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PREACHING FROM 1 & 2 CHRONICLES

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Preaching From 1 & 2 Chronicles

The two books of Chronicles were originally one, but by the time of the Septuagint they were divided. The original title in translation was "The Words of the Days", but was called by the Greek version "Things Omitted Or Passed Over." As history is traced back to Adam, they may be viewed as the history of mankind seen from a specific perspective. Ezra most probably was the author and the time of their composition seems to be 450-425 B.C. (E. J. Young, *An Introduction To The Old Testament*, 413). The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are closely related. They are evidently addressed to the descendants of the remnant that returned from Babylon to Palestine in the days of Cyrus, king of Persia. This group still represented just a small portion of Israel and there were many problems. Through the prompting of Haggai and Zechariah earlier, the Jews had built the second temple by 516 B.C. However, there was no *shekhina* glory and some of the temple furniture was missing. The old independent theocracy was dead, for they lived now under a pagan government and this was to continue through the rest of Biblical history. No Davidic descendant was on the throne, in spite of the glorious covenant made with David. In fact the monarchy had gone underground and would not reappear until Magi came to Jerusalem enquiring: "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?". This is true, although Zerubbabel was of Davidic descent and had a prominent position. Both Ezra and Nehemiah remind us that conditions were far from rosy. There was need for much reformation. Earlier prophetic predictions of a glorious restoration were still far removed. The remnant needed a message to encourage them and to remind them that God's plan was still intact. Saints today still have the same requirement.

As one reads consecutively through the Old Testament, the history from Adam to the exile has been traced. We may be then a little surprised to have a re-run of it here. However, we soon observe certain additions and omissions. McNicol reminds us that twenty whole chapters and twenty-four parts of chapters dealt with matters not found in the other books of Scripture (*Thinking Through The Bible*, I, 229f.). Omissions include the private lives of David and Solomon with their many sins and most references to the schismatic northern kingdom. All is designed to show that Judah is the legitimate heir of the patriarchal promises and that past covenants continue to operate (1 Chron. 28:4f.). This explains the heavy use of genealogies, which we find so tedious. The author gives a dominant place to David and Solomon and also to the temple. Chronicles is a priestly book, for prescribed forms must be preserved.

There is a fourfold division of the material: 1. Early genealogical material 2. The career of David 3. The career of Solomon and 4. Judah's history up to the return from exile. The purpose is best seen as an epitome of Israel's history revealing the causes of the apostasy that led to the exile. Also it aims to encourage future faithfulness to the Mosaic legislation, so that the Messianic hope might be fulfilled. The sources used included canonical material such as the Pentateuch, Joshua, the books of Samuel and Kings, as well as other pre-exilic material. The

Chronicler uses the material with the purpose of reform in mind. Never must they fall back into the old ways, which had so grieved their covenantal Lord. Application may be made to the 20th century, for apostasy is perennial. The moral absolutes of the Old Testament are still binding. This fact must be proclaimed in an age when so much is in a state of flux. Israel must also pay strict attention to Levitical matters. The houses of Aaron and David still had roles to play, as is emphasised in the prophets. The emphasis on worship is relevant in today's person centred world. Glorious hymns praising God's wondrous attributes must be promoted in all our services.

Preaching from the Genealogies

In the Roman Empire it used to be said that all roads led to Rome. Similarly in the Scriptures all roads lead to Christ. As those called to expound the Word of God, I would suggest that our approach to the Old Testament should be guided by the words of the risen Christ: "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:27 N.I.V.). A Christo-centric approach is called for and we shall find Him presented in prophecies and in types. We find the great Messianic passage of Chronicles in 1 Chronicles 17.

While in our devotional reading we may tend to skip the genealogies, yet they have an important place in the history of salvation. After all, we are not dealing with myths and legends, but with that which actually took place on planet earth. Genealogies were of special importance at the time of the composition of the book as there were those among the exiles who could not find their family registers (Ezra 2:60ff.). The chronicler evidently intended to exhibit the connection of the people of Israel with the whole human family, so he reaches back to Adam.(Keil and Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, Chronicles*, 20f.). Against a broad spectrum we see a focusing on special people. These have important roles in the preparation for the Messiah's coming. So it is not Cain but Seth, not Lamech but Enoch, not Ham but Shem, not Ishmael but Isaac, not Esau but Jacob, and not Joseph but Judah. We see God's sovereignty manifested in carrying out His election of grace. The confusion of languages at Babel causes nations to arise and with this background the selection of a chosen nation is possible. By supernatural means a barren couple gives birth to a multitude of descendants. The instruments employed by the Lord are unworthy and in themselves unsuitable for His holy work, but grace can transform a Jacob into an Israel and physical types can lead to spiritual antitypes. God's sovereignty in providence becomes apparent. The Creator's eternal plan moves onward slowly but surely.

