

The Book of 2 Chronicles

The Division of the Second Book of the Chronicles

Originally the two books of the Chronicles formed one book and were undivided. The period of the history of the people, Israel, covered in this book is the same as in the books of the Kings. It begins with the Solomonic reign, the building and dedication of the temple, and ends with the captivity of Judah. The closing of Chronicles proves the post-exilic time of its composition, for it mentions Cyrus the King of Persia and his restoration proclamation. The history, however, is almost exclusively the history of the house of Judah. Israel's history is very briefly touched upon. Inasmuch as Chronicles is written from the priestly and the divine viewpoint, everything centers around the temple of Jehovah. There are most interesting descriptions of Solomon's reign, the temple and the worship, which we do not find in the parallel chapters in the first book of Kings. The reader should make use of the parallel passages given in connection with the introduction to the Chronicles and then read the annotations in Kings, as we shall not repeat, in the annotations of this second book of the Chronicles, what has already been given. We shall point out what is peculiar to Chronicles. We divide the book into four sections.

I. THE REIGN OF SOLOMON (1-9)

1. The Beginning of His Reign and the First Vision (1:1-17)
2. The Building of the Temple (2-4)
3. The Dedication of the Temple (5:1-7:10)
4. The Second Vision (7:11-22)
5. Solomon's Prosperity and Activities (8:1-18)
6. The Queen of Sheba and Solomon's Death (9:1-31)

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III. THE HISTORY OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH AND EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE CAPTIVITY (11-36:14)

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3. Decline and Apostasy under Jehoram, Ahaziah and Athaliah (21-22)
4. Reformation under Joash, and Joash's Apostasy (23-24)
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7. Decline and Apostasy under Manasseh and Amon (33:1-25)

8. Reformation under Josiah (34-35)

9. The Final Decline and Apostasy (36:1-14)

IV. THE CAPTIVITY AND THE EPILOGUE (36:15-23)

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE REIGN OF SOLOMON

1. The Beginning of Solomon's Reign and the First Vision

CHAPTER 1

1. The Lord was with him (1:1)

2. At Gibeon (1:2-6)

3. The first vision (1:7-12)

4. His riches and prosperity (1:13-17)

The events connected with the beginning of Solomon's reign and recorded in 1 Kings 1-3:3 are omitted in Chronicles. Second Chronicles begins with the statement that Solomon was strengthened in his kingdom, and the Lord his God was with him, and magnified him exceedingly. This shows the keynote of Chronicles. It is Jehovah's gracious dealing with the house of David and the bestowal of the promised blessing. In 1 Kings 3:3 we read that Solomon loved the Lord.

Here more of Gibeon is mentioned than in Kings. "Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities" (Joshua 10:2). Later Gibeon became the possession of the tribe of Benjamin and was made a priest-city. It was about two hours from Jerusalem. When Saul had destroyed Nob, the tabernacle was removed to Gibeon, where it remained till Solomon built the house of the LORD (1 Chron. 16:39, 21:29; 1 Kings 3:4; 2 Chron. 1:3). The ark had been brought from Kirjath-jearim, not far from Gibeon, to the tent which David had pitched for it in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:2; 1 Chron. 13:5-6), but the tabernacle and the brazen altar, that Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made remained at Gibeon. The high place at Gibeon means the elevation upon which the tabernacle and the altar stood. Originally there was at the same spot a Canaanitish place for the worship of idols. As long as the temple, that central place for worship chosen by God (Deut. 12:11), was not standing, the worship of Jehovah in the Gibeon high place was not sinful. After the temple was built the high places became centers of idolatrous practices. Solomon and all the congregation with him gathered at Gibeon and sought the brazen altar and offered a thousand burnt offerings upon it. He began with this act of worship and it was the same night that God appeared unto Solomon. The Lord drew graciously near to him as the result of the sacrifices upon the brazen altar. The burnt-offering is the type of the perfect devotion and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is this which makes us nigh. On the meaning of the great vision, God's offer to Solomon, the King's answer, see 1 Kings 3.

After the vision and the Lord's promise, "I will give thee riches and wealth and honor," we hear of Solomon's horses, horsemen and chariots. In 1 Kings, we find the same paragraph in another setting, that is, in chapter 10:26-29. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen and 4,000 stalls for horses. A great commerce seems to have been fostered by Solomon. While this showed the promise fulfilled, in that the Lord gave him riches and wealth, it also showed an unlawful desire for

increase which was forbidden (Deut. 17:16). Read comment on 1 Kings 10:26-29.

2. The Building of the Temple

The Beginning and Appeal to Hiram

CHAPTER 2

1. Solomon's purpose (2:1)
2. The workmen (2:2)
3. The message to Hiram, King of Tyre (2:3-10)
4. Hiram's answer (2:11-16)
5. Solomon numbers the strangers (2:17-18)

In 1 Kings 5, Solomon purposed to begin the great work to which he had been called, to build an house for the name of the LORD and an house for his kingdom (1 Kings 7:1; 2 Chron. 8:1). Then he levied a very large body of men from among the people to labor in cutting the timber and hewing stone for the temple and the palace of Solomon. Of these 70,000 were carriers; 80,000 were quarry men and 3,600 overseers. In 1 Kings 5:13, we read of a levy of 30,000 men. These must be considered additional workmen, for they were sent to Lebanon.

Solomon then sent a message to Hiram (the same as Hiram), the King of Tyre. Hiram had sent before messages to Solomon, when he heard of his enthronement. They of Tyre had already brought cedar trees in abundance to David for the building of the Temple (1 Chron. 22:4). He loved Solomon as much as he loved his father David, for when Hiram heard the words of Solomon he rejoiced greatly and said, "Blessed be the LORD this day, who hath given unto David a wise son over this great people." To him Solomon sent a message. He reminded him of the dealings his father David had with him, and requested "even so deal with me." He acquainted him with his work, "Behold I build an house for the name of the LORD my God," and that it would be a great house, "for great is our God above all gods." Then he requested that Hiram would send him a master-workman and more material, cedar trees, fir trees and algum trees or almug trees (1 Kings 10:11), the red sandalwood, highly valued among the ancient nations, out of Lebanon. In return he offered to Hiram's servant wheat, barley, wine and oil, twenty thousand measures of each. 1 Kings 5:11 tells us that besides this gift to the workers in timber, twenty thousand measures of wheat and oil were yearly given by Solomon to the household of Hiram.

And Hiram's answer reveals that he was a believer in Jehovah, for he acknowledged Him as the Creator and as the lover of His people (verses 11-12). The King sent Hiram, a skilful worker whose mother was a Jewess (1 Kings 7:14). This Gentile co-operation in the construction of the temple is interesting, and also prophetic. Jews and Gentiles, Israel and the nations will yet unite to glorify the Lord. And the strangers who were in Israel, also Gentiles, were the servants of the King.

CHAPTER 3 The Building of the Temple

1. The place (3:1-2)
2. The dimensions (3:3)
3. The porch and holy place (3:4-7)

4. The most holy (3:4-18)

5. The brazen pillars (3:15-17)

First, the place is mentioned where the house of the LORD was built, "in Mount Moriah (Gen. 22), where [the LORD] appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite." The building began in the second day of the second month in the fourth year of Solomon's reign. From 1 Kings 6:1 we learn that this was the 480th year from the Exodus. Counting forty years to one generation we have exactly twelve generations. This figure can be chronologically verified. The internal measurement given in verse 3 is sixty cubits long (about ninety feet), twenty cubits wide (about thirty feet), and thirty cubits high (about forty-five feet). Then there was the porch. The height of the porch is given as 120 cubits, which is evidently the error of a copyist; it should be twenty cubits, or perhaps thirty. For the full description see annotations on 1 Kings 6. Notice again the description of the cherubim overlaid with gold. These are not the cherubim upon the ark, but they were great figures made by Solomon. Each was ten cubits high. Their great wings met over the mercy seat upon which were the cherubim, which look down upon the mercy-seat. The Solomonic cherubim looked outwards. The word "inward" in verse 13 is a wrong translation. On the meaning of this attitude of these gigantic cherubim, see comment on 1 Kings 6:23-30. In verse 14, the veil is mentioned, of which we read nothing in 1 Kings 6. This veil was woven of the same material and in the same manner as the one in the tabernacle (Exod. 26:31).

The two pillars called Jachin (He will establish) and Boaz (In Him is strength) are the symbols of the stability of the government of this earth in the glorious reign of Christ, which is typified by the reign of Solomon and the house he built.

CHAPTER 4 The Vessels that were for the House

1. The altar of brass (4:1)

2. The molten sea (4:2-5)

3. The ten loaves (4:6)

4. The ten candlesticks (4:7)

5. The ten tables (4:8)

6. The court (4:9-10)

7. The work of Hiram (4:11-17)

8. The work of Solomon (4:18-22)

The altar of brass, twenty cubits long, twenty cubits broad and ten cubits high, is not mentioned in the book of Kings. In the south-east of the court of the temple, stood the molten sea, which rested upon twelve oxen, three looking northward, three looking westward, three southward and three eastward. It received and held 3,000 measures of water. (3,000 measures was the full amount it could contain; the usual contents, however, were 2,000 measures [1 Kings 7:26].) The molten sea was for the priests and the Levites to perform their ablutions. It is typical of that cleansing which His people need and which is so graciously provided by the Lord Himself. The immense quantity of water contained in the molten sea suggests the unlimited provision grace has made. In Revelation 4:6, we read that before the throne was a sea of glass like crystal. This sea of

glass is an allusion to the molten sea in Solomon's temple. But it is not a sea of water, but of glass like crystal, because the redeemed (symbolically seen in the twenty-four elders) in glory do no longer need cleansing. They have entered upon a perfect and fixed state of holiness. The ten lavers with their bases were for the washing of the sacrifices. We see that instead of one laver there were ten; and there were also ten candlesticks and ten tables. Everything was an increase and on a large scale, while the whole house and its contents represented an untold wealth. It all foreshadows that coming glorious Kingdom of Christ. Then there will be the increase and the blessing typified by the ten lavers, the ten candlesticks and the ten tables. The brazen scaffold, five cubits long, five cubits broad and three cubits high which Solomon had made upon which he stood and kneeled in prayer (2 Chron. 6:13) is not mentioned in this chapter.

