeeded in everything he undertook. But when envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart. The other events of Hezekiah’s reign and his acts of devotion are written in the vision of the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. Hezekiah rested with his ancestors and was buried on the hill where the tombs of David’s descendants are. All Judah and the people of Jerusalem honoured him when he died. And Manasseh his son succeeded him as king.’ 2 Chronicles 32:24-33

Hezekiah became ill at the time of the Assyrian invasion of Judah, 2 Kings 20:1-21, it was during this time he received a sign from God. The sign wasn’t a miraculous cure but the going back of the shadow on the dial of Ahaz, 2 Chronicles 32:31 / Isaiah 38:1-39:8.

Hezekiah became proud, and his pride is seen in his unnecessarily showing off his treasures to the ambassadors from Babylon, 2 Kings 20:13.

Sometimes he used his riches for good purposes, 2 Chronicles 31:3, but other times he used his wealth foolishly, 2 Kings 20:12-21. In this case, the very same people he showed them to, would remove them from him, 2 Kings 20:12-21.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following, concerning Hezekiah’s wealth.

‘There can be no wonder that Hezekiah’s wealth was so great, because the death of that immense army, 185,000 men of Sennacherib made all of their personal possessions the spoil for Hezekiah, as well as all of the vast treasures they had looted from Lachish and the other destroyed cities of Judah. History hardly affords another example of so great a windfall. No wonder he had to make a treasury for shields, etc.’

As a result, God’s wrath came upon him, 2 Kings 20:17-18.

Wiseman, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the tunnel, 2 Kings 20:21-22.

‘This tunnel, found in 1880, was cut for 643 metres to cover a direct distance of 332 metres to enable the defenders to fetch water within the protective walls even during a siege.’

Notice that Hezekiah appears to have humbled himself, but the judgment for his pride, didn’t come when he was alive, it would come later during the days of his sons, 2 Kings 20:19 / Isaiah 39:5-7.

Everything Hezekiah did was written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, Isaiah 1:1 / Isaiah 36:1, they are also written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel, 2 Kings 18:1.

He was buried on the hill where the tombs of David’s descendants are, 2 Chronicles 33:20 / 2 Kings 21:18 / 2 Kings 21:26 / 2 Kings 23:30.

All Judah and the people of Jerusalem honoured him and Manasseh, his son, takes over and reigns as king of Judah.

CHAPTER 33

‘Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had demolished; he also erected altars to the Baals and made Asherah

poles. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them. He built altars in the temple of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “My Name will remain in Jerusalem forever.” In both courts of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to all the starry hosts. He sacrificed his children in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced divination and witchcraft, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, arousing his anger. He took the image he had made and put it in God’s temple, of which God had said to David and to his son Solomon, “In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever. I will not again make the feet of the Israelites leave the land I assigned to your ancestors, if only they will be careful to do everything I commanded them concerning all the laws, decrees and regulations given through Moses.” But Manasseh led Judah and the people of Jerusalem astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites.’ 2 Chronicles 33:1-9

MANASSEH KING OF JUDAH

Manasseh was the longest-reigning king of Judah and he reigned from 687 to 642 B.C., but reigned together with his father, Hezekiah, from about 696 to 687 B.C.

2 Kings 21:1-9, tells us that Hezekiah named his son Manasseh, possibly because God helped him forget his illness. The name Manasseh means ‘forget’, Genesis 41:51.

He became king when he was only twelve years old and reigned for fifty-five years, which means he was the longest-reigning king of Judah after the division of Israel during the reign of Rehoboam.

He didn’t start off well as the king, because he did evil in God’s eyes by getting involved in idolatry, witchcraft and child sacrifice, 2 Kings 21:1-9. He basically undone everything his father, Hezekiah had achieved to keep Judah right with God.

He built altars in God’s temple, erected altars to Baal, made an Asherah pole, 2 Kings 21:7 / Ezekiel 8:3 / Ezekiel 8:5 / Jude 1:4, worshipped the starry hosts, Deuteronomy 4:19 / Acts 7:42-43.

He also sacrificed his own son through the fire, 2 Chronicles 33:6, tells us ‘he sacrificed his children in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom.’ In other words, he sacrificed several of his children to Molek.

Manasseh totally took the people away from God to such an extent that Judah was worse than the nations that God had destroyed before, Genesis 15:16.

‘The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. So the LORD brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. In his distress, he sought the favour of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God.’ 2 Chronicles 33:10-13

Manasseh totally disobeyed God and commands, and because he and the people wouldn’t listen to God or obey His ways, 2 Kings 21:9-10.

Whilst he reigned Judah was subjected to Assyria, who eventually placed him in prison in Babylon. He had a hook put through his nose and he was bound with bronze shackles, 2 Kings 25:7.

