

1 and 2 Chronicles

by Ross Callaghan

<http://rosscallaghan.yolasite.com>



Introduction to 1 and 2 Chronicles

The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles contain historical records of the Israelites from Adam through to the end of the captivity in Babylon. Much of the material is also recorded in 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings or elsewhere in the Old Testament. The records contain factual details like genealogies and descriptions of important historical events. Often they emphasize some events and ignore others, possibly because the writer was interpreting the events in the light of God's covenant with Israel, rather than just recording what happened. In the Hebrew Bible, 1 and 2 Chronicles form a single book; the last book in the Bible.

Author and date

The Bible does not say who wrote 1 and 2 Chronicles or when the books were written. The Jewish Talmud attributes them to Ezra who wrote "his book and Chronicles - the order of all generations down to himself." The Chronicler was a skilled writer and editor and was probably a priest from Jerusalem because he must have had access to many historical records. The books were written after the captivity in Babylon as they contain references to Cyrus' decree (538BC). The language used and events described indicate they were completed around 400BC.

Purpose

The Chronicler wants the Jewish people to see God's sovereignty over everything. He interprets selected events from Israel's history to show that obedience to God leads to blessing and disobedience leads to disaster. He emphasizes God's promise of a lasting covenant through David and so ignores kings from the Northern Kingdom who are not in David's line. He reminds his readers that God was still with them but that they need to continue to worship Him in a faithful way. The nation had experienced God's judgment through the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile in Babylon, but this must never happen again.

Key verses

Praise be to You, Lord, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is Yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; You are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from You; You are the ruler of all things. In Your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give You thanks, and praise your glorious name. 1 Chronicles 29:11-13

There is no one like You, Lord, and there is no God but You, as we have heard with our own ears. And who is like Your people Israel - the one nation on earth whose God went out to redeem a people for Himself, and to make a name for Yourself, and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations from before Your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt? You made Your people Israel Your very own forever, and you, Lord, have become their God. And now, Lord, let the promise You have made concerning your servant and his house be established forever. Do as you promised, so that it will be established and that Your name will be great forever. Then people will say, 'The Lord Almighty, the God over Israel, is Israel's God!' And the house of Your servant David will be established before You. 1 Chronicles 17:20-24

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

Outline

1 Chronicles Chapters 1-9. Genealogies

These chapters provide basic genealogies from Adam through to the period after the exile in Babylon. The family trees are not complete, and are not intended to be. The Chronicler focuses on David's family and the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi, ignoring many of the other tribes. He wants his readers to recognize that what is going on in their present circumstances is connected to what has gone before, and is part of God's purpose for the nation.

1:1-2:2	Adam to Israel (Jacob) and his 12 sons
2:3-4:23	Judah: the royal line
4:24-43	Reuben
5:1-10	Simeon
5:11-22	Gad
5:23-26	The half tribe of Manasseh
6:1-81	Levi and the temple musicians
7:1-5	Issachar
7:6-12	Benjamin
7:13	Naphtali
7:14-19	Manasseh
7:20-29	Ephraim
7:30-40	Asher
8:1-40	The Benjamites
9:1-34	The people in Jerusalem
9:34-44	King Saul

1 Chronicles Chapter 10. The death of King Saul

The Philistines attacked the Israelites at Gilboa and killed Jonathan and two of Saul's other sons. Saul was critically injured and asked his armour bearer to kill him, but he wouldn't. Saul then fell on his own sword and died. The Israelites fled when they saw that Saul and his sons had died, so the Philistines were able to take over many towns. The Philistines cut Saul and his sons' bodies into pieces and displayed them on the walls of Bethshan. People from Jabesh Gilead later came and took the bodies down, cremating them and burying their bones under a tree. *So Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord... and the Lord turned the kingdom over to David, the son of Jesse.*



Death of King Saul

1 Chronicles Chapters 11-29. The reign of King David

At Hebron *all Israel came together* and reminded David that the Lord had said he would shepherd Israel and become their ruler. There *they anointed David king over Israel, as the Lord had promised through Samuel.* (1 Samuel 16:1-13).