The Priest's court was enclosed by a wall of hewn stones and a row of cedar beams (1 Kings 6:36). It had massive gates covered with brass. What Hiram had worked for Solomon and Solomon's own work concludes this chapter and the account of the building the temple.

3. The Dedication of the Temple

CHAPTER 5 The Ark Brought in the Temple

1. The completion of the temple (5:1)

2. The assembly called by Solomon (5:2-3)

3. The ark carried to its place (5:4-9)

4. The contents of the ark (5:10)

5. The praise and the glory (5:11-14)

The reader will find the comments on the dedication of the temple in the book of Kings (1 Kings 8). Verses 11-13 are not given in the record of the first book of Kings. The Levites exercised their holy office. What a sight it must have been when Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun in the lead with their sons and brethren, all clothed in white linen, with cymbals, psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding the trumpets! And they were as one, to make one sound. It expresses the unity of God's people. The one supreme thought and aim was to praise and thank the Lord. This was the one mind in which they all were as one. Then the mighty volume of many voices, the sound of the trumpets, cymbals and instruments of music broke forth. The one note in praise was "He is good; for His mercy endureth forever." When the foundation of the second house was laid this praise was again uttered (Ezra 3:11). It must be remembered that David in his great prophetic psalm of praise ended with this note of praise "O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever.... Blessed be the LORD God of Israel for ever and ever. And all the people said, Amen, and praised the LORD" (1 Chron. 16:34-36). In Psalm 136 we find twenty-six times "His mercy endureth." How rich was that mercy towards Israel! He had graciously guided and kept them. He brought them into the land and all their enemies had been subdued. The house had been built and all had been accomplished. And greater mercy is for Israel in the future. He will regather them. All their enemies will be silenced. Another house will once more stand in Jerusalem and the covenant-promise made to David will be completely realized in the enthronement of the coming King upon the hill of Zion (Psalm 2). What praises His redeemed and restored people will then utter, when the Lord has been gracious to His people and to His land! (Psalm 65:1, 147:12) The scene here at the dedication of the temple foreshadows the future praise of Israel in the Kingdom which our Lord will bring and establish when He comes again.

And when this mighty praise ascended to Jehovah, when they made but one sound, heaven

answered. The house was filled with the cloud. The visible symbol presence of Jehovah had come, as it came at the consecration of the tabernacle (Exod. 40:34-35). "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me" (Psalm 50:23). "As an holy priesthood we are to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). "By him therefore let us offer praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Heb. 8:15). And if Israel had but one thought and made but one sound, how much more should we, His heavenly people, enjoying greater riches and a greater nearness than Israel ever had, be of one mind in praising His name!

CHAPTER 6 Solomon's Address and Dedicatory Prayer

1. Solomon's address to the congregation (6:1-11)
2. Solomon's dedicatory prayer (6:12-42)

The report of Solomon's address is the same as recorded in 1 Kings 8:12-21. The opening statement of this chapter has been well characterized as a pregnant expression of the king's realization of the mystery of the Being of Jehovah, the all-creative God, as well as the condescension displayed in His self-limitation to dwell amongst men. (See Exodus 19:9; 20:21; Lev. 16:2; Deut. 4:10; 5:22.) The prayer is nearly the same as in Kings (1 Kings 8:22-50). However, 1 Kings 8:51-61 is omitted and a few additional verses are added. The opening words of his great prayer are in acknowledgment of the greatness of Jehovah and the fulfillment of what God had promised to David, that is, the promise as it relates to him as David's son and the building of the house. He asks next that his prayers and the prayers of God's people may be heard as they ascend from the place where His Name is honored. Sin is acknowledged in connection with this request. "And when Thou hearest, forgive." In what follows, the different troubles are mentioned and Jehovah is implored to hear and to forgive. It is the model prayer for Israel. Confession of sin and prayer for forgiveness is linked with all petitions. Sin is acknowledged as the one cause of all troubles and disaster. Israel was thus taught in the prayer of Solomon to cast itself with supplication and repentance for sin upon Jehovah, and to find that the Lord heareth and delivereth His people. The subsequent history of Judah gives numerous instances of answered prayer. Note the omissions from the prayer report in 1 Kings 8 and the different closing of the prayer in the account in Chronicles. It is explained by the prophetic character of Kings and the priestly character of Chronicles. Psalm 132:8-10 is touched upon in verses 41-42.

CHAPTER 7:1-10 The Answer by Fire-the Sacrifices and the Feast

1. The answer by fire (7:1-3)
2. The sacrifices (7:4-7)
3. The feast of tabernacles (7:8-10)

A fuller manifestation of Jehovah's favor and presence followed the great prayer of the king. First the cloud had appeared and now the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. This is complementary to 1 Kings 8:63-64. Nothing is mentioned of this answer by fire upon the sacrifices in the book of Kings. And now all the children of Israel saw the fire and the glory of the Lord; and they bowed themselves and worshipped, praising the Lord and saying, as the Levites had said before, "He is good, for His mercy endureth forever." So all Israel will see in a future day the glory of the Lord and the coming Lord in glory and worship Him (Zech. 12:10). The house was dedicated by the King and all the people. (The Hebrew word used for dedicate is the word "channuka." The Jews keep a feast called by that name.) The feast which followed was the feast of tabernacles. Its prophetic significance is mentioned in previous annotations.

4. The Second Vision

CHAPTER 7:11-22

1. All finished by Solomon (7:11)
2. The divine answer and the warning (7:12-22)

A second time the Lord appeared unto Solomon. At this time He did not say again "Ask what shall I give thee," but He assured him that Solomon's prayer had been heard and He had chosen the dedicated place for Himself. He graciously assures the king that if He has chastised His people by sending drought, locusts or pestilence and they humble themselves, and seek His face, turning away from their wicked ways, that He will forgive and heal their land. There can be no recovery apart from the conditions mentioned in these verses. His people who have failed must first humble themselves, pray, seek His face, and turn away from their evil ways. The warning given in verses 19-22 had passed into history and found its literal fulfillment.

5. Solomon's Prosperity and Activities

CHAPTER 8

1. The fortifications of cities (8:1-6)
2. The subjection of the strangers (8:7-10)
3. The removal of the daughter of Pharaoh (8:11)
4. The perfected service (8:12-16)
5. The expedition to Ophir (8:17-18)

The activities of the King included the fortification of certain cities. (See 1 Kings 9.) First the cities are mentioned which Hiram restored to Solomon. These are the cities which Solomon had previously given to him for security. 1 Kings 9:10-14 explains this statement which otherwise would be obscure. All the strangers, the Canaanites, dwelling in the land were put into subjection and had to pay tribute to Solomon. They were the servants. "But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no servants for his work; but they were men of war, and chief of his captains and captains of his horsemen and chariots." it foreshadows the age in which all will be put in subjection under Him who will be King to rule in righteousness (Isaiah 32:1; Heb. 2:8). Then His own people will serve Him, for they "shall be willing in the day of His power" (Psalm 110:3). The only mention made of the daughter of Pharaoh in Chronicles is in this chapter (verse 11). He married her in the beginning of the reign. Her removal to the house Solomon had built for her now took place. On the typical meaning of Pharaoh's daughter see 1 Kings 3:1. The worship in the house was then carried on in a perfect way. At the appointed times all was done and all David, the man of God, had commanded was carried out (verse 14). There was no departure from the commandment of the king, so the house of the Lord was perfected. It foreshadows a perfect obedience and worship which the earth will see when the true King has come. Then, as it was in Solomon's day, the King's commandment will be the absolute rule for everything (verse 15).

6. The Queen of Sheba, Solomon's Riches and Honors, and Solomon's Death

CHAPTER 9

1. The visit of the Queen (9:1-12)

2. The riches of Solomon (9:13-16)
3. The ivory throne (9:17-19)
4. Further riches and honors of Solomon (9:20-29)
5. The death of Solomon (9:30-31)

The account of the visit of the Queen of Sheba is the same as it appears in 1 Kings 10. The fame of Solomon had spread far and wide, and the Queen of Sheba comes to bring her tribute to admire and praise his wisdom and to give him presents of glorious things and of great value. And more than that. "King Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom." A type of the coming King who will be head of all. "And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom that God had put in his heart. And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, harness and spices, horses and mules, a rate year by year" (verses 23-24). In annotations on 1 Kings 10, we have pointed out how all this glory and the wealth of Solomon and Jerusalem foreshadows the fulfillment of many prophecies concerning the glorious reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. Greater splendor and glory will rest upon Him and come to Jerusalem than in Solomon's reign. Many beautiful descriptions of that coming glory, foreshadowed in this chapter, we find in different parts of the prophetic Word (Isa. 60:3-14, 66:10-13; Psalm 72).

As nothing is said in the first part of Chronicles on David's sin, so the sin and failure of Solomon is passed over in this part of Chronicles. His reign is described as unmarred by failure, a reign of undimmed glory. Such will be the reign of Him who is greater than Solomon. Solomon's failure, however, is indicated in this chapter. The horses out of Egypt mentioned in verse 28, and the fact that he multiplied horses and sought the gold of Ophir, shows that he became lifted up.

Solomon enjoyed the sure promises of God. He sins in the means by which he seeks to satisfy his own lusts; and although the result was the accomplishment of the promise, yet he bears the consequences of so doing. Outwardly only the fulfillment of the promise was seen. In fact there was something else. Without sending for horses from Egypt, and gold from Ophir, Solomon would have been rich and glorious, for God had promised it. By doing this he enriched himself, but he departs from God and from His word. Having given himself up to his desires after riches and glory, he had multiplied the number of his wives, and in his old age they turned away his heart. This neglect of the word, which at first appeared to have no bad effect (for he grew rich, as though it had been but the fulfillment of God's promise), soon led to a departure more serious in its nature and in its consequences, to influence more powerful, and more immediately opposed to the commands of God's word, and at last to flagrant disobedience of its most positive and essential requirements. The slippery path of sin is always trodden with accelerated steps, because the first sin tends to weaken in the soul the authority and power of that which alone can prevent our committing still greater sins--that is, the word of God, as well as the consciousness of His presence, which imparts to the word all its practical power over us (Synopsis of the Bible).