It appears the only thing that would get him back on track with God was to spend some time in captivity. After praying to God, humbling himself and repenting of his sinfulness, he went back to Jerusalem to begin a campaign to get God’s people back on track with God, but that didn’t last long. The good news in all of this was the Israelites never again got involved in worshipping false gods.

‘Afterward he rebuilt the outer wall of the City of David, west of the Gihon spring in the valley, as far as the entrance of the Fish Gate and encircling the hill of Ophel; he also made it much higher. He stationed military commanders in all the fortified cities in Judah. He got rid of the foreign gods and removed the image from the temple of the LORD, as well as all the altars he had built on the temple hill and in Jerusalem; and he threw them out of the city. Then he restored the altar of the LORD and sacrificed fellowship offerings and thank offerings on it, and told Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel. The people, however, continued to sacrifice at the high places, but only to the LORD their God.’ 2 Chronicles 33:14-17

Manasseh now begins to rebuild the outer wall of Jerusalem, [Nehemiah 3:15](#), but makes it higher, he gets rid of all the foreign gods and removed all the images and altars and threw them outside the city.

After restoring the altar of the LORD, they offered fellowship and thanks offering sacrifices on the altar and encouraging the people to serve God, the God of Israel.

Notice, however, that he didn’t get rid of the high places, and so, the people continued to sacrifice in those high places, but only to God. It appears that Manasseh could only undo some of the evil practices that he had done before his repentance.

‘The other events of Manasseh’s reign, including his prayer to his God and the words the seers spoke to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, are written in the annals of the kings of Israel. His prayer and how God was moved by his entreaty, as well as all his sins and unfaithfulness, and the sites where he built high places and set up Asherah poles and idols before he humbled himself—all these are written in the records of the seers. Manasseh rested with his ancestors and was buried in his palace. And Amon his son succeeded him as king.’ 2 Chronicles 33:18-20

Everything Manasseh had done, his prayer and the words the seer spoke to him, [2 Kings 21:11-15](#), are written in the annals of the kings of Israel. Amon, his son, now becomes king of Judah.

Despite his repentance, Manasseh will go down in history and be remembered for his sin. Many commentators suggest that Manasseh, is more responsible for bringing the kingdom of Judah to an end, than any other person, [2 Kings 23:26](#) / [2 Kings 24:3](#) / [Jeremiah 15:4](#).

AMON KING OF JUDAH

‘Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem two years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done. Amon worshiped and offered sacrifices to all the idols Manasseh had made. But unlike his father Manasseh, he did not humble himself before the LORD; Amon increased his guilt. Amon’s officials conspired against him and assassinated him in his palace. Then the people of the land killed all who had plotted against King Amon, and they made Josiah his son king in his place.’ 2 Chronicles 33:21-25

Manasseh’s son was named Amon, this is the name of the Egyptian god, who was the god of the wind and certain powers of generation, [Nahum 3:8](#). Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king of Judah and he reigned for two years, 642 to 640 B.C. [2 Kings 21:19-26](#).

Amon was certainly following in the footsteps of his father Manasseh and it appears there was some kind of conspiracy among Amon’s officials which led to him being assassinated.

The murderers put Josiah on the throne as king, however since Josiah was only eight years old, it appears that some of Amon’s officials, or priests of the temple, were irritated with the apostasy that was led by Manasseh and Amon, [2 Kings 21:19-26](#).

In other words, they wanted a change, they wanted someone who was young enough they could train to be king.

Ellison, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There are only minor variations here from the parallel in 2 Kings. No motivation for the assassination is given. Amon may have been the vicious son of a bad father, or it may have been out of disgust for his following a discredited policy. Amon was the unhappy product of his father’s pagan life, not of his pious death.’

CHAPTER 34

‘Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and followed the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left. In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David. In his twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles and idols. Under his direction the altars of the Baals were torn down; he cut to pieces the incense altars that were above them and smashed the Asherah poles and the idols. These he broke to pieces and scattered over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. He burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and so he purged Judah and Jerusalem. In the towns of Manasseh, Ephraim and Simeon, as far as Naphtali, and in the ruins around them, he tore down the altars and the Asherah poles and crushed the idols to powder and cut to pieces all the incense altars throughout Israel. Then he went back to Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of Josiah’s reign, to purify the land and the temple, he sent Shaphan son of Azaliah and Maaseiah the ruler of the city, with Joah son of Joahaz, the recorder, to repair the temple of the LORD his God. They went to Hilkiah the high priest and gave him the money that had been brought into the temple of God, which the Levites who were the gatekeepers had collected from the people of Manasseh, Ephraim and the entire remnant of Israel and from all the people of Judah and Benjamin and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Then they entrusted it to the men appointed to supervise the work on the LORD’s temple. These men paid the workers who repaired and restored the temple. They also gave money to the carpenters and builders to purchase dressed stone, and timber for joists and beams for the buildings that the kings of Judah had allowed to fall into ruin. The workers laboured faithfully. Over them to direct them were Jahath and Obadiah, Levites descended from Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, descended from Kohath. The Levites—all who were skilled in playing musical instruments—had charge of the laborers and supervised all the workers from job to job. Some of the Levites were secretaries, scribes and gatekeepers.’ 2 Chronicles 34:1-13