David started his kingship by capturing Jerusalem (Jebus) and he *became more and more powerful, because the Lord Almighty was with him.* The Philistines were the David's major enemy, but he was supported by his mighty men including Jashobeam, Eleazar and Shammah. They broke into a Philistine camp and got water for David, but he poured it out saying *Should I drink the blood of these men who went at the risk of their lives.* Abishai and Benaiah were also famous, like 'the Three' but many more fighting men supported David, including some who defected from Saul, and some from each of the tribes. *Day after day men came to help David, until he had a great army, like the army of God.* All of the rest of Israel were also of *one mind* in making David king, and *there was joy in Israel.*

David then decided to bring the Ark of God back to Jerusalem, and the whole nation supported him. As they moved the Ark, *David and all the Israelites were celebrating with all their might before God, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets.* Uzzah laid his hand on the Ark when an ox stumbled and was struck down for his irreverence. David was angry about this and *afraid of God that day* so wouldn't bring the Ark into the City of David, and left it with Obed Edom for three months. *and the Lord blessed his household.*

David built a palace in Jerusalem and *knew that the Lord had established him as king over Israel.* He took many wives and continued to defeat the Philistines in battle so that *his fame spread throughout every land, and the Lord made all the nations fear him.*



Bringing in the Ark

Once David had found a suitable place to house the Ark it was brought into Jerusalem by the Levites, accompanied by musicians, singers, doorkeepers and the elders of Israel. There was much celebration *with shouts, with the sounding of rams horns and trumpets and of cymbals, and the playing of lyres and harps.* The Ark was placed under a tent and the first offerings made before it. Levites were then appointed to minister before the Ark together with officials who would serve in the Tabernacle. David completed the ceremony by praying a lovely psalm of thanks, the words of which are echoed in Psalms 105:1-15; Psalm 96:1-13 and Psalm 106:1, 47-48. *All the people said "Amen" and "Praise the Lord".*

David was concerned that he was *living in a palace* but the Ark was *under a tent.* The prophet Nathan told him that he would not be the one who would build a suitable place for it. God told Nathan to tell David that he was to be the ruler, and that one of his sons (Solomon) would *build a house for Me, and I will establish his throne for ever.* David was humbled by this revelation and responded with a prayer in which he promised to obey the Lord, and asked God to *bless the house of your servant, that it may continue for ever in your sight; for You, O Lord, have blessed it, and it will be blessed for ever.*

The house of David and his kingship has indeed been continued forever. Jesus, who *belonged to the house and line of David* (Luke 2:4) is now King of Kings!

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the House of Jacob for ever; His kingdom will never end.
Luke 1:32

David attacked and defeated the surrounding nations including the Philistines, Moabites, Amalekites and Arameans, In each victory he took plunder, which he dedicated to the Lord. *David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for his people.*

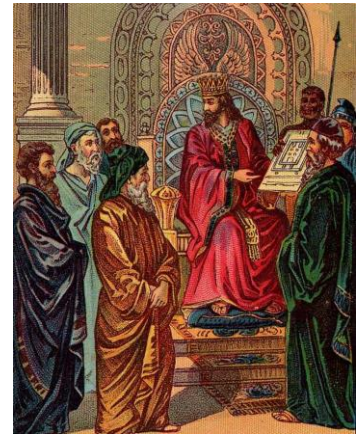
When the Ammonite king died David wanted to show sympathy to the king's son, Hanun, but his envoys were insulted. Hanun tried to appease David but a series of battles ensued between David's forces, led by Joab, and the Ammonites, supported by the Arameans. When the Arameans were defeated they were *not willing to help the Ammonites any more!* David forces plundered the Ammonites, and later, the Philistines.

Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel. Joab tried to talk David out of doing the census but it went ahead, revealing 1,100,000 fighting men, excluding those from Levi and Benjamin. The census was *evil in the sight of God, so He punished Israel.* Why was a census considered evil in God's sight? We don't know the answer to this question but it may be that a census was used to measure the nation's military might and trusting in military might meant not trusting in God. David realized he had done a *very foolish thing* and asked God to forgive him. God gave David three options as punishment: 3 years of famine; 3 years of domination by enemies, or 3 days of plague. David chose the plague and 70,000 people died. Jerusalem was about to be destroyed but the Lord *grieved because of the calamity* and relented. David said he should be punished rather than the nation as he was the one who sinned so he went and bought an altar ready to make a sacrifice. This place became the site of the temple that would be built by David's son, Solomon. The census took place and a count was made of the army and the officers of the tribes. Joab began to count the men but *did not finish.* The numbers of those under the age of 20 was not recorded because *wrath came upon Israel on account of this numbering.*