II. THE REBELLION OF THE TEN TRIBES

CHAPTER 10

1. Rehoboam made king (10:1)
2. Jeroboam's return from Egypt and his request (10:2-5)
3. Rehoboam's answer (10:6-15)

4. The revolt and Rehoboam's flight (10:16-19)

What followed Solomon's fall when he turned away from the Lord, who so graciously had appeared unto him twice, is unrecorded in the Chronicles. 1 Kings 11:9-43 contains these events. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, had lifted up his hand against Solomon (1 Kings 11:27). He planned secretly a revolt against the king, and when he went out of Jerusalem, most likely to carry out his plans, the prophet Ahijah met him, and in renting his own garment into ten pieces announced that God would take the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give to Jeroboam the ten tribes. Then Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam and he fled into Egypt, and was in Egypt until Solomon died. It is here where the account in Chronicles comes in. Rehoboam (enlarger of the people), the only son of Solomon mentioned in the Bible, went to Shechem, where all Israel had come together to make him king. Jeroboam had returned from Egypt and appeared on the scene, sent by the people to conduct negotiations in their behalf. Jeroboam demanded a lightening of the heavy burden of forced labor and taxation which Solomon had put upon them. If this request would be granted they were ready to serve Jeroboam. The King asked for three days to consider the demand. He first turned to the aged men and consulted those who had been closely associated with his father. They advised him to use kindness to avert the threatening rebellion. "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15: 1). If Rehoboam had heeded this inspired saying of his father, he would have followed the advice which had been given. But instead he turned to the young men, "the young men (Hebrew: children) that had grown up with him." They readily gave advice how the peoples' demand, "Ease somewhat the yoke that thy father did put upon us," should be answered. It was foolish advice. The threat to increase their burdens, and that while his father had used whips he would use scorpions (a cruel whip to which pieces of sharp metal were attached) was to overawe the people and bring them into submission. It seems almost impossible that Rehoboam should follow such advice. If Eccles. 2:18-19 applies to this son of Solomon, the father's fears were well founded. He certainly showed that he was not a wise man, but a fool. Yet there was another reason why Rehoboam listened to the foolish counsel. "So the king hearkened not unto the people, for the cause was of God, that the Lord might perform His Word, which He spake by Ahijah, the Shilonite, to Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. And the offended people answered the king with the same spirit and declared their independence. In contempt they said, "And now David see to thine own house." Then foolishly Rehoboam sent one of the officials who were hated on account of their office, Hadoram, who was over the tribute. The people became infuriated and stoned him to death. King Rehoboam had to make haste to escape a similar fate. The revolt had come. "And Israel rebelled against the house of David." The words spoken to Solomon (1 Kings 11:11-13) were now fulfilled.

III. THE HISTORY OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH: EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE CAPTIVITY

1. Decline and Apostasy under Rehoboam, Abijah and Asa

CHAPTER 11 Rehoboam's Reign

1. The forbidden war (11:1-4)
2. The national defence (11:5-12)
3. Jeroboam's wickedness and Rehoboam's strength (11:13-17)
4. Rehoboam's family (11:18-23)

The provocation to go to war with the tribes which had revolted was great. Rehoboam was ready to start the civil war. He gathered 180,000 men of Judah and Benjamin to fight against Israel and to restore the tribes to his kingdom. Shemaiah, the man of God, the prophet in Judah, received a message from the LORD, which he faithfully delivered. "Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your

brethren; return every man to his house, for this thing is done of me." It required courage to deliver such a message in the midst of the great preparations for war. Rehoboam and the people obeyed and did not go to war. They must have realized that if they disobeyed they would have fought against God. And the LORD also blessed the king and his people for believing the Word and being obedient. He always blesses when there is obedience. He built and fortified fifteen cities. "He fortified the strongholds, and put captains in them and store of victuals and of oil and wine." In several places he put shields and spears. Thus he made ready for a possible invasion from the side of Egypt, for Jeroboam, his rival, had been there. Rehoboam's fears were well founded, as we shall find in the next chapter.

Then there was a great exodus of priests and Levites from the domain of Jeroboam. As we learned from 1 Kings 12:25-33, Jeroboam established a wicked worship, setting up two golden calves at Beth-el and Dan. The priests he made were taken, not from the sons of Levi, but from the lowest of the people (1 Kings 12:31). The true priest and Levites who had remained with him were cast off from executing their holy and God-given office. He also had priests "for the devils." The Hebrew word translated "devils" means "hairy ones" and "goats." In Egypt the sacred goat was worshipped and Jeroboam's worship was patterned. The priests and Levites who were driven away by Jeroboam strengthened the Kingdom of Judah. They had a wholesome influence upon the otherwise weak son of Solomon. "They made Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, strong." They all walked in the way of David and Solomon for three years. Most likely fear had much to do with it. We read nothing of turning to the LORD and seeking His face.

His family record is given. Mahalath is mentioned as his wife, a daughter of Jerimoth, probably the son of one of David's concubines (1 Chron. 3:9). Then he took Maacah, a granddaughter of Absalom. According to Josephus, Maacah's mother was Tamar, the daughter of Absalom (2 Sam. 14:27). He had many wives and concubines. The polygamous tendencies of his father and grandfather were thus indulged by him, and in all probability his apostasy started from this sin. But he acted wisely and dispersed all his children throughout the whole country. Having twenty-eight sons and many more daughters, there were great possibilities of conspiracies, which he avoided by scattering them in different directions.

CHAPTER 12 Rehoboam's Apostasy, Punishment, and Death

1. Rehoboam's apostasy (12:1)
2. Punishment through Shishak (12:2-12)
3. Death of Rehoboam (12:13-16)

The kingdom had been established; Rehoboam had strengthened himself and lived in the indulgence of the flesh. Then followed the awful plunge into apostasy. "He forsook the law of the Lord and all Israel with him." Idolatry in the high places and under every green tree was established and fostered by him. "And there were also Sodomites in the land, and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel" (1 Kings 14:22-24).

Then Shishak came from Egypt against Jerusalem with an immense army. He was the first king of the twenty-second, or Bubastic dynasty. In his army were the Lubims (Libyans), Sukkims (desert tribes) and the Ethiopians. The cities which Rehoboam had built and fortified could not keep him out, for the LORD had brought him to punish Jerusalem. When Jerusalem was threatened and the Egyptian hordes were about to proceed against Jerusalem, Shemaiah, the man of God, appeared once more. He brought the solemn message from the LORD, "Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I left you in the hand of Shishak." That for which the LORD always looks first of all, when His people have sinned and departed from Him, was done by the princes and the king. "They humbled themselves." And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves and were returning to Him,

He had compassion on them. Some deliverance was granted and the wrath was not poured out upon the city. And He is still the same gracious LORD, always ready to forgive His people, when they return unto Him. However, the pride of Rehoboam had to be dealt with and, therefore, Shishak was permitted to take away the immense riches which Solomon had stored up in the treasures of the house of the LORD and in the king's house. The shields of gold were also carried away. Sad is the record of this son of Solomon: "And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD." Had he prepared his heart to seek the LORD, he would not have done the evil which he did. The only thing which can keep from evil is to seek the LORD and walk in obedience to His Word. Rehoboam's reign, with the exception of three years in which he walked in the way of David and Solomon, was a reign of trouble. Besides Shishak's invasion "there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually" (verse 15).

CHAPTER 13 The Reign of Abijah

1. The beginning of his reign (13:1-2)
2. War with Jeroboam (13:3-19)
3. Death of Jeroboam (13:20)
4. Abijah's family (13:21-22)

Abijah is called in Kings, Abijam, and in 2 Chron. 13:21, Abijahu (Hebrew text). His reign was not of a long duration; he outlived his father Rehoboam only three years. His mother was Maachah (2 Chron. 11:20). She is called here Michaiiah, probably because she was the queen-mother. There is no discrepancy between chapter 11:20 and the second verse of this chapter, in which she is called the daughter of Uriel of Gibeath. Josephus is probably correct when he states that Uriel was the husband of Tamar, the daughter of Absalom. In chapter 11:20, she is called a daughter of Absalom or rather grand-daughter, for one word is used in Hebrew for daughter and grand-daughter. (Abishalom in 1 Kings 15:2 is the same as Absalom.)

Of Abijah's evil walk, and that his heart was not perfect with the LORD, the Chronicles has nothing to say. That is found in Kings. That things went from bad to worse under Abijah's brief reign may be learned from the fact that his son Asa had to institute a reformation, and Maachah, the mother of Abijah and grandmother of Asa, had to be put away, because she had put up an Asherah, a vile idol-image in a grove (1 Kings 15:13; 2 Chron. 15:16). Chronicles gives an account of Abijah's war with Jeroboam. The two armies of Judah and Israel faced each other; Abijah had 400,000 men and Jeroboam 800,000. There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of these figures, as some critics have done. Both sides were confident of victory. Jeroboam had twice as many men as Abijah, and they were "mighty men of valor." He trusted in his superior number. It was different with Abijah, King of Judah. Before the battle began the king delivered a remarkable address in which he expressed his confidence in Jehovah. The LORD had given the kingdom to David and to his sons by a covenant of salt, said Abijah. The covenant of salt refers to a very ancient custom. When a guest had been entertained in a tent and partaken of salt with his host, the obligation of the latter towards his guest was one of inviolable sanctity. The covenant of Jehovah with David was like a covenant of salt, that is, inviolable. Abijah believed in that covenant. Then he mentioned Jeroboam, whom sarcastically he calls "the servant of Solomon," his revolt, his idolatry, his opposition to the priesthood. He closed his address with a confident statement. "Behold, God Himself is with us for our captain, and His priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you." Then the warning: "O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers, for ye shall not prosper." Abijah won the battle. When they were encircled by the enemy they cried to Jehovah in their hour of need, and He was faithful to His own word (Numb. 10:9). When the priests sounded with the trumpets, when they shouted, no doubt in faith and anticipation of Jehovah's interference, then God smote Jeroboam and all Israel and delivered them into their hands. They had prevailed because

they relied upon the LORD God, and so shall we prevail if we trust in the Lord. With that battle Jeroboam's strength was broken. The wicked king, whose awful idolatry was the ruin of Israel, never recovered his strength. The LORD struck him and he died.