JOSIAH’S REFORMS

Josiah is now king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah and he reigned for thirty-one years, 640 B.C. to 609 B.C. 2 Kings 22:1-7. Shaphan was the father of Jeremiah’s friend Ahikam, Jeremiah 26:24, and the grandfather of Gedaliah, who was made governor of Judea by the Babylonians after the fall of Jerusalem, 2 Kings 25:22. Shaphan and Nathan-Melek’s, 2 Kings 23:11, names also appear on ancient records of those who lived during these times.

Hilkiah was the father, or grandfather of Seriah, Nehemiah 11:11, who was high priest at the time of the captivity, and an ancestor of Ezra the scribe. Hilkiah appears on the seal of Azariah who was a priest, and the grandfather of Ezra, 1 Chronicles 6:13-14 / 1 Chronicles 9:11 / Ezra 7:1. Hilkiah’s name appears also on the seal of another son named Hanan.

Josiah did what was right in God’s eyes and loved and obeyed God as David did, Acts 13:22.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the purging.

‘Jeremiah’s first prophecies, Jeremiah 2-3, appear to have been coincident with Josiah’s earlier efforts to uproot idolatry, and must have greatly strengthened his hands.’

The power of Assyria had been greatly weakened and so, Josiah aimed not merely at a religious reformation, but at a restoration of the kingdom to its ancient limits, 2 Kings 23:19. He purged the nation of the high places, he smashed the Asherah poles and idols, and altars of the Baals were torn down and he 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 wanted some repair work done on the temple, and so he set about raising the funds needed for the repairs, similar to the way Jehoshaphat did many years ago, 2 Kings 12:9-15. He makes a lot of effort in restoring the neglected temple, much as his predecessor Hezekiah had done, 2 Chronicles 29.

THE BOOK OF THE LAW FOUND

‘While they were bringing out the money that had been taken into the temple of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD that had been given through Moses. Hilkiah said to Shaphan the secretary, “I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the LORD.” He gave it to Shaphan. Then Shaphan took the book to the king and reported to him: “Your officials are doing everything that has been committed to them. They have paid out the money that was in the temple of the LORD and have entrusted it to the supervisors and workers.” Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king. When the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his robes. He gave these orders to Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Abdon son of Micah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king’s attendant: “Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the remnant in Israel and Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the LORD’s anger that is poured out on us because those who have gone before us have not kept the word of the LORD; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written in this book.” Hilkiah and those the king had sent with him went to speak to the prophet Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the New Quarter. She said to them, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me, ‘This is what the LORD says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people—all the curses written in the book that has been read in the presence of the king of Judah. Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and aroused my anger by all that their hands have made, my anger will be poured out on this place and will not be quenched.’ Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before God when you heard what he spoke against this place and its people, and because you humbled yourself before me and tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD. Now I will gather you to your ancestors, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place and on those who live here.’” So they took her answer back to the king. Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. He went up to the temple of the LORD with the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the Levites—all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the LORD. The king stood by his pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the LORD—to follow the LORD and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, and to obey the words of the covenant written in this book. Then he had everyone in Jerusalem and Benjamin pledge themselves to it; the people of Jerusalem did this in accordance with the covenant of God, the God of their ancestors. Josiah removed all the detestable idols from all the territory belonging to the Israelites, and he had all who were present in Israel serve the LORD their God. As long as he lived, they did not fail to follow the LORD, the God of their ancestors.’ 2 Chronicles 34:14-33

Jeremiah 1:1-2 tells us that Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, which tells us that Jeremiah began his ministry during the reign of King Josiah.

Hilkiah discovers ‘the Book of the Law’, Deuteronomy 31:24-27 / 2 Kings 22:8-10. Josiah’s reforms had already been going forward for several years. He began the purging of the temple and Jerusalem in his twelfth year, six full years before the events in 2 Kings 22:8, and the repairs on the temple mentioned in 2 Kings 22:9 were probably commenced at the same time.

Although each king was supposed to have a copy of the Book of the Law, Deuteronomy 17:18-20 / Deuteronomy 31:9-13, we have no idea how long they have been without the Law of Moses, that is the first five books of the Old Testament, but because only those portions that referred to the responsibilities of the king were immediately read before Josiah.