David then began making *extensive preparations* for the building of the temple because he thought Solomon was *young and inexperienced* and that the temple needed to be of *great magnificence and fame and splendor.*

These preparations included:

- Explaining to Solomon why David couldn't be the one to build the temple. It was because he had *shed much blood*.
- Praying God's blessing over Solomon for the task. *The Lord be with you, and may you have good success. May the Lord give you discretion and understanding.*
- Reminding Solomon that success would be based on his observing *the decrees and laws that the Lord gave to Israel.*
- Encouraging Solomon to be fully committed to the task. *Devote your heart and soul to seeking the Lord your God. Begin to build the sanctuary of the Lord God, so that you may bring the Ark of the covenant of the Lord and the sacred articles belonging to God into the temple that will be built for the Name of the Lord.*
- Providing necessary funding and workmen.
- Gathering 38,000 Levites to supervise the work of the temple or to be officials, judges, gatekeepers or musicians. These Levites were from Levi's sons Gershon, Kohath and Merari. *They were to serve before the Lord regularly in the proper number and in the way prescribed for them.*
- Gathering priests to serve in the temple from the families of Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons. Their order of ministering was determined by drawing lots.
- Ensuring all those who worked in the temple were selected fairly, were capable, and were skilled for the task.
- Appointing Levites to serve in the temple's treasury, and officials to oversee the storehouse.



Planning for the Temple

1 Chronicles finishes with David gathering his officials and explaining how he had it in his heart *to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord*, then charging them to *be careful to follow all the commands of the Lord*. He called on Solomon to acknowledge the God of his father, *and serve Him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind*, and then passed over the plans that *the Spirit had put in his mind* for the building of the temple. He encouraged Solomon to *be strong and courageous, and do the work*, explaining that God would be with him, and would not fail him or forsake him in the task. He reminded Solomon that the *palatial structure was not for man, but for God*. He then called on everyone to dedicate themselves to give of their treasures for its building. The people gave *freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord* and David rejoiced in this and gave thanks to God for His greatness, power, glory, majesty, splendor, and generosity. He recognized that everything comes from God and that they had only given back to Him what came from His hand. Finally David prayed that Solomon would work with *wholehearted devotion* to build the temple.

At this stage Solomon had already been crowned as king, but the people acknowledged him as *king a second time and he took his place on the throne in place of his father David*.

David died at a good old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth and honour.

The Chronicler doesn't mention many aspects of David's life that are recounted in 1 and 2 Samuel. The focus is on David's preparation of Solomon to build the temple so that the Ark of the Covenant can be properly housed.

See 1 Samuel Chapter 16 – 2 Samuel Chapter 23 for a much fuller account of David's life. This account includes David's character flaws alongside his military successes and heart for the Lord. David was an imperfect follower of the Lord, but he was a man 'after God's heart', and achieved much for the Lord, despite his imperfections.



David worshipping the Lord

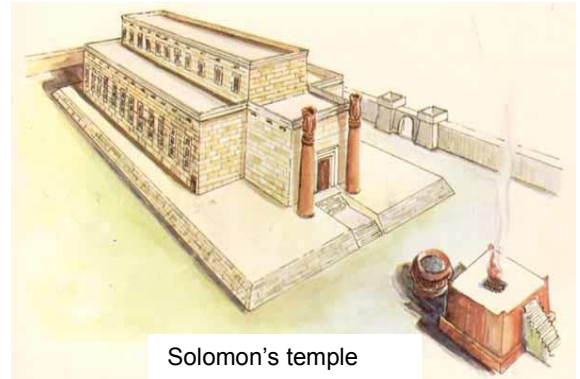
2 Chronicles Chapters 1-9. The reign of King Solomon

The Chronicler ignores the deception and intrigue described in 1 Kings Chapter 2 that began Solomon's reign. He says that *Solomon, son of David established himself firmly over his kingdom, for the Lord his God was with him and made him exceedingly great.*

Solomon's rule was established by asking God for *wisdom and knowledge* to govern God's people well. This request pleased the Lord so God gave Solomon *wisdom and knowledge* and also *wealth, riches and honour.*

Solomon built a temple for the Name of the Lord, and a royal palace for himself, in obedience to the Lord. He got timber from Hiram, king of Tyre, and used many skilled workers and labourers. The temple was built in accordance with God's specifications and took seven years to complete.