CHAPTER 14 The Reign of Asa

1. The death of Abijah and Asa becomes king (14:1)
2. The good beginning (14:2-8)
3. His victory over Zerah (14:9-15)

Asa, (which means "healing" or "who will heal?"), the son of Abijah, began his reign well. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord. The strange altars, the high places and the images were taken away and the groves cut down. He was not satisfied with this work, but he also commanded Judah to seek the Lord. The land was quiet. The Lord blessed him and the land for the faithful work which had been done. "The land had rest, and he had no war in those years, because the LORD had given him rest." it was a remarkable work for one so young; probably Asa was not yet twelve years old when he became King. Maachah, his grandmother, most likely had some oversight as "queen-mother." (In 1 Kings 15:13 she is called the mother of Asa; the same is the case in our book 15:16. Mother in these passages has the meaning of grandmother.) Notice the great prosperity which followed the work he had done. "The Kingdom was quiet before him." Cities were built and fortified. They readily acknowledged that it was all of God. "Because we have sought the LORD our God, we have sought Him, and He hath given us rest on all sides." So they built and prospered.

But faith had to be tested. A powerful army under the leadership of Zerah, an Ethiopian, came against Judah. The battle was to take place in the open field, in the valley of Zephathah. Before the forces ever clashed Asa cried to the Lord. His prayer is most beautiful and simple. It still breathes freshness and has been a help to all God's trusting people in all ages. "LORD it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God, let not man prevail against thee." What confidence and trust! He put the whole matter upon the LORD. Their enemies were His enemies. In His name, resting on Him, they went forth. May we know and practice the same confidence. Such a prayer could not remain unanswered. The LORD smote the Ethiopians and gave to His people a great victory.

CHAPTER 15 The Reign of Asa, Warning and Reformation

1. The warning message of Azariah (15:1-7)
2. Asa's response and reformation (15:8-19)

But the Lord knew the danger which threatened Asa. He had begun well. He was faithful to Jehovah, and he and the people had a wonderful demonstration that the Lord hears and answers prayer. Would he continue and end as well as he had begun? The Spirit of God came at this important time upon Azariah (whom the Lord helps). When victorious Asa returned the prophet met him and delivered his message. It was a needed and timely message, for the danger for God's people is always the greatest after a victory is won and outward success and prosperity is enjoyed. "The LORD is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you." This has, of course, nothing to do with the question of salvation and the possession of eternal life, which the believer hath in Christ. To bear a real testimony, fruit unto God and have the victory at all times, a close walk with the Lord is needed. Apart from this, God's people are helpless and must needs dishonor their Lord. Verses 3-6 picture the results of departure from the Lord, such as were among Israel during the period of the judges. "Be ye strong

therefore, and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded."

And Asa hearing these words, believed what the prophet had said and then acted upon them. It is the true path to blessing, learning, believing and obeying. The abominable idols were removed and the altar before the porch of the LORD, which had fallen into disuse, was renewed by him. (2 Chron. 8:12). A great sacrificial scene followed. In connection with it they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD. The religious enthusiasm ran so high that they determined to put to death every person who did not seek the LORD. And when they sought Him with their whole desire He was found of them and gave them rest. These are precious and encouraging words. He is the LORD, who changeth not. It is still true today and ever will be true. He will be found by those who seek Him with their whole desire.

CHAPTER 16 Asa's Relapse and Death

1. War between Asa and Baasha (16:1-6)
2. Hanani's rebuke (16:7-9)
3. Hanani imprisoned (16:10-11)
4. Asa's illness and death (16:12-14)

Much has been made by critics of the supposed wrong date, the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa. Compare 1 Kings 15:33 with the first verse of this chapter to see the apparent discrepancy. If the invasion of Judah by Baasha occurred shortly after the events recorded in the previous chapter, it was in the thirty-sixth year after the revolt of the ten tribes. This presents a possible solution. Others think it is the error of a scribe.

As the dates in 2 Chron. 15:19; 16:1 are incompatible with that of Baasha's death (1 Kings 16:8), and consequently, of course, with that of Baasha's war against Asa, commentators have tried to obviate the difficulty, either by supposing that the numeral 35 refers, not to the date of Asa's accession, but to that of the separation of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, or else by emending the numeral in the book of the Chronicles. The latter is, evidently, the only satisfactory solution. There is manifestly here a copyist's mistake, and the numeral which we would substitute for 35 is not 15 but 25--and this for reasons too long to explain (Bible History).

Asa relapsed and failed when Baasha, King of Israel, came against Judah and built Ramah. (See annotations, 1 Kings 15 and 16.) In unbelief Asa made an alliance with the King of Syria. He feared Baasha very much. In Jeremiah 41:9, we read of a pit which he made for fear of Baasha; probably to hide there. "The fear of man bringeth a snare." How this reveals the weakness of man! After all the evidences of the LORD's mercy and power Asa could forsake thus the LORD and enter into an unholy alliance with a heathen king. He gained the object he sought and Baasha was forced to abandon his plan. But God had been a witness of it all. He sent through Hanani (graciously given by the Lord the meaning of his name) and rebuked the king for what he had done. The LORD reminds him of the far greater host which threatened him (14:9-15) and the deliverance He had wrought. Beautiful are the final words of Hanani. "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." The Lord looks for faith, for confidence. Our hearts are perfect toward Him when we trust Him and are obedient to His Word. Then all His power is with us and for us.

Wars to the end was the punishment announced upon Asa. And Asa showed his true state of Soul, when, instead of saying, "I have sinned," he began to rage; when instead of beseeching Hanani to pray for him, he put him in prison. He was away from the LORD and his behavior made it known. Stricken by disease, no doubt to humble him and bring him back to the Lord, he sought not the LORD, but the physicians. These were in all probability magicians; who used enchantments.

There was no return unto the LORD; no repentance.

2. Reformation under Jehoshaphat

CHAPTER 17 Jehoshaphat's Reformation and Increase

1. The Lord was with Jehoshaphat (17:1-5)
2. The revival under his reign (17:6-9)
3. His increase (17:10-19)

Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa, began his reign by strengthening himself against Israel. The Lord was with him, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, which means David's faithful walk before his great sin. The Lord greatly blessed him by establishing his kingdom and in giving him riches and honor in abundance. The Lord kept all His promises. When Jehoshaphat saw the evidences of divine blessing, his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord. This does not mean that he was puffed up, but that he became encouraged to go on in the good way he was following. The high places and groves were removed by him. In 1 Kings 22:43, we read that he did not take away the high places and that the people offered incense there. The work was not completely done. While he personally wanted to see it accomplished and commanded that it be done, the people failed in fully carrying out his wishes. "For as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers" (20:33). Another work he did, was the sending out of teachers to instruct in the knowledge of the LORD. Their names are interesting. Ben-hail, "son of strength"; Abadiah, "servant of the Lord"; Zechariah, "the Lord remembers"; Nathaneel, "gift of God"; Micahiah, "Who is like the Lord?" He also sent priests and Levites. "And they taught in Judah and had the book of the law of the LORD with them and went about throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people." It was a revival in teaching and in the study of the Word. No true revival can take place unless it is connected with the Word.

And the results soon came. The fear of the LORD fell upon the surrounding kingdoms. They feared to touch the people who were thus blessed. The Philistines brought presents and tribute silver; the Arabians immense herds of cattle. It was all a fulfillment of Deut. 11:22-25. Judah had a phenomenal increase. Without doubt this chapter presents one of the best scenes in the kingdom of Judah.

CHAPTER 18 Jehoshaphat's Sinful Alliance with Ahab

1. The alliance with Ahab (18:1-3)
2. Ahab's false prophets (18:4-11)
3. Micahiah's prophecy (18:12-27)
4. The fatal battle at Ramoth-Gilead (18:28-34)

The same record also appears in 1 Kings 22, to which the reader may turn for further annotations. Jehoshaphat's prosperity became a snare to him. Riches and honor he had in abundance. No doubt lifted up in his heart and self secure, saying perhaps, "I am increased in goods and have need of nothing," on a certain day he joined affinity with Ahab. Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram married Ahab's wicked daughter Athaliah (21:6). This was a fatal step for Jehoshaphat and the house of Judah. It brought him into alliance with Ahab, the wicked; he almost lost his life on account of it; only his prayer saved him (18:31); and Athaliah introduced the vile idolatries of Ahab into Judah (22:3) and became the murderess of the royal seed (22:10-12).

The historical account of Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab, the false prophets, the prophecy of Micaiah, the battle of Ramoth-Gilead, is commented upon in the record of the first book of the Kings.

That Jehoshaphat knew the Lord and was His is blessedly illustrated in verses 31-32. In the hour of need, the king in such bad company turned to the Lord and cried to Him. There was an immediate answer and the King of Judah was saved. What a power prayer is! May all God's people make use of it. As we have said previously, "Jehoshaphat was miraculously saved, but Ahab was miraculously killed."

CHAPTER 19 Rebuke and Restoration

1. The rebuke by the prophet (19:1-3)
2. Further revival and restoration (19:4-11)

At sun-down Ahab, the King of Israel died, while his ally Jehoshaphat, saved through the mercy of God, returned to his home in peace in Jerusalem. Then Jelin, the son of Hanani, met him. Asa, the father of Jehoshaphat, had been rebuked by Hanani, and had put him in prison for it. The son of Hanani rebukes Jehoshaphat. We read no answer from the king, but his actions show that the rebuke went home to his conscience. He must have repented of the unholy alliance with the enemy of the Lord. Jehu said to him, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD." This principle is the same in the New Testament. God's people are a separated people. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14). And the Lord acknowledged the good Jehoshaphat had done and his attitude, a heart prepared to seek God.