Remember nobody had seen the Book of the Law for years and so when Josiah heard the word of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes. In others words, God's Word moved him to repentance, and as a result of his repentance, the whole of Israel was deeply moved toward God again.

The good news is that Josiah didn't just go out of his way to get Israel to worship and obey God how they were supposed to in the first place, he actually went on to destroy anything which involved idolatry and the worshipping of false gods.

Hilkiah the priest and others went to speak to the prophetess Huldah, who was Shallum's wife, [2 Kings 22:14-20](#). It should be noted that other prophets were now on the scene at this time, prophets like Zephaniah, [Zephaniah 1:1](#), and Jeremiah, [Jeremiah 22:15-16](#), who were both warning God's people about their upcoming exile into Babylon. It's possible that they went to Huldah because she was closest to them, but they go to inquire of the Lord. It's interesting because we don't know what they asked but we do know didn't enquire about the newly discovered Book of Law.

The Lord tells them that He will bring disaster upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah because of their apostasy but the disaster wouldn't come anytime during the reign of Josiah. God delayed judgment on Josiah, [2 Chronicles 35:20-24](#), like he did with Ahab, who responded to a word of warning with a kind of repentance, [1 Kings 21:25-29](#). Josiah has now received news about this upcoming disaster twice, once from God's Word and now from God's prophet. Josiah stood up in front of everyone and declared he would obey God and His Word with all his heart and soul. He gets everyone else to stand as a demonstration of their agreement with the covenant, [Genesis 15:17](#) / [Jeremiah 34:18](#) / [1 Samuel 8:11-17](#) / [1 Samuel 10:25](#) / [Joshua 24](#).

Although Josiah had religiously cleaned up Judah by the standards of God's Word, sadly, after his death, his descendants went back to idolatry and undone everything he had achieved.

CHAPTER 35

'Josiah celebrated the Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem, and the Passover lamb was slaughtered on the fourteenth day of the first month. He appointed the priests to their duties and encouraged them in the service of the LORD's temple. He said to the Levites, who instructed all Israel and who had been consecrated to the LORD: "Put the sacred ark in the temple that Solomon son of David king of Israel built. It is not to be carried about on your shoulders. Now serve the LORD your God and his people Israel. Prepare yourselves by families in your divisions, according to the instructions written by David king of Israel and by his son Solomon. "Stand in the holy place with a group of Levites for each subdivision of the families of your fellow Israelites, the lay people. Slaughter the Passover lambs, consecrate yourselves and prepare the lambs for your fellow Israelites, doing what the LORD commanded through Moses."

Josiah provided for all the lay people who were there a total of thirty thousand lambs and goats for the Passover offerings, and also three thousand cattle—all from the king's own possessions. His officials also contributed voluntarily to the people and the priests and Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah and Jehiel, the officials in charge of God's temple, gave the priests twenty-six hundred Passover offerings and three hundred cattle. Also Konaniah along with Shemaiah and Nethanel, his brothers, and Hashabiah, Jeiel and Jozabad, the leaders of the Levites, provided five thousand Passover offerings and five hundred head of cattle for the Levites. The service was arranged and the priests stood in their places with the Levites in their divisions as the king had ordered. The Passover lambs were slaughtered, and the priests splashed against the altar the blood handed to them, while the Levites skinned the animals. They set aside the burnt offerings to give them to the subdivisions of the families of the people to offer to the LORD, as it is written in the Book of Moses. They did the same with the cattle. They roasted the Passover animals over the fire as prescribed, and boiled the holy offerings in pots, caldrons and pans and served them quickly to all the people. After this, they made preparations for themselves and for the priests, because the priests, the descendants of Aaron, were sacrificing the burnt offerings and the fat portions until nightfall. So the Levites made preparations for themselves and for the Aaronic priests. The musicians, the descendants of Asaph, were in the places prescribed by David, Asaph,

Heman and Jeduthun the king's seer. The gatekeepers at each gate did not need to leave their posts, because their fellow Levites made the preparations for them. So at that time the entire service of the LORD was carried out for the celebration of the Passover and the offering of burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD, as King Josiah had ordered. The Israelites who were present celebrated the Passover at that time and observed the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days. The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; and none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem. This Passover was celebrated in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign.' 2 Chronicles 35:1-19

JOSIAH CELEBRATES THE PASSOVER

Josiah now tells the people it's time to celebrate the Passover according to how it was written in the Book of the Covenant, which implies they hadn't celebrated the Passover correctly up until this point, Deuteronomy 16:1-8 / 2 Kings 23:21-23.

Josiah tells the Levites that the ark, 'is not to be carried about on your shoulders'. The KJV, says 'it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders.'