When it was finished the temple was furnished with materials made by the skilled craftsman Hiram-Abi and then the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the inner sanctuary - the Most Holy Place. *Then the temple of the Lord was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God.*



Solomon's temple

Solomon prayed a wonderful prayer of dedication and as he dedicated the temple to the Lord *the glory of the Lord filled the temple.* Everyone offered sacrifices and there was great celebration during a seven-day festival. The Lord appeared to Solomon and said He had heard Solomon's prayer. He told Solomon that in a drought *If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.* God's eyes would be attentive to the prayers offered in the temple because He had chosen and consecrated it so His *name would be there forever.* However, if the people turned away from the Lord and forsook His decrees and commandments there would be *disaster.* God would *uproot Israel from the land* and would reject the temple so it would become an *object of ridicule among all peoples.* This is exactly what happened later on!

Other activities that took place during Solomon's reign were:

- Rebuilding villages given by Hiram.
- Choosing not to make slaves of the Israelites used in building the temple and giving them jobs in his organization. People from other nations were used as slaves.
- Bringing Pharaoh's daughter to Jerusalem as his wife.
- Sacrificing to the Lord in the temple during the normal feasts.
- Receiving gifts of gold from other nations.
- Being visited by the Queen of Sheba. She had *heard of Solomon's fame* and visited him with many questions. She was overwhelmed by Solomon's wealth, and by the ease with which he answered all of the questions. She praised God that He had placed Solomon on the throne and made him king and gave Solomon many gifts including exotic spices.
- Becoming extremely wealthy so he was *greater in riches and wisdom than all of the other kings of the earth.*
- Continuing to be very wise due to the *wisdom God had put in his heart.* (But the Chronicler doesn't record how Solomon's wisdom didn't keep him from being seduced away from the Lord, especially by his love for foreign women. 1 Kings records how he had *seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray* so that he followed pagan gods and was *not fully devoted to the Lord as the heart of David his father had been.* God became angry with Solomon for his failure to obey the Lord's commands and determined to take away the northern tribes from his rule).
- *Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel for forty years. Then he rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father. And Rehoboam his son succeeded him as king.*

Solomon's reign was characterised by great highs and lows. He had great wisdom and enormous wealth but this didn't prevent him turning away from the Lord and suffering God's judgment. We can all learn much from Solomon's wisdom (as in the Book of Proverbs) but also from his downfall. Obedience to the Lord and a strong commitment to maintaining God's standards of righteousness will stand us in good stead as we seek to live out our Christian lives. Solomon expounded these things in many of his proverbs, but in the end didn't live by them – and suffered the consequences.

Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Proverbs 16:18

Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people. Proverbs 14:34.

2 Chronicles Chapters 10-36:21. The kings of Judah

The kingdom fell apart after the death of Solomon and was divided into two:

- **The Northern Kingdom (Israel)** lasted for about 200 years and was ruled from Samaria by 20 kings from nine different dynasties. These kings consistently rejected the Lord and did evil in His sight.
- **The Southern Kingdom (Judah)** lasted about 350 years and was ruled from Jerusalem by 19 kings, all descendants of King David, except for a brief reign by Athaliah. Many of these kings did evil in the sight of the Lord but a few brought the people back to the Lord (especially Hezekiah and Josiah).

In this section the Chronicler describes the reigns of selected kings from the Southern Kingdom of Judah, all descendants of King David. Sometimes he refers to Judah as 'Israel' because, to him, all of the tribes are Israelites. This can be a bit confusing!

Chapters 10,11,12. Rehoboam, first king of Judah.

The division into the northern and southern kingdoms was pretty predictable as there were divisions among the tribes even in David's time. The immediate cause of the split into two kingdoms was the unwise way that Rehoboam dealt with representatives of the northern tribes while negotiating for the kingship. He was advised to *be kind* to them but chose to deal with them *harshly*. As a result *Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day*.

Jeroboam, a hero of an earlier rebellion against Solomon was appointed king of the northern tribes and immediately erected shrines at Bethel and Dan with golden calves as gods. These pagan altars later became a symbol of how far the people had fallen away from the Lord. There was ongoing warfare between Israel and Judah, particularly over land from the tribe of Benjamin that was claimed by both sides. There were also sporadic invasions from the Arameans in the north and the Egyptians in the south.

Rehoboam's position as king of Judah was established by building towns for defence throughout Judah. *He became strong and he and all Israel (i.e. Judah) with him abandoned the law of the Lord*. When attacked by Shishak, king of Egypt, he and the leaders humbled themselves before the Lord and they were not totally destroyed. But Rehoboam *did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the Lord*.