Graciously had Jehovah restored the king who had failed and dishonored Him. He had returned in peace, bowed before the divine rebuke and dwelt in Jerusalem. Then he went out again to do service for the Lord. He became at once active in bearing testimony and helping God's people, bringing them back to the fear of the Lord. He caused judgment and righteousness to be executed in the land. Notice how in this revival the Lord is before Jehoshaphat; eight times in verses 4-11 the Lord is mentioned.

CHAPTER 20 Judah Invaded, Jehoshaphat's Prayer and Deliverance

1. The invasion (20:1-2)
2. Jehoshaphat's great prayer (20:3-13)
3. Jehovah's answer through Jahaziel (20:14-17)
4. Prostrated before the LORD (20:18-19)
5. The great deliverance (20:20-25)
6. In the valley of Berachah (20:26-30)
7. The record of Jehoshaphat (20:31-34)
8. Alliance with Ahaziah (20:35-37)

An invasion of Judah by Moab, Ammon and others followed. Then Jehoshaphat feared and set

himself to seek the LORD and proclaimed a fast throughout Judah. Though the enemy was nearing Jerusalem and the danger was great, there was no disorder or confusion. They all looked to Jehovah and that gave them calmness. In troubles and trials God's people must always look first to the Lord and seek His face. A great company gathered together, even from the cities in Judah, to seek the LORD. It was one of the most remarkable prayer meetings reported in the Bible. The king stood in the midst of the large congregation. And what a prayer it was he uttered! What earnestness and faith breathes in every word! He addressed God as in heaven and as the ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations. In His hand there is power and might; none is able to withstand Him. It is a good way in approaching God to remember what a wonderful and almighty God and Lord He is. Then Jehoshaphat speaks of His dealing with His people Israel and speaks of Abraham--"thy friend forever." The prayer of Solomon in dedicating the house is mentioned (verse 9). Then he tells the Lord of the invasion, and the object of Ammon and Moab "to cast us out of thy possession which thou hast given us to inherit." Most beautiful is the ending of his prayer. "O, our God, wilt Thou not judge them?" They were His enemies, for they came against His land and His people. "For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee." Here is the spirit and soul-attitude which pleases God. Whenever and wherever it is manifested God's answer and gracious help is not far away. But it is just this spirit of dependence and expectation from the Lord which is so little known among God's people.

In the midst of the congregation was a Levite by name of Jahaziel (he will be seen of God), of the sons of Asaph. Upon him came the Spirit of the LORD and through him there came the answer, "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem; fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD will be with you." And the heavenly answer was believed. The king took the lead in bowing his head with his face to the ground. The people did likewise. In anticipation of the coming victory the Levites praised the Lord with a loud voice.

The next morning the divine direction was obeyed. The king addressed the people to have faith in God. Then he appointed singers arrayed in their official garments to go before the army and sing as if it were a triumphal procession: "Praise the LORD; for His mercy endureth forever." (The expression, "beauty of holiness" is literally, "holy array.") We read nothing of swords or spears. They needed no weapons. Probably they left them at home, for the Lord had said, "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle." And when they began to sing and praise, trusting in the promise, the Lord began His work in overthrowing and destroying their enemies. The invading armies were annihilated and none escaped.

A great praise-service in the valley of Berachah (blessing) followed. Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, with the people returned to Jerusalem with joy. They came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the LORD. And the kingdoms feared God when they heard what the Lord had done.

The prophetic application of all this is not difficult to make. Jehoshaphat and the people with him are typical of the remnant of God's earthly people, that God-fearing remnant which dwells in the land and in Jerusalem during the great tribulation. The prayer of Jehoshaphat, the divine answer and the great deliverance, foreshadows the cry for help and deliverance of that remnant, while the overthrow of their enemies, with the coming of the Lord, is foreshadowed in the deliverance of Jehoshaphat and the people. The praise will be great in Jerusalem, when the Lord acts in behalf of His believing remnant, at the close of the times of the Gentiles. Then the kingdoms of the earth will fear God.

It would be well if Jehoshaphat's life had ended with this beautiful scene. But it does not. He entered another unholy alliance, for commercial reasons, with wicked Ahaziah, King of Israel. The ships to go to Tarshish never reached their destination; they were broken. "Again had Jehoshaphat to learn in the destruction of his fleet at Ezion-Gaber that undertakings, however well planned and apparently unattended by outward danger, can only end in disappointment and failure, when they

who are the children of God combine with those who walk in the ways of sin."

And how many Christians have made the same experience! God cannot bless the believer when he is in fellowship with an unbeliever.

3. Decline and Apostasy under Jehoram, Ahaziah and Athaliah

CHAPTER 21

The Reign of Jehoram

1. Jehoram's wicked reign (21:1-7)
2. Revolt of Edom (21:8-9)
3. Revolt of Libnah (21:10-11)
4. The message of Elijah (21:12-15)
5. Judah invaded (21:16-17)
6. Jehoram's sickness and death (21:18-20)

Jehoram was Jehoshaphat's firstborn. Jehoshaphat had six other sons to whom he gave great riches, but the kingdom was given to Jehoram. He walked in wickedness. "For he had the daughter of Ahab to wife and he wrought that which was evil in the sight of the LORD." When Jehoram was in power, he slew all his brethren with the sword and also princes in Israel. The daughter of the murderer Ahab may have instigated the horrible crime. Jehoshaphat had joined affinity with Ahab (18:1), and married his son Jehoram to Athaliah. "What a man sows that will he reap." His unholy alliance began to bear fruit. And how often have Christian parents seen their children depart from God and follow altogether the wicked ways of the world, because they themselves had set the example. Then the enemies of Judah came and different revolts took place.

The writing which came to Jehoram from the prophet Elijah is interesting and presents some difficulties. Elijah had been translated a number of years before. To solve the difficulty some say that the name Elijah should be Elisha, who was then living and ministering in connection with Samaria. There is no need of doing this. It does not say that Elijah sent that writing, but it says: "There came a writing from Elijah the prophet." Elijah knew Jehoshaphat and he knew his son Jehoram, who was for several years the co-regent of his father. The Lord showed him beforehand the evil course Jehoram would take, and how he would follow the wicked ways of Ahab, Elijah knew so well. Then he received the message exposing the wickedness of Jehoram, "like to the whoredoms of Ahab," and announcing the judgment to come upon Jehoram. This message was probably intrusted by Elijah to Elisha, and when the proper moment had come this man of God delivered the writing to Jehoram, telling him at the same time that it was from Elijah.

Fearful was the end of this murderous and idolatrous king. He died of sore diseases, unrepenting, and thus as a lost soul passed into the blackness of darkness forever (Jude 13). And his people made no burning for him (burning incense) like the burning of his fathers; neither was he buried in the sepulchres of the kings.

CHAPTER 22 Ahaziah and Athaliah

1. Ahaziah and his evil reign (22:1-4)
2. His alliance with Ahab's son (22:5)

3. At Jezreel (22:6-7)

4. Jehu's judgment and Ahaziah's end (22:8-9)

5. Athaliah (22:10-12)

When the Philistines and Arabians invaded Judah they carried away the treasures of Jehoram, and slew his sons. Only Jehoahaz the youngest son was left (21:17). He is also known as Ahaziah and Azariah. These names in Hebrew have the same meaning "upheld by Jehovah." Poor, young Ahaziah still reaps the harvest of the unfortunate alliance of his grandfather Jehoshaphat. The leaven is doing its dreadful work. His mother Athaliah, granddaughter of the wicked Omri and daughter of Ahab, was his counsellor to do wickedly. He therefore did evil in the sight of the LORD, like the house of Ahab, for they were his counsellors, after the death of his father, to his destruction. What might have been if his grandfather Jehoshaphat had not made affinity with Ahab and his house and marrying his son Jehoram to Athaliah! Ahaziah's end, after he went with his uncle Jehoram, the son of Ahab, and the circumstances connected with it we have already annotated in Second Kings. Athaliah's awful crime in slaying the seed royal and the miraculous preservation of Joash, the reader will also find explained in 2 Kings.

4. Reformation Under Joash

CHAPTER 23 Joash King and Athaliah's Execution

1. Joash made king (23:1-11)

2. Athaliah slain (23:12-15)

3. Jehoiada and the revival (23:16-21)

The annotations to this interesting page in the history of Judah have already been made in connection with 2 Kings 11. We therefore pass over the preservation of the young child Joash and his hiding away in the LORD's house, on this account. However we call attention to the differences in the two accounts in 2 Kings 11 and 2 Chron. 23. As stated before the book of Chronicles is written from the priestly and Levitical view point; this explains the greater detail about Jehoiada, the priest, given in Chronicles. A careful study and comparison of the two chapters will show that there are no discrepancies.

"The differences, and even more the similarity, in the narratives of the event in the books of Kings and Chronicles have suggested what to some appear discrepancies of detail. It is well to know that, even if these were established, they would not in any way invalidate the narrative itself, since in any case they only concern some of its minor details, not its substance. The most notable difference is that in the book of Kings the plot and its execution seem entirely in the hands of the military; in Chronicles, exclusively in those of the priests and Levites. But in Chronicles also--and indeed, there alone--the five military leaders are named; while, on the other hand, the narrative in the book of Kings throughout admits the leadership of the priest Jehoiada. And even a superficial consideration must convince that both the priests and the military must have been engaged in the undertaking, and that neither party could have dispensed with the other. A revolution inaugurated by the high-priest in favor of his nephew, who for six years had been concealed in the Temple, and which was to be carried out within the precincts of the Sanctuary itself, could no more have taken place without the cooperation of the priesthood than a change in the occupancy of the throne could have been brought about without the support of the military power. And this leaves untouched the substance of the narrative in the two accounts (A. Edersheim).