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Josiah means shall not henceforth be your duty. The ark shall remain undisturbed in the holy of holies. You shall return to your old employments, to the service of God and the instruction of the people.'

Notice Josiah himself provided thirty thousand lambs and goats for the Passover sacrifice, as well as three thousand cattle. This was more than double than the previous Passover celebrations during the reign of Hezekiah, 2 Chronicles 30:24.

They separated from the Paschal lambs, those parts which were to be burned on the altar. These parts they gave to the offerors, who took them up to the altar and handed them to the officiating priests.

In other words, the people were served first and then the priests and finally the Levite leaders. He also put singers in their places, however, God didn't command any kind of singing during the Passover celebrations.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'This Passover was utterly unlike the one kept in the reign of Hezekiah, in several important particulars.

1. It was kept at the prescribed time, Numbers 9:1-5 / 2 Chronicles 30:1-3.
 2. The ceremonial cleanness of participants was observed.
 3. And all the particulars of the Mosaic instructions were strictly observed.
 4. Although the singers were mentioned, the instruments of music were not mentioned, and apparently not used.
- These important distinctions fully justify the statement in 2 Chronicles 35:18, that, 'from the days of Samuel the prophet, none of the kings of Israel keeps such a Passover as Josiah kept'.'

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

THE DEATH OF JOSIAH

‘After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order, Necho king of Egypt went up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah marched out to meet him in battle. But Necho sent messengers to him, saying, “What quarrel is there, king of Judah, between you and me? It is not you I am attacking at this time, but the house with which I am at war. God has told me to hurry; so stop opposing God, who is with me, or he will destroy you.” Josiah, however, would not turn away from him, but disguised himself to engage him in battle. He would not listen to what Necho had said at God’s command but went to fight him on the plain of Megiddo. Archers shot King Josiah, and he told his officers, “Take me away; I am badly wounded.” So they took him out of his chariot, put him in his other chariot and brought him to Jerusalem, where he died. He was buried in the tombs of his ancestors, and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him. Jeremiah composed laments for Josiah, and to this day all the male and female singers commemorate Josiah in the laments. These became a tradition in Israel and are written in the Laments. The other events of Josiah’s reign and his acts of devotion in accordance with what is written in the Law of the LORD—all the events, from beginning to end, are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.’ 2 Chronicles 35:20-27

Here we read of a conflict which took place near the end of Josiah’s reign, which involved him being killed, 2 Kings 23:28-30. Pharaoh Necho of Egypt wanted to come to the rescue of the Assyrians at Carchemish, but while he was on his way, Josiah engaged him in battle at Megiddo.

For some reason, possibly pride, he went into battle with Necho when he didn’t need to. Sadly, Josiah totally ignored the advice from Necho when he said, ‘What quarrel is there, king of Judah, between you and me?’ Josiah stubbornly refused to hear this warning, which was actually from God.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The fate of Josiah was unprecedented. No king of Judah had, up to this time, fallen in battle. None had left his land at the mercy of a foreign conqueror. Hence, the extraordinary character of the mourning, Zechariah 12:11-14.’

It was during this period we find a world power struggle taking place between the Assyrians and the Babylonians. That king of Assyria was Nabopolassar the father of Nebuchadnezzar and this pharaoh was Pharaoh-Necho II.

The history of this event is very complex but Coffman in his commentary gives us useful insight into it.

‘The Assyrian empire was in a state of collapse. Nineveh had fallen in 612 B.C., and Pharaoh-Necho was ambitious to succeed Assyria as the world ruler. It is not exactly clear why Josiah felt it necessary to challenge the king of Egypt, but he did, losing his life as a result. Yes, God had promised through Huldah that Josiah would die in peace, but it is sinful to allege the fact of his being killed in battle as ‘a contradiction’.

1. The ‘in peace’ of God’s promise may have referred to the fact that Jerusalem would not be under attack at the time of his death.

2. All of God’s promises are conditional, Jeremiah 18:7-10, and it is simply astounding how many learned men apparently remain ignorant of this simple truth. In the light of it, Josiah’s engagement of the king of Egypt in battle might have been contrary to God’s will, nullifying the promise altogether.

Notice that Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, he probably was wondering why the righteous died in the way Josiah did. He was so popular that even the entire nation lamented over his death.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The exact place of the battle seems to have been Hadad-Rimmon, in the valley of Megiddo, for there Zechariah tells us, Zechariah 12:11, was the great mourning for Josiah.’