Chapter 13. Abijah, king of Judah.

Abijah, Rehoboam's son, was the next king of Judah, reigning for 3 years. While fighting against Jeroboam he reminded the people that *the Lord is our God and we have not forsaken Him*. He told the men of Israel to *stop fighting against the Lord, because they would not succeed*. The men of Judah were *victorious because they relied on the Lord, the God of their fathers*.

Chapters 14-16. Asa, king of Judah.

Asa was Abijah's son and reigned for 35 years. He continued the approach of his father and *did what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God*. He *commanded Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers and to obey His laws and commands*. Asa had a very large army and continued to build fortified cities, as his father had

done. Asa relied on the Lord and so was able to defeat the vast army of the Cushites. The Holy Spirit told him that *the Lord is with you when you are with Him* so he encouraged the people to turn to the Lord during a time of great distress. Asa repaired the altar in the temple and led the people into a covenant to seek the Lord *with all their heart and soul*. This led to an extended period of peace. In Asa's last years he entered into treaty with surrounding nations, and even gave away treasures from the temple. Hanani the seer reminded him how he had been blessed when he relied on the Lord but Asa was angry when he heard this and put the seer in prison. Asa died from a severe disease. His life is a lesson to us all. When we follow in the Lord's ways the Lord will bless us; but when we choose to reject the Lord and go our own way there are severe consequences.

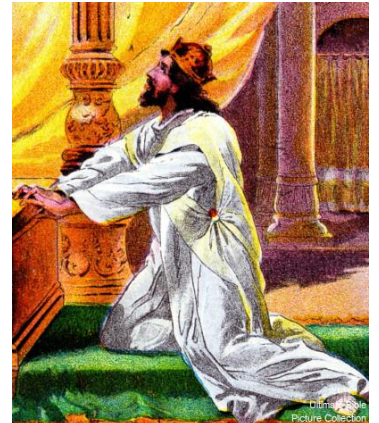
Chapters 17-20. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah

Asa's son Jehoshaphat was the fourth king of Judah and he reigned for 25 years. Along with Hezekiah and Josiah, Jehoshaphat is held in very high esteem by the Chronicler and his reign is described in glowing terms. Jehoshaphat followed in his father's ways and *did what was right in the eyes of the Lord*. The Lord established the kingdom under his rule and he became very rich. *His heart was devoted to the ways of the Lord*, and he instituted a number of important reforms. These included continuing to strengthen the army; sending officials around the kingdom to teach the people from the *Book of the Law of the Lord*; removing many of the pagan high places; closing the places of prostitution, and appointing judges who would have *no injustice or partiality or bribery*. He encouraged the judges and priests to *serve faithfully and wholeheartedly in the fear of the Lord*.

Unlike his father, Jehoshaphat allied himself other nations including Ahab, the king of Israel. When Ahab wanted to know whether they should go to war against Ramoth Gilead, Jehoshaphat asked that they first enquire of a prophet of the Lord. Ahab had many prophets who prophesied what he wanted to hear, but the prophet Micaiah wouldn't do that. He prophesied that they should attack Ramoth Gilead and they would be victorious, but that Ahab would be killed and the people would be *like a sheep without a shepherd*. Ahab didn't like this and had Micaiah put in jail. The prophecy was fulfilled and Ahab was killed in the battle.

Back in Jerusalem the prophet Jehu challenged Jehoshaphat about his alliances and also about not getting rid of all of the places of idolatry. Later Jehoshaphat made an alliance with Ahaziah, king of Israel so while his reign was characterized by a strong relationship with the Lord, it was not perfect.

When he was about to be attacked by a *vast army* of Moabites and Ammonites Jehoshaphat sought the Lord praying *We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You*. The Lord answered by saying He would be with them and would fight the battle for them. *The battle is not yours, but the Lord's*. Jehoshaphat and the people believed this and began to *sing and praise the Lord*. The Lord set ambushes against the Moabites and Ammonites and *they were defeated*, with much plunder afterwards. *And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side*.



Chapter 21. Jehoram, king of Judah.

Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram reigned over Judah for 8 years. He *established himself firmly* over the kingdom by killing all of his brothers and *did evil in the eyes of the Lord*. Jehoram allied himself with Ahab as his father had done by marrying one of Ahab's daughters. God wasn't willing to destroy the house of David because of this sinfulness due to the covenant He had made with David. (2 Samuel 7:13-15). During Jehoram's reign Edom broke away from Israel and *to this day Edom* (modern-day Jordan) *has been in rebellion against Judah*. Jehoram led Judah astray by reinstating the pagan high places and was cursed to die a horrible death in a prophecy by Elijah. The Lord also caused surrounding nations to attack Judah and carry off the king's wife, children and treasures. Jehoram *passed away to no-one's regret*. What a terrible epitaph!

Chapter 22-24. Ahaziah and Joash, kings of Judah.

Jehoram's youngest son, Ahaziah, succeeded him but only reigned for 1 year. He also *did evil in the eyes of the Lord* and died after he disobeyed God and went to war against the Arameans. Ahaziah was captured and put to death by Jehu and his mother, Athaliah ruled in his place for 6 years. She then tried to kill off the whole royal family of Judah but her sister hid Ahaziah's son, Joash in the temple. 6 years later Jehoiada, the priest

gathered a big group together and demanded that the King's son, Joash, should become the king. Joash was crowned as king and Athaliah was put to death. *Jehoiada made a covenant that he and the people and the king would be the Lord's people.* This began a period of reform with the temple repaired and many of its normal practices being resumed. This was all funded through the contributions of the people who placed their gifts in a big chest, *until it was full.* They *rebuilt the temple of God according to its original design and reinforced it.*

After the death of Jehoiada, the priest, Joash was swayed by his officials and undid many of the reforms he had initiated and the nation fell back into idolatry. Zechariah prophesied that God had forsaken Joash because he had *forsaken the Lord* but Joash had him stoned to death. Joash himself was put to death by his own officials after he was conquered by the Arameans. *Because Judah had forsaken the Lord, the God of their father, judgment was executed on Joash.* His reign lasted for 40 years and was a sad reminder of how those who do great things can easily fall, and all the good they have done be wasted.

Chapter 25. Amaziah, king of Judah.

Joash's son, Amaziah reigned for 29 years. *He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not wholeheartedly.* What a disappointing description of your life! How much better to live for the Lord, and do it wholeheartedly! When Amaziah was mustering an army he hired some extra men from Israel, but a prophet told him they were not needed so he sent them home. God had *the power to help or overthrow.* After winning the battle Amaziah brought back some foreign gods and this angered the Lord so He sent a prophet to rebuke Amaziah. Amaziah stopped him speaking and listened to his own advisers. When he went into battle against Jehoash, king of Israel, the Lord taught him a lesson and he was captured. The walls of Jerusalem were broken down and treasures from the temple taken to Israel. Amaziah was rejected after he *turned away from following the Lord* and fled to Lachish where he died. His life is a tragic example of the effects of backsliding away from the Lord!

Chapter 26. Uzziah, king of Judah.

Amaziah's son, Uzziah reigned for 52 years and, like his father, started well but finished poorly. *As long as he sought the Lord, God gave him success.* After a period of rebuilding Uzziah *became powerful and his pride led to his downfall.* He tried to usurp the role of the priests and was afflicted with leprosy, so had to live out his life in isolation.

Chapter 27. Jotham, king of Judah.

Uzziah's son, Jotham reigned for 16 years. He grew powerful because *he walked steadfastly before the Lord his God.* Jotham's reign was notable for conquering of the Ammonites.

Chapter 28. Ahaz, king of Judah.

Jotham's son Ahaz reigned for 16 years and was one of Judah's worst kings. He *did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord* and led the nation into even more idolatry than before. In response God handed him over to the Arameans and many from Judah were taken prisoner to Damascus. Ahaz himself was defeated by the king of Israel and many of his soldiers killed and much plunder taken to Samaria. The prophet Oded explained that while Judah had been given over to the Samaria, Israel was *just as guilty of sins before the Lord* and they should send their *fellow countrymen* back home and return the plunder. Ahaz called on the Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria for help when he was besieged by the Edomites but he was double crossed and Judah came under Assyrian control. Ahaz became *even more unfaithful to the Lord* and this led to his *downfall and the downfall of all Israel.* Ahaz shut down the temple and gave away its furnishings then set up pagan altars on every street corner in Jerusalem. This *provoked the Lord to anger.*

Chapter 29-32. Hezekiah, king of Judah.