Athaliah received her just recompense. The youthful Joash occupied the throne of David, and

the faithful priest Jehoiada was the instrument who brought about the needed revival. The beginning was in a solemn covenant. It was a covenant which bound the young ruler and the people together to be true to Jehovah, as it is demanded of the LORD's people; there was also a covenant between the King and the people (2 Kings 11:17). And the revival under the priestly direction began by the destruction of the idols and false worship and a return to Jehovah and the true worship of His Name. Every true revival must needs begin the same way. Tested by this standard most of the present day revivals are found wanting. "And he set the porters at the gates of the house of the LORD, that none which was unclean in anything should enter in." The house of the LORD was guarded against all that is unclean. How different from the corruption which is tolerated in Christendom, in that which is "the house," the professing Church.

CHAPTER 24 The Temple Repaired, Apostasy and its Results

1. Joash's reign (24:1-3)
2. The failure of the priests (24:4-7)
3. The temple repaired (24:8-14)
4. Death of Jehoiada (24:15-16)
5. The apostasy (24:17-22)
6. The Syrian invasion (24:23-24)
7. The death of Joash (24:25-27)

Joash was seven years old when he began his reign and reigned forty years. As long as Jehoiada the priest lived, he did what was right in the sight of the Lord. The account of the repairing of the temple needs no further comment here. (See annotations on 2 Kings 12.) Jehoiada, the faithful priest, who had so much to do with these important events during this crisis, died 130 years old. Being connected by marriage with the royal house and in appreciation of the great work he had accomplished "because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward His house," they buried him among the kings. After his death it became manifest that the revival which had taken place had its mainstay in the good priest; Joash's convictions and faithfulness to Jehovah were but skin-deep. A reaction set in, as it has been so often in the history of the Church. He listened to the evil counsel of the princes of Judah, and then they left the house of the LORD God and became idolators. The result was wrath from God upon Judah and Jerusalem for this trespass. Such is man in his corrupt nature! But the gracious Lord did not give them up. His righteousness demanded judgment, yet in infinite mercy he sent prophets to bring them back. These unnamed prophets testified against them, but they would not give ear. They hardened their hearts against the Lord and His prophets.

A worse deed followed. Jehoiada had a son by name of Zechariah; he was the cousin of the king. Upon him came the Spirit of God and he announced the fact that because they had forsaken the LORD, He had also forsaken them (2 Chron. 15:2). Like Stephen, the first martyr of the church, Zechariah had touched the sore spot; when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart. Then they stoned Zechariah as their offspring later stoned Stephen. It was worse than base ingratitude from the side of Joash that he gave the commandment to murder the son of Jehoiada. The king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father "had done him, but slew his son."

But there is a difference between the last words of this martyr-prophet and the last words of the first martyr of the Church. Stephen prayed: "Lord lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60).

Zechariah said: "The LORD look upon it and require it." Typically he represents the tribulation martyrs of the Jewish remnant, who will give the testimony concerning righteousness and the coming King at the end of the present age, and whose blood will cry for vengeance to heaven (Rev. 6:9-11). There can be no doubt our Lord meant this Zechariah when He uttered the words in Matthew 23:35. It is true He speaks of him as the son of Barachias (blessed of Jehovah); but this is not a difficulty. Barachias was another name Jehoiada bore and well suited to his character. Our Lord informs us of the place where he was slain, "between the temple and the altar." Joash, completely forsaken by the LORD, was defeated by the Syrians. Great diseases came upon him and he was murdered by his own servants. Like Jehoram he was not buried in the sepulchres of the kings.

5. Decline and Apostasy under Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham and Ahaz

CHAPTER 25 The Reign of Amaziah

1. The record of Amaziah's reign (25:1-4)
2. The war against Edom (25:5-13)
3. His idolatry and the divine rebuke (25:14-16)
4. The war between Judah and Israel (25:17-25)
5. The death of Amaziah (25:26-28)

Joash's son Amaziah (strength of the Lord) took up the government in Judah when he was twenty-five years old. His mother's name, Jehoaddan, means "Jehovah is pleased." Perhaps it was through her influence, as her name indicates godliness, that her son began the reign well. He did that which was right in the sight of the LORD. But the Lord, who looks deeper and knows the heart of man, knew that it was "not with a perfect heart." He dealt out justice to the murderers of his father, and also adhered closely to the law of God. In the account in 2 Kings 14 but a passing statement is given on the war with Edom. The details are recorded in the present chapter. He gathered a large army and hired 100,000 mighty men of the kingdom of Israel. It was a hasty deed and showed that Amaziah was not acting in faith. A man of God appeared next and warned him to have nothing to do with the 100,000 hirelings, "for the LORD is not with Israel." This is a good test still in all undertakings. Every believer should ask before he enters upon anything: Can the Lord approve of it? Is the Lord with it? But Amaziah had already paid the hundred talents to the soldiers. So he asked about the money. And the man of God gave a beautiful answer. "The LORD is able to give thee much more than this." Whenever believers face pecuniary losses on account of being true to the Lord and to His Word, they should remember that the Lord, who is thus honored, is able to make up for it and give much more. How many have found out that this is true! He dismissed the hirelings and Israel was angry. Cruel was Amaziah's deed done to the Edomites. After smiting 10,000 of them he took another 10,000 captive and brought them unto the top of the rock and cast them down so that they were broken in pieces. It was a horrible crime. The deed was committed in the wild regions of Selah or Petra (2 Kings 14:7). Evidently Amaziah had become greatly impressed with the magnificent rock temples which he saw in Mount Seir. In their weird and grand temples the Edomites practised their abominable idol-worship with human sacrifices. Some of these "gods" of the children of Seir, Amaziah brought back from his expedition and set them up to be his gods. A prophet rebuked him with a statement of much force. And the king answered with a sneer and a threat, showing how hopeless was his case. Then the prophet became silent after he made the solemn declaration: "I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened to my counsel" (verses 15-16).

The comment on the war between Amaziah and the king of Israel is given in 2 Kings 14.

Amaziah was slain in Lachish.

CHAPTER 26 The Reign of Uzziah

1. The beginning of his reign (26:1-5)
2. Uzziah's success and fortifications (26:6-15)
3. Uzziah's sin and leprosy (26:16-21)
4. The death of Uzziah (26:22-23)

The Son of Amaziah, Uzziah, in his sixteenth year, was made king by the people. In Second Kings 15 he is called Azariah. (In the annotations on 2 Kings 15:1-2 an explanation is given on this double name of Uzziah.) Isaiah was then prophet in Judah (Isaiah 1:1). Isaiah's name is mentioned in verse 22. Hosea (Hosea 1:1), Amos (Amos 1:1) and Zechariah (2 Chronicles 26:5) were also prophets during his reign. The latter is not, of course, the Zechariah whose wonderful visions are written in the book which bears his name. Uzziah built Eloth and restored that important harbor to Judah (2 Kings 14:22). From Eloth and Ezion-Geber Solomon's ships had gone to Ophir (1 Kings 9:26-28; 2 Chron. 8:17-18). Probably during the days of Joram (also called Jehoram) of Judah, when Edom revolted, Eloth also must have become independent. Uzziah did that which was right in the sight of the LORD. He sought God in the days of Zechariah, of whom we know nothing else but what is mentioned in verse 5. The Zechariah of Isaiah 8:2 cannot be identified with the Zechariah here, for the one mentioned by Isaiah lived much later. The better rendering of "who had understanding in the visions of God," is, "who was his (Uzziah's) instructor in the fear of God." Then follows the statement "as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper." And this is still true with all of God's people.

He waged a most successful warfare against the ancient foe of Israel, the Philistines. Previously, under the reign of Jehoram (2 Chron. 21:16-17), as so often before, God had used the Philistines to chastise His people, but now He used Uzziah to punish them for their wickedness. Then the Ammonites brought gifts and Uzziah's fame spread as far as Egypt. A great restoration work was, after that, carried on by him; he restored and fortified the northern wall of Jerusalem, which had been broken down under Amaziah (2 Chron 25:23). Then there was a marked reorganization of the army of Judah and the defense of Jerusalem was greatly strengthened. "And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong." Alas! for the next little word! How often we find it in Scripture. "But!" "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense." How solemn these words are! What a warning they contain to all God's people! When the heart of man is lifted up, when pride is followed, transgression is not far behind. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). How well it is for God's children to be much on their faces and humble themselves before the Lord. To be little in one's own eyes and make nothing of self is true greatness and the place of safety, where Satan stands defeated. And the danger of success and prosperity!

Uzziah invaded the priestly office which did not belong to him. It was a small matter to put some incense upon the altar. It was done in self-will and in defiance of the LORD's order and ordinance. It was a rejection of that office which foreshadowed the work of the true priest, our Lord Jesus Christ. And today in Christendom we see much of the same spirit, and that which is far worse, the total rejection of the Lord Jesus as sin-bearer and the great high priest. Uzziah became a leper and died a leper. He was buried as an outcast in the field and not in the sepulchres of the kings. In the year he died Isaiah had his great vision (Isa. 6:1). Isaiah's opening chapters give a good description of the religious and moral condition of Judah at the close of Uzziah's reign.

CHAPTER 27 The Reign of Jotham

1. The reign of Jotham (2 7:1-6)

2. The death of Jotham (27:7-9)

The record of the reign of Jotham is brief in both 2 Kings and in Chronicles. He did also what was right in the sight of the LORD. The statement "howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD" means that he did not act as Uzziah, his father did, when he intruded into the functions of the priesthood. However, in spite of the good example of the king, the people continued in their departure from Jehovah. "And the people did yet corruptly." All the evils of a false worship continued and were not stopped. The state of the people is pictured by Isaiah in chapters 1-5 and also in the book of the prophet Micah. These portions of the Word of God are needed to get a better understanding of the conditions which prevailed during the reign of Jotham. Jotham was a godly man and in his reign of sixteen years did much good. All his wars were successful. "He became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God." And this statement is the key of all his success and prosperity. He lived and walked in the presence of the Lord. He was guided, strengthened and kept by Him. And this is what all God's people need. It is still the way, the only way to blessing and success, to prepare our ways before the Lord. Jotham is one of the few Bible-characters of whom nothing evil is recorded. Yet the people over which he ruled continued in corruption and apostasy from God.