CHAPTER 36

‘And the people of the land took Jehoahaz son of Josiah and made him king in Jerusalem in place of his father. Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. The king of Egypt dethroned him in Jerusalem and imposed on Judah a levy of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. The king of Egypt made Eliakim, a brother of Jehoahaz, king over Judah and Jerusalem and changed Eliakim’s name to Jehoiakim. But Necho took Eliakim’s brother Jehoahaz and carried him off to Egypt.’ 2 Chronicles 36:1-4

JEHOAHAZ KING OF JUDAH

Following the death of Josiah, Jehoahaz became king of Judah and reigned for only three months, before Pharaoh Necho put him in chains, [2 Kings 23:31-35](#).

Jehoahaz was probably a throne name, for his personal name was Shallum, [Jeremiah 22:11](#) / [1 Chronicles 3:15](#). His older brother was Eliakim. When Pharaoh heard that they had made Jehoahaz king, he immediately sent a detachment of soldiers to Jerusalem and deposed of him and placed Eliakim on the throne.

Judah was now under the control of Egypt and they had to pay a heavy levy to Egypt for as long as they stayed under their control. Pharaoh Neco, then appointed his brother, Jehoiakim as king over Judah.

JEHOIAKIM KING OF JUDAH

‘Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon attacked him and bound him with bronze shackles to take him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also took to Babylon articles from the temple of the LORD and put them in his temple there. The other events of Jehoiakim’s reign, the detestable things he did and all that was found against him, are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. And Jehoiachin his son succeeded him as king.’ 2 Chronicles 36:5-8

Jehoiakim now becomes king of Judah at the age of twenty-five and he reigned for eleven years, 608 B.C. to 597 B.C. [2 Kings 23:36-37](#). Although Judah was under Egypt’s control in the early part of his reign, later Judah would come under the control of the Babylonians, [2 Kings 23:34](#) / [2 Kings 24:1](#).

There’s no doubt that Jehoiakim was a very greedy king who oppressed God’s people. He was an idolater, he killed innocent people, introduced forced labour and was far from being a just king, [Jeremiah 22:13-17](#). He even killed Uriah, God’s prophet for prophesying that Jerusalem is going to be destroyed, [Jeremiah 26:20-23](#).

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, took Jehoiakim into captivity. This was the first conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, which resulted not only in the change of Judean kings but also in the plundering of the treasures of the temple.

JEHOIACHIN KING OF JUDAH

‘Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months and ten days. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD. In the spring, King Nebuchadnezzar sent for him and brought him to Babylon, together with articles of value from the temple of the LORD, and he made Jehoiachin’s uncle, Zedekiah, king over Judah and Jerusalem.’ 2 Chronicles 36:9-10

Jehoiachin was now king of Judah, he became king at the age of eighteen. He is also known as Jeconiah, [Matthew 1:11](#) / [Jeremiah 22:24](#). He was just as evil as his father, Jehoiakim, which is surprising considering he only reigned for three months, [2 Chronicles 36:9-10](#). But in those three months, he murdered men and ravished their wives, [Ezekiel 19:5-7](#).

[2 Kings 24:8-17](#) tells us that Nebuchadnezzar takes all the skilled workers away from Jerusalem, but he leaves behind all those who didn't have any skill.

This was his way of removing anyone who may rebel against him and of course, this would mean that the skilled workers would work for him in building up his empire. Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin to Babylon.

This was the first conquest of Jerusalem which occurred in 597 B.C. but because Jehoiachin surrendered, there was very little destruction to the city.

A second conquest of the city occurred in 586 B.C. to stop the rebellion of Mattaniah, that is Jehoiachin's uncle, whose name was changed to Zedekiah [1 Chronicles 3:15](#).

It was during this conquest that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, [2 Kings 25:1-7](#). The third and final assault on Jerusalem took place in 582 B.C. [Jeremiah 52:29-30](#).

Coffman says the following concerning the plundering of Solomon's temple. 'Nebuchadnezzar spoiled Solomon's temple three times.

1. He took some of the treasures away when Jehoiakim was king, placing the golden vessels in the temple of his god in Babylon, [Daniel 1:2](#). These were the vessels profaned by Belshazzar, [Daniel 5:2](#).
2. He continued the destruction by taking many other treasures, breaking and cutting them into pieces when he came up against Jeconiah, as in this chapter.
3. He thoroughly looted and destroyed the temple, even cutting up the brass and all other metal objects of value when the city fell a third time at the end of the reign of Zedekiah, [2 Kings 25:13-16](#).'

ZEDEKIAH KING OF JUDAH

'Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke the word of the LORD. He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him take an oath in God's name. He became stiff-necked and hardened his heart and would not turn to the LORD, the God of Israel. Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the LORD, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem.' [2 Chronicles 36:11-14](#)

Zedekiah is now king of Judah and he begin his reign when he was twenty-one years old and reigned for eleven years, [2 Kings 24:16-20](#) / [Jeremiah 52:1-3](#). He too did evil in God's eyes, because it was Nebuchadnezzar who placed him on the throne, [2 Kings 24:17](#), we can be sure that he was totally in submission to the Babylonian king.