Fortunately Ahaz's son, Hezekiah, was one of the best kings in Judah. He ruled for 29 years and *did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father David had done.*

In the first month of his reign, Hezekiah *opened the doors of the temple of the Lord and repaired them*. He then brought the priests and Levites together and ordered them to re-consecrate themselves to the Lord, and to purify the temple. He wanted to *make a covenant with the Lord, the God of Israel so that His fierce anger will turn away from us*. Once the temple was purified Hezekiah brought sacrifices, and the normal temple services were restored. The people were glad that the re-establishment of the temple was able to take place so quickly and they *sang praises with gladness and bowed their heads and worshipped*.

Hezekiah then invited all Judah and Israel to come to Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover in the temple. He hoped that this would lead to a re-unification of the Northern and Southern kingdoms, before the Lord, and also politically. Most of the northern tribes mocked the messengers who brought the invitations, so only a few from the tribes of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun went to Jerusalem for the celebration. The Passover was held a month later than the regular time due to low numbers of priests and Levites available. After the Passover the people carried on for an extra week and there was great joy, for *since the days of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel, there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem*. Before going home the people set about destroying the high places, Asherah poles and unholy altars throughout Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh. Hezekiah then assigned duties to the priests and Levites; ordered the people to make their required contributions to the temple; set up storerooms to hold everything that was given, and the normal temple distributions were able to be resumed. The temple was purified, and back in operation! *In everything that he undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the Law and the commands, Hezekiah sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered*.

Just when Hezekiah had faithfully brought Judah back to the Lord, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah, laying siege to the fortified cities, and intending to take Jerusalem. Hezekiah blocked off the water supplies outside the city and made a tunnel bringing the water into the city. This tunnel still exists today. He also repaired broken sections of the wall. He encouraged his people by saying there was *greater power* with them (the Lord) than with the *vast army* of the Assyrians. Sennacherib sent a message to the people of Jerusalem trying to undermine their confidence in the Lord and in Hezekiah. He also insulted the Lord, *so the Lord sent an angel, who annihilated all the fighting men and the leaders and officers in the camp of the Assyrian king, so he withdrew to his own land in disgrace*. It doesn't pay to insult the Lord!

During Hezekiah's time *the Lord took care of the people and he was highly regarded by all the nations*. As he approached his death he became proud, but repented so that the Lord's wrath did not come upon him or the people. He had great riches and *succeeded in everything he undertook*. He was followed as king by his son Manasseh, who probably had become co-regent with him ten years earlier.

At one point in his life God left Hezekiah *to test him and to know everything that was in his heart*.

The Hebrew word here for 'test' is the same word as for 'tempt', or 'try'. Whenever we feel that 'God has left us' or we don't sense His presence it may be that satan is tempting us, or God is testing us, or we feel we are in a trial.

It's helpful to know that these are all parts of the same experience! Temptations, testings and trials are used by God to help expose everything that is in our hearts, so that we can be more whole-hearted for Him.

Chapter 33. Manasseh and Amon, kings of Judah.

Hezekiah's son, Manasseh was not like his father. He reigned for 55 years and did evil in the eyes of the Lord rebuilding much of the idolatry that Hezekiah had removed. Manasseh was so evil that he *provoked the Lord to anger*. When the Lord spoke to him he *paid no attention*, until he was taken prisoner by the Assyrians. Then in his distress he sought the Lord and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. The Lord was greatly moved by Manasseh's repentance and restored him to Jerusalem. *Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is God*. He got rid of the foreign gods, restored the temple worship and *told Judah to serve the Lord, the God of Israel*. Manasseh is great example to us of the power of repentance. No matter how evil we may have been in the past God can and will restore us to His righteous ways when we repent.

Manasseh's son Amon only reigned for 2 years but he *did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did not humble himself before the Lord*, as his father had done. He was assassinated.

Chapter 34-35. Josiah, king of Judah.

Amon's son, Josiah, was only 8 years old when he became king. He was one of the great kings. *Never before had there been a king like Josiah, who turned to the Lord with all his heart and soul and strength, obeying all the laws of Moses. And there has never been a king like him since.* 2 Kings 23:25.