CHAPTER 28 The Reign of Ahaz

1. The record of his reign (28:1-4)

2. The punishment of Ahaz (28:5-8)

3. The message of Oded and its results (28:9-15)

4. Further punishments of Ahaz (28:16-25)

5. Death of Ahaz (28:26-27)

On Ahaz his wicked reign and apostasy, as well as the war with Syria and the invasion of Judah by Israel, see our annotations on 2 Kings 16. It was at that time that Isaiah ministered in Judah (Isa. 7). Pekah, the son of Remaliah, slew in one day 120,000 men "because they had forsaken the LORD their God." it was a terrible punishment which fell upon Ahaz. Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew the son of Ahaz, Maaseiah, also the governor and Elkanah, who was next to the king. A still larger number of Jews were taken captive. The interesting record of the prophet Oded is only given here in Chronicles. Who Oded was we do not know. He was a true and courageous prophet of Jehovah in the midst of idolatrous Samaria nearing so rapidly its predicted doom. Only a true prophet clothed with the Spirit of power could utter such a daring message, which in a time of victory and enthusiasm was calculated to humble the people. And he made the demand, "deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren, for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you." It was the Word of the Lord, and they knew only too well that every word spoken was true, and the heads of Ephraim (the northern kingdom) were deeply impressed and convicted. They said, "Ye shall not bring the captives hither." They acknowledged that Israel had transgressed. "For our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel." Then follows one of the beautiful scenes in Chronicles. This dark chapter is relieved by the mercy which was shown. "And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to

their brethren." it reminds us of two passages in the New Testament: Luke 10:30-37, the parable of the good Samaritan, and Matthew 25:31-40. We leave the application which can be made with the reader. Ahaz and his alliance with Assyria as well as Ahaz's further idolatry are commented upon in Second Kings.

6. Reformation under Hezekiah

CHAPTER 29 Hezekiah and the Beginning of the Revival

1. The record of his reign (29:1-2)
2. The purification of the temple (29:3-19)
3. The restored worship (29:20-30)
4. The great offerings (29:31-36)

Compare chapters 29-32 with 2 Kings 18-20 and the annotations given there. The reformation which took place under the reign of the godly son of ungodly Ahaz was a thorough and remarkable one. He did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all his father David had done. In the records of most of the former kings this phrase is missing. It shows that Hezekiah followed the ways of the man after God's own heart. His father had shut up the doors of the house of the LORD (28:24). The first thing Hezekiah did was to open the doors and to repair them. And this was in the first year of his reign, in the first month. There was no delay; he began at once. He fully realized that, in order to have the LORD's presence and blessing, the work must begin at the sanctuary. It has been well said, that piety and the work of righteousness were manifested in Jehoshaphat; great energy and faith was displayed in Hezekiah; and we shall find in Josiah profound reverence for the Scriptures, for the book of the law. And such is the need of the professing Church in the days of decline and apostasy. A revival of profound reverence for the Scriptures, and a whole hearted turning to the law and the testimony, the Word of God, is specially needed. Hezekiah gathered the priests and the Levites. In his great address he acknowledged the sins of the nation. Confession, as it always must, stands in the foreground. "For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken Him, and have taken away their faces from the habitation Of the LORD, and turned their backs." For this reason the wrath of the LORD rested upon them. He called upon them to sanctify themselves and to carry forth the filth out of the holy place. As for himself, it was in his heart to make a covenant with the LORD. No doubt this had been made in secret in the presence of the LORD. Every true revival begins in this way.

The address and appeal found willing hearts among the servants of God. The Levites arose. The three leading families of Gershon, Kohath and Merari, were represented. Then there were two from the family of Elizaphan; two of the descendants of Asaph; two of Heman and two of Jeduthun. They gathered their brethren and went into the inner part to cleanse it. They did not begin on the outside to work towards the inner part. All true work must begin in the inner part.

The true worship was restored and great offerings were brought. The praises they sung were the Psalms, "the words of David and Asaph the singer." Consult 2 Kings 18 on the abolishment of the idols and the destruction of the brazen serpent. Chronicles emphasizes the great restoration work of the temple, in harmony with its priestly character.

CHAPTER 30 The Passover

1. Preparations for the great Passover (30:1-14)
2. The celebration of the Passover (30:15-22)

3. The concluding festive days (30:23-27)

The Passover is next celebrated. It was, so to speak, the birthday of the nation, and typified the great redemption by the blood of the true Passover-Lamb. It had not been kept for a long time and as the proper yearly time for its celebration had passed, the first month, they concluded to keep it in the second month. The law had made provision for that and therefore what they did was according to the Word. (See Num. 9:6-13 and the annotations given there.) And the king recognized the unity of the people of God and their need. Therefore he sent letters to all Israel and Judah, also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel. The posts went with the letters throughout the entire land. The letter in itself is beautiful and was addressed to the children of Israel, not mentioning the sad division which had taken place. A considerable part of the house of Israel, the ten tribes, had already been carried into captivity. The letter reached, therefore, only the remnant which escaped out of the hand of the Kings of Assyria (30:6; 2 Kings 15:19; 1 Chron. 5:26). It was the Spirit of God who would bring all the people of God together around the table of the great feast. He always unites God's people. And the posts passing along even unto Zebulun with the God-given message of the king, were treated by some of the remnant with mockery. But others humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. Without such humbling a coming together of the people of God is not possible.

The great feast then was kept by the great multitude after they had taken away the false altars. They killed the passover. The priests sprinkled the blood, which they had received from the Levites. Many of them who had come were not cleansed; Hezekiah prayed for them. "The good LORD pardon every one." And the LORD hearkened and healed the people, so that the divine threat was not carried out (Lev. 15:31). The feast of unleavened bread was also kept for the appointed seven days with great gladness; yet throughout the days of gladness and remembering Jehovah confession was made to the LORD (verse 22). Everything shows that the Spirit of God was in the great revival. Other festive days followed with more gladness. The king gave great gifts and the princes did likewise, while a great number of priests gave their continued service. Not since the days of Solomon, when he had dedicated the house and reigned over Israel, had Jerusalem seen anything like it. The whole scene ended by the priests blessing the people (Num. 6:23-27). Heaven heard and rejoiced with His people.

Dispensationally the great revival foreshadows what will take place when the King of Israel will occupy the throne and reign, when all Israel is united and back in the land (Ezek. 37), when His people will worship and praise the Holy One of Israel.

CHAPTER 31 The Results of the Revival

1. The destruction of the false worship (31:1)

2. The king's appointments (31:2-21)

All was done by Hezekiah for the orderly continuance of the service in the house of the LORD. The order of the courses of the priests, after David's arrangement, which had been abandoned during the preceding apostasy, was once more settled. What was needed for the public sacrifices of the congregation was willingly given, as well as other things, by the king and the people.

"For the personal support of the ministering priests and Levites nothing more was required than the re-enactment of the ancient provision of firstfruits, tithes, and firstlings (Ex. 23:19; Num. 18:12, 21, etc.; Lev. 27:30-33). These together with 'the tithe of dedicated things' (Lev. 27:30; Deut. 14:28), were now offered in such quantity as not only to suffice for the wants of the priesthood, but to leave a large surplusage, to the thankful joy and surprise of Hezekiah and the princes. In answer to the king's inquiry the high-priest Azariah explained that the large store accumulated was due to the special blessing bestowed by the Lord on a willing and obedient people (2 Chron. 31:5-10). The collection of this store began in the third month--that of Pentecost--when the wheat harvest was

completed, and it ended in the seventh month--that of Tabernacles, which marked the close of the fruit harvest and of the vintage. And these contributions, or dues, came not only from Judah, but also from 'the children of Israel' (verse 6); that is, from those in the northern kingdom who had joined their brethren in returning to the service and the law of their Lord.

"For the storage of these provisions, Hezekiah ordered that certain chambers in the temple should be prepared, and he appointed officials, who are named in the sacred text, alike for the supervision and the administration of these stores (verses 11-19). Again and again it is noted with what 'faithfulness' one and the other duty were discharged by each in the special department assigned to him (verses 12, 15, 18)."

Such were the results of the revival produced by the Spirit of God. A united people, the destruction of all false worship, the restoration of Jehovah's worship, great willingness in giving and much sacrifice, obedience to the Lord and to His Word. Such must be the results of every true revival among God's people. Great is the record of the good King Hezekiah: "He sought his God, he did it with all his heart, he prospered."

CHAPTER 32 Sennacherib's Invasion, the Deliverance, and the Passing of Hezekiah

1. Sennacherib's invasion (32:1-2)
2. The king's counsel and trust in God (32:3-8)
3. Sennacherib's threatening and arrogance (32:9-16)
4. Sennacherib's defiance of God (32:17-19)
5. Hezekiah's and Isaiah's prayer (32:20)
6. The deliverance (32:21-23)
7. Hezekiah's illness, pride and departure (32:24-33)

As this part of Hezekiah's history is also found in 2 Kings 20 and we have given already the necessary annotations in connection with these chapters, we do not repeat them here. His prayer and Isaiah's ministry are reported in Second Kings and omitted in Chronicles. So are the details of his illness, his prayer, Isaiah's comforting words, and the details of his failure when he exposed his wealth to the ambassadors. The account of the defiance of Sennacherib's servants is also very much condensed in Chronicles. Both 2 Kings 19-20 and 2 Chronicles 32 must be read together. But we find also additions here. Notably among these are the beautiful words of Hezekiah. After he had done all in his power in defence of the city, cutting off the water, building walls, raising up towers, making darts and shields, appointing captains, he uttered his comforting message. "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid or dismayed for the King of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him, for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles." (See 2 Kings 6:16. No doubt the king had a record of the events of Elisha's ministry and words.) No wonder the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah. They are good and helpful words to rest upon in faith in all our warfare down here.