He probably would have had to swear an oath to Nebuchadnezzar, which would have involved invoking the Name of the Lord. The change of his name to Zedekiah was an essential element in the whole procedure, [2 Kings 24:17](#).

Jeremiah tells us his rebellion against Babylon was also a rebellion against God, [Jeremiah 31:1-40](#) / [Ezekiel 17:13](#).

He should have never rebelled in the first place because it was totally against everything God had said to His prophet Ezekiel, [Ezekiel 8:1-18](#), and against everything God had said to His prophet Jeremiah, [Jeremiah 25:11-12](#) / [Jeremiah 28:1-4](#) / [Jeremiah 34:8](#).

2 Kings 24:16-20 tells us that God ‘thrusts them from his presence’. The sin of people had become so bad, that God couldn’t even bring Himself to look at them any longer, Isaiah 6:9-10. This is one of the saddest descriptions of God looking at His people in the Scriptures.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel was taken into Assyrian captivity because their sins were too great, 2 Kings 17:5-6, and we read that the Southern Kingdom of Judah were just as bad, and they too are taken into Babylonian captivity for sent years.

Zedekiah broke his oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar, and when Nebuchadnezzar came up once more to destroy Jerusalem, Zedekiah asked Jeremiah to pray for the city, but God, declared that He would fight against Zedekiah and the city and destroy them, Jeremiah 37:1-21.

Jehoiachin was the last king of Judah and was so recognised by the Jews, because Zedekiah was merely a hand puppet of Nebuchadnezzar and because of his foolish rebellion, Jerusalem fell a third time.

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

‘The LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and did not spare young men or young women, the elderly or the infirm. God gave them all into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the LORD’s temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. They set fire to God’s temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there. He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his successors until the kingdom of Persia came to power. The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfilment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.’ 2 Chronicles 36:15-21

2 Kings 25:1-7, tells us it was in the ninth year of Zedekiah when Nebuchadnezzar marched against Jerusalem, he did this for a year and a half, Jeremiah 39:1-10.

The people in Jerusalem were desperate because there was no food. Despite fleeing from the city, they had no chance against the mighty Babylonian army, Jeremiah 52:4-27.

Zedekiah was captured and his son was killed before his eyes because of his rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, 2 Kings 24:20. Nebuchadnezzar had shown mercy to Jehoiachin, but none was shown to Zedekiah, hence the harsher treatment he received.

Notice that the land enjoyed its sabbath’s rest, Leviticus 26:34-43 / Daniel 9:2, that is, the land rested from being used for crops.

Jeremiah had prophesied that the Israelites would go into seventy years of captivity, Jeremiah 29:10, however, as we now know the people didn’t listen.

THE STAGES OF THE EXILE

The Exile of Judah took place in three specific stages.

THE FIRST STAGE

The first stage took place in 605 B.C. On his way back from victory in Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar, general of the armies of Babylon, laid siege to Jerusalem and took some of the leading nobles, and young men from the city of Jerusalem as hostages and carried them back to Babylon.

It is at this point that Daniel and his three friends are carried off, [Daniel 1:1-7](#). Most of the citizens are still in the land of Judah but are certainly subservient to Babylon. It is possible that it was at this point that Jeremiah prophesied the 70-year captivity, [Jeremiah 25:11-12](#).

Nebuchadnezzar had just vanquished the Egyptians at the Battle of Carchemish, thus establishing Babylon as the new rulers of the eastern Mediterranean world. Nebuchadnezzar was establishing Babylonian dominance over all that area and had come to Jerusalem and laid siege to the city.

Hearing of his father's death, he took several young men from the royal family as hostages and trainees for his court, including Daniel and his three friends according to [Daniel 1:1-7](#).

He also made King Jehoiakim a vassal, [2 Chronicles 36:6](#), and then hastened back to Babylon to establish himself on the throne. Nebuchadnezzar and a small military force took the short route across the desert, sending the captives with his greater army along the Fertile Crescent.

At this point, though most of her citizens were yet in the land of Judah, the nation was subservient to Babylon. It is at this point that Jeremiah prophesied that Judah would be carried off to Babylon for 70 years.

Therefore, most scholars believe that the 70-year captivity began with this event. This would coincide well with the decree for the first return around 538 B.C., which would be followed by that return and the beginning of the temple rebuilding process around 537/536 B.C.

THE SECOND STAGE

The second stage took place in 597 B.C. Jehoiakim rebels against Nebuchadnezzar, about 602 B.C., who finally comes and attacks Jerusalem, on March 10th 597 B.C., carrying off 10,000 captives to Babylon.

After rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar, King Jehoiakim died on December 10th 598 B.C., so that by the time Nebuchadnezzar arrived to punish Jerusalem for its rebellion, his son Jehoiachin, had been on the throne for three months and ten days.

In other words, Jehoiachin was in the wrong place at the wrong time and would essentially pay for the rebellion of his father against Babylon. Jehoiachin was taken captive to Babylon and remained a prisoner there until the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 561 B.C. [2 Kings 25:27-30](#).

Nebuchadnezzar also carried off the wealthy elite from Jerusalem; included in these was Ezekiel, the prophet. Although, Ezekiel wasn't actually called to the prophetic ministry until after he had been carried off to Babylon, probably about 593 BC.

THE THIRD STAGE

The third stage took place in 586 B.C. King Zedekiah ignores the warnings of Jeremiah, [Jeremiah 27-28](#), and plots against Babylon once again, so that Nebuchadnezzar returns, lays siege against Jerusalem, January 15th 588 B.C. to July 18th 586 B.C., and captures it. One month after the city fell, the captain of Nebuchadnezzar's army burned the city and the temple.

It is interesting that the temple was destroyed in 586 B.C. and would not be completely rebuilt until February/March of 516 B.C., 70 years after its destruction. So, not only were the Jews in captivity for a minimum of 70 years, but the temple would not exist for 70 years as well.

A tiny remnant of Jews, including Jeremiah, was left in Judah under Gedeliah, who was appointed governor. When Gedeliah was murdered, those Jews feared reprisal and fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah there against his wishes, [Jeremiah 40:13-16](#).

‘In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfil the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing: “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: ““The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up and may the LORD their God be with them.”” 2 Chronicles 36:22-23

The first year of Cyrus king of Persia is referring to the first year of his reign over the Babylonian lands in 538/537 B.C. His actual reign over the Medes and Persians began earlier in 557 B.C.

He was known as Cyrus the Great, and he is the very person whom Isaiah names in his prophecy, [Isaiah 45:1](#), who would help Israel rebuild the temple and Jerusalem, [Isaiah 44:28-45:7](#).

The seventy years of captivity were coming to an end just as Jeremiah had said, [Jeremiah 15:12-14](#) / [Jeremiah 29:10-12](#). The seventy years are calculated from the first captivity during the days of Daniel and his friends, [Daniel 1:1](#), to the first return of the captives in 536 B.C. There is no doubt that the Jews saw what was happening as a fulfilment of the prophecies.

It would be easy for God to move the heart of Cyrus, especially if someone pointed out to Cyrus that his name actually appears in the prophecies of Isaiah, which were written many years before [Isaiah 44:28](#) / [Isaiah 45:1-4](#) / [Isaiah 24:13](#).

Cyrus then goes on to make a proclamation not only verbally but also in writing, [2 Kings 19:9-14](#). The accounts of this proclamation here and in [Ezra 1:1-4](#) were the public proclamations of the decree.

The quotation of the proclamation in [Ezra 6:3-5](#) was the official recording of the decree. It's possible that each group would receive a different letter with the same thing written on them.

Cyrus gives credit to God and proclaims that he will build a temple for God in Jerusalem, [1 Chronicles 17:11-12](#) / [1 Chronicles 22:10](#) / [1 Chronicles 28:6](#) / [2 Chronicles 6:9-10](#).

He then proclaims that God's people may return home to help with the building work. Sadly, only a small number of Jews decided to return home from exile, as Isaiah had prophesied, [Isaiah 10:22](#).

THE CYRUS CYLINDER

If you visit the British Museum in London, you will see on display an original pair of cufflinks based on the Cyrus Cylinder. The cufflinks are made from 24k plated bronze and are supplied in a presentation box.

The Cyrus Cylinder is one of the most famous objects to have survived from the ancient world. The cylinder was inscribed in Babylonian cuneiform, cuneiform is the earliest form of writing, on the orders of the Persian King Cyrus the Great, 559-530 B.C. after he captured Babylon in 539 B.C.

It is often referred to as the first bill of human rights as it appears to encourage freedom of worship throughout the Persian Empire and to allow deported people to return to their homelands. The cylinder was found in Babylon, modern Iraq, in 1879 during a British Museum excavation.

After the deportations only the poor of the land, the vine-growers and farmers were left, 2 Kings 25:12 / Jeremiah 39:10 / Jeremiah 40:7 / Jeremiah 52:16.

Notice that Cyrus also proclaims freewill offerings, this tells us that it wasn't just about the remnant returning to Jerusalem to live but they were to return to also rebuild the temple, Ezra 1:1-4.