Josiah brought many reforms during his 31-year reign. These included:

- Purging of pagan high places, Asherah poles, idols, cast images and altars of Baal.
- Repairing the temple by hiring skilled workers and faithful people to supervise them.
- Encouraging obedience to *the Law of the Lord that had been given through Moses*. The Book of the Law had been discovered during the repair of the temple. When Josiah had the book read publicly he realized that God's anger would fall on His people because they were forsaking Him. *My anger will be poured on this place and will not be quenched.* Josiah humbled himself and wept in God's presence and *renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord to follow the Lord and keep His commands, regulations and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, and to obey the words of the covenant written in the Book of Law.* He also made everyone else *serve the Lord their God, which they did for as long as he lived.*
- Celebrating the Passover as prescribed in the Book of the Law. The Passover had not been celebrated since the days of Samuel (before King David) but Josiah made sure *the entire service of the Lord was carried out in the celebration of the Passover.*



Josiah died in a battle with Neco, king of Egypt; one that he didn't really need to engage in. *All Jerusalem mourned for him* and Jeremiah composed a number of laments for him. Jeremiah 22:10,15,16. After Josiah died, the kingdom reverted back to its idolatrous ways. God's judgment had been turned back during his lifetime but it soon descended powerfully on Judah and her rebellious people.

Chapter 36:1-14. Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, last kings of Judah.

The last kings of Judah brought a very sad period in Israel's history to a close. Jehoahaz only reigned for three months before being dethroned by the king of Egypt and being replaced by his brother Eliakim (renamed Jehoiakim). Jehoiakim reigned for eleven years and *did evil in the eyes of the Lord*. He was taken into captivity in Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar along with many of the articles from the temple. His son Jehoiachin also *did evil in the eyes of the Lord* and only reigned for three months. He was also taken into captivity in Babylon along with more articles from the temple. Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah became king and reigned for eleven years. Jeremiah spoke the word of the Lord to him, (Jeremiah 37:1-39:18) but *he would not turn to the Lord* and led the people into even more despicable practices than before, even *defiling the temple*.

2 Chronicles 36:15-23. The exile in Babylon and return to Jerusalem

Chapter 36:15-21. The fall of Jerusalem and exile in Babylon.

God had given His people many opportunities to repent and turn back to Him but they *mocked God's messengers, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets*. Finally *the wrath of the Lord was aroused against His people and there was no remedy*. God handed them over to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and those who remained alive were carried into exile in Babylon. The temple was destroyed and Jerusalem trashed. The Israelites became servants of the Babylonians for 70 years until Babylon fell to the Persian king Cyrus the Great.

Meanwhile the land of Israel *enjoyed its Sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah* (Jeremiah 27:22, 25:11). God had purged His land and His people of their evils and they were now ready to be the way by which God would bring blessing to all nations. See Ezekiel Chapter 36.

Chapter 36:22-23. The decree of Cyrus.

2 Chronicles finishes with the decree of Cyrus, given in 538 BC. Cyrus' decree finished the 70-year captivity in Babylon and allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem so they could rebuild the temple. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah describe what happened after this decree.

Discussion questions

Draw up a timeline showing the main events that are described in 1 and 2 Chronicles.

What was the significance of this period of history

- for Israel?
- for God in His dealings with the Israelites?

1 and 2 Chronicles contains material that is different from equivalent passages in 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings. Why is this? On what basis did the Chronicler choose material to be included in his books?

1 Chronicles lists the genealogies of the tribes of Israel. How do these genealogies compare to equivalent genealogies in other parts of the Bible? Why is there a difference? Why are genealogies important? What can we learn from genealogies?

David and Solomon were important leaders in Israel during the period described in 1 and 2 Chronicles. Identify the qualities and characteristics that each man demonstrated in his role as a leader. Which of these qualities and characteristics made him effective as a leader? How were these qualities and characteristics interpreted by the Chronicler compared to the writers of 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Kings? What can you learn from David and Solomon about qualities like repentance, facing up to sin, dealing with personal issues, reacting to enemies, worship, leadership, endurance, generosity, courage, steadfastness and love?

Many of the kings described in 2 Chronicles *did evil in the eyes of the Lord*. What did they do, and what was the effect of this? Identify the kings that that *did good in the eyes of the Lord*. What did they do and what was the effect of this? Can a modern day king or ruler do evil or good in the eyes of the Lord? What is the effect of this on the nation they lead? How can national leaders make sure their nation experiences God's blessing rather than His judgment?

Why was the building and maintenance of the temple so important during this period of Israel's history? Compare this to beforehand when the Israelites were wandering in the desert on their way to the Promised Land, and afterwards when the temple was destroyed and they were in captivity in Babylon.

What have you learned from your study of 1 and 2 Chronicles? How will you apply this in your life?