7. Decline and Apostasy under Manasseh and Amon

CHAPTER 33

1. Manasseh's wicked reign (33:1-10)
2. Manasseh's imprisonment and restoration (33:11-13)
3. His reign after restoration and his death (33:14-20)
4. The reign of Amon (33:21-25)

Manasseh, the twelve year old son of Hezekiah, did not follow the ways of his father, but did evil in the sight of the LORD. He had no godly Jehoiada, like Joash, to stand by him and guide him. He was surrounded, no doubt, by counsellors, but they were evil counsellors. Instead of following the example of his father, he followed that of his wicked grandfather Ahaz. In reading the record of his evil doings we get the impression that he hasted in undoing all his father had done. The corrupt worship on the heights was restored by him, and he added at the same time the Phoenician rites of Baal and Asherah, the Chaldean worship of the host of heaven (the sun and the stars). The altars for this wicked worship were placed in the outer and inner courts of the house of the LORD. More than that, he set a carved image in the house of God. This was an image of an idol; the vilest, unnameable practices were introduced into the place which was to be holy. "And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of Hinnom." As we saw in Second Kings, his grandfather Ahaz was the first one to introduce this horrible Canaanitish custom in Judah. The sins of the Sodomites were openly practiced.

"Alike the extent and the shameless immorality of the idolatry now prevalent, may be inferred from the account of the later reformation by Josiah (2 Kings 23:4-8). For, whatever practices may have been introduced by previous kings, the location, probably in the outer court of the temple, of a class of priests, who, in their unnaturalness of vice, combined a species of madness with deepest moral degradation, and by their side, and in fellowship with them, that of priestesses of Astarte, must have been the work of Manasseh" (A. Edersheim).

Then there were enchantments, witchcraft and wizards, and he dealt also with a familiar spirit. This was demon-power manifested as it is today in spiritualism and similar cults. So wicked was his work that he made Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel (verse 9). "Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much till he filled Jerusalem from one end to another" (2 Kings 21:16). "And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people, but they hearkened not" (verse 10). God's prophets bore faithful witness against these awful deeds. Isaiah, Jewish tradition claims, suffered martyrdom under Manasseh's reign. But though the LORD sent His messages, they did not hear. In 2 Kings 21:10-15, we have preserved the message which the LORD sent by His servants the prophets. But Second Kings has nothing to say of the conversion and restoration of this wicked man, one of the greatest miracles of grace on record. The king of Assyria came and bound Manasseh in fetters and carried him to Babylon. A certain class of higher critics, a number of years ago, used to sneer at this record, and denied its historicity because it is entirely missing in the book of Kings.

"It was called in question for this reason, that there was not ground for believing that the Assyrians exercised supremacy in Judah--far less that there had been a hostile expedition against Manasseh; and because, since the residence of the Assyrian kings was in Nineveh, the reported transportation of Manasseh to Babylon (verse 11) must be unhistorical. To these were added, as secondary objections, that the unlikely account of a king transported in iron bonds and fetters was proved to be untrustworthy by the still more incredible notice that such a captive had been again restored to his kingdom."

But these objections have been completely refuted by an Assyrian monument. On this monument the Assyrian king is pictured leading two captives with hooks and rings. The inscription runs as follows: "I transported to Assyria men and women ... innumerable." Among other names

given is the name "Minasi sar matir Jaudi" which means "Manasseh, King of Judah." Then carried away, no doubt much disgrace and suffering put upon him, his conscience awakened. He humbled himself and prayed and found mercy. What a manifestation of divine mercy! Jewish tradition often refers to Manasseh's conversion as the greatest encouragement to repentant sinners. Such mercy will yet be shown to the remnant of Israel, when they turn unto the LORD "whose mercy endureth forever." And the evidences of the genuineness of the conversion of Manasseh are not lacking. He acted faithfully after his return and repaired the altar and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God.

The utter corruption of human nature is seen in the case of his son Amon. With the awful experience of his father before him, and no doubt exhorted by Manasseh to serve the LORD and be true to Him, he followed deliberately the bad example of his father's idolatry. He trespassed more and more and did not repent like his father Manasseh, but died in his sins. Under his reign the wickedness reached a higher mark than under any previous king.

8. Reformation under Josiah

CHAPTER 34 The Reign of Josiah and the Reformation

1. The record of his reign (34:1-2)
2. The beginning of the reformation (34:3-7)
3. The house of the LORD repaired (34:8-13)
4. The law of Moses found and read (34:14-21)
5. Hulda, the prophetess (34:22-28)
6. The law read and the covenant (34:29-33)

The contents of this chapter are found also in Second Kings, chapters 22:1-23:30. Inasmuch as this has been covered by our annotation, we do not need to repeat it here. However, we add a paragraph from the Synopsis of the Bible.

"We find in Josiah a tender heart, subject to the word, and a conscience that respected the mind and will of God: only at last he had too much confidence in the effect of this to secure blessing from God, without the possession of that faith which gives intelligence in His ways to understand the position of God's people. God, however, makes use of this confidence to take Josiah away from the evil He was preparing in the judgments which were to fall upon Judah, the knowledge of which should have made Josiah walk more humbly. At the age of sixteen he began by the grace of God to seek Jehovah; and at twenty he had acquired the moral strength necessary for acting with energy against idolatry, which he destroyed even unto Naphtali. We see here how sovereign grace came in; for both Hezekiah and Josiah were the sons of extremely wicked fathers.

"Having cleansed the land from idolatry, Josiah begins to repair the temple; and there the book of the law was found. The king's conscience, and his heart also, are bowed under the authority of the word of his God. He seeks for the prophetic testimony of God with respect to the state in which he sees Israel to be, and God makes known to him by Huldah the judgment about to fall upon Israel; but tells him at the same time that his eyes shall not see the evil."

CHAPTER 35 The Keeping of the Passover and Josiah's Death

1. The Passover kept (35:1-19)

2. The death of Josiah (35:20-27)

In the eighteenth year of his reign, Josiah, like his great-grandfather Hezekiah, kept the Passover. No doubt the reading of the law had made this feast once more an urgent necessity. Moreover they had made a solemn covenant "to walk after the LORD, to keep His commandments, His testimonies and His statutes, and to perform the words of the covenant written in the book." Therefore in the appointed time, on the fourteenth day of the first month, they kept the memorial feast, the last before the house of Judah was carried into captivity. (Hezekiah's Passover was kept in the second month. See 2 Chronicles 30:2-3.) And all was done by the godly king "according to the word of the LORD"--"as it is written in the book of Moses." It was obedience to the Word. And such an obedience is needed in the days of decline in the professing Church. It is this which pleases God. The Passover kept was even greater than that of Hezekiah (verse 18). All Judah and Israel (those who were still left) kept the great feast.

The death of this excellent man and king of Judah has its lessons. The king of Egypt, who was Necho, also called Pharaoh-Necho, came up to fight against Charchemish by Euphrates. Josiah went out against him. But did Josiah ask counsel of the LORD? Was the good man guided by the LORD when he went out against Necho, who did not intend to attack Judah? The evidence is conclusive that Josiah acted of himself and was not directed by the LORD. The Egyptian king rebuked him. Necho had not come against Judah. God had commanded him to make haste and fight against Assyria. Josiah should have known what the prophets had announced about Assyria and its overthrow. Thus Necho sent his ambassadors to give a warning. Necho was on a mission which he knew was of God. Josiah opposed him. "Forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that He destroy thee not." But he gave no heed. The king who had cleansed Jerusalem and Judah, who had repaired the temple, obeyed the word and kept the Passover, neglected to ask the LORD in this matter and then continued in the wrong course. Perhaps pride played here also an important part. It would have greatly humbled him if he had desisted from his uncalled for warfare. How all this has been repeated and is being repeated in the individual experience of Christians needs hardly to be pointed out. Many who were much used like Josiah, stumbled and fell, when they ceased to depend on the Lord and acted in self will. Like Ahab (2 Chron. 18:29) he disguised himself. The arrow found him as it was with Ahab. He was pierced in the valley of Megiddo; he died in Jerusalem. There was great lamentation. The lamentations of Jeremiah are not the lamentations as we possess them in the book which bears that name. Jeremiah, however, refers to him (Jer. 22:10-13; Lam. 4:20). In Zechariah 12:10-14 the lamentation in the valley of Meggido is mentioned. It is connected there prophetically with another lamentation for another son of David, who was pierced. And He, our Lord, was pierced and wounded for our transgression. When He comes again to fill the throne of His father David, the people shall mourn for Him, but in a different way as they mourned for Josiah. Josiah was the last good king of the house of David who reigned. But there is another one coming who shall rule in righteousness (Is. 32:1).

9. The Final Decline and Apostasy

CHAPTER 36:1-14

1. Jehoahaz's reign (36:1-7)

2. Jehoiachin's brief reign (36:8-10)

3. Zedekiah (36:11-14)

As the complete record of these three final rulers is given in the second book of Kings, the annotations are made there. Nothing needs to be added. It was the final plunge before the awful judgment overtook Jerusalem and Judah. And there will be a final plunge into apostasy in connection with the professing Church, before the predicted judgment with the coming of our

blessed Lord will end this present evil age and usher in His glorious kingdom.

IV. THE CAPTIVITY AND THE EPILOGUE

CHAPTER 36:15-23

1. The captivity (36:15-21)

2. The epilogue (36:22-23)

In infinite patience the Lord still waited for the return of His people. Judgment is His strange work, but He delighteth in mercy. He sent them messengers who exhorted them and brought the messages of God, because He had compassion. But they mocked the messengers, despised God's gracious offers and misused His prophets, till there was no remedy. An awful statement. Apostasy and defiance of God increased to such an extent, till there was no remedy. The threatening clouds of judgment broke at last and the people were carried away into the captivity. "To fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths, for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath to fulfill three-score and ten years." And this age too is, with its rejection of God's best, approaching a day when there will be no remedy and the judgment will fall.

The epilogue takes us after the seventy year captivity. Cyrus had been named by Isaiah almost two hundred years before he was born (Is. 44:28). God accomplished His purpose through this Persian king. We shall follow his history in Ezra and his work and what it foreshadows in Isaiah.