The chronicler focuses on the tribe of Judah, so that we may come eventually to David and his posterity. His descendants are traced down to Zedekiah, who was reigning when Babylonia destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C. It is interesting to observe that the chronicler interrupts Judah's genealogy to give us the story of Jabez (1 Chron. 4:9f.). His name sounds in Hebrew like "Pain" and indicated his mother's difficulty in giving birth. It occasioned Jabez' petition that he would be blessed and delivered from pain, which prayer request God graciously granted. Because of the proximity of the tribes of Benjamin and Simeon to Judah, they share some of the attention. Importance is also given to the tribe of Levi and the high priest is traced from Aaron to Jehozadak, the high priest at the time of the Babylonian captivity. The writer gives information also about the three leaders of David's Levite choirs and the cities in which

the priests and Levites dwelt. Structures for worship are important, if Judah is to be fenced off from her pagan environment. C.F. Keil remarks that "the chronicler had in view not only the Levitic worship, but also and mainly the attitude of the people and their princes to the Lord and to His law" (*Chronicles*, 19). We do well today to make the same emphasis.

In chapter 8 we have a concise genealogy of King Saul, but it is interesting to observe the passing over of his reign. We read: "Ner was the father of Kish, Kish the father of Saul, and Saul the father of Jonathan." Then Saul's death in battle, described in chapter 10, leads to the statement that men came to David at Hebron to turn Saul's kingdom over to him, as the Lord had said. Israel had to learn the hard way: they suffered 40 years under the wrong king, before a man after God's own heart would begin to rule. After a humble and glorious start, Saul soon demonstrated the truth of Lord Acton's saying: "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Saul's obsessive jealousy of David, his intrusion into the priest's office, his failure to obey Samuel's command and his consulting the witch of Endor indicated that he was a threat to the theocracy. Thus God removed him. Yes, jealousy is as cruel as the grave and it still works havoc in the churches. Likewise, disobedience is rife even in evangelical assemblies and needs to be strongly denounced.

Chapter 9, which ends this section of genealogies, lists the names of those who dwelt in Jerusalem after the return from exile. This restored community was to mark a new beginning for Israel. The prophets had predicted that the future hope lay in a remnant and it soon appears that it would be a remnant even of this group. Nevertheless, it is important to note that representatives from all the twelve tribes are mentioned as among the remnant that returned to Palestine (2 Chron. 11:16). Dan may be an exception (cf. Rev. 7:5ff.).

In preaching from this section, care should be taken to show the wonderful preparation God made for the messianic kingdom. After all, Christ was in reality the Lion of Judah.

Preaching From the History of David

The last portion of 1 Chronicles takes us from chapter 10 to the end of the book and it, in narrative, deals with the reign of David. It is the religious rather than the political that is emphasised. A comparison with the account in 2 Samuel 6 of the bringing of the Ark into Jerusalem well illustrates this. After David's recognition by all of Israel at Hebron, he engages in a strategy to capture Jerusalem from the Jebusites and is successful. He then takes up residence there and it is called the City of David. We read: "And David became more and more powerful, because the LORD Almighty was with him." After assembling a host of mighty warriors around him, he proceeded to identify his throne with that of the Lord by bringing in the Ark of the Covenant into the city. His first attempt was unsuccessful, for he used the methods of the Philistines, and Uzzah died for touching the Ark. What lessons can be drawn from that for modern evangelicals! On the second attempt the Levites carried the Ark on their shoulders, as the Law required, and the attempt was successful. The chronicler pays more attention to this triumphant entry than to David's many successes over the Philistines. A glorious psalm celebrates the occasion, evidently composed by David himself (1 Chron. 16: 8ff.; Ps. 105:1-15; Ps. 96). The people celebrate the covenantal mercy to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Israel. It is interesting to observe that the chronicler refers some thirty times to the God of their fathers. God is keeping His word.

Having the Ark in Jerusalem, David thought it fitting that a temple be built. It seemed incongruous that he should dwell in style in a palace and the Lord be in a tent. While God rejected the offer, David was blessed for his loving concern and was graced with a glorious covenant. 1 Chronicles 17 is rich in material for preachers to expound. Unlike Saul who had no successors, the Lord promised to grant David a dynasty and this would be everlasting. His son will build the desired temple. David's son will also be special for he will also be God's son. No wonder then that the psalmist can declare: "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom." (Ps. 45:6). Unlike Solomon's temple, the temple built by this Son will not disappear after 500 years. It will be built with living stones (1 Pet. 2:5). The reign will be universal as well as eternal (Ps. 2: 8). No millennium can satisfy these statements! Notice the elements of consummation that are implied in the covenant. Let us read 1 Chron. 17:9f.: "And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also subdue their enemies." This surely points to a time beyond the great apostasy with which the 1000 year reign concludes (Rev. 20:7-10), namely to the time of the end - the province of eschatology. Warfare has ceased and all instruments of mass destruction have been destroyed. The curse, which has plagued creation from Adam's one offence, God has removed forever. Endless peace is ushered in, so sin must have been finally dealt with. Righteousness must come before there can be lasting peace.

This prophecy about an endless dynasty may seem to have failed in the light of the exile which is to follow. However, as David was enabled to speak of the death and resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:25ff.), he may have been enabled to see that his reign was but a type of something greater. Certainly, in a similar way, Abraham was given the ability to spiritualize the prophecy of his possessing land (Heb.11:10; Rom. 4:13). Here preachers can exercise their eschatological gifts! Sermons should jump at them demanding to be preached! (Christ as King in Family, Church, Society etc.).

David was a great administrator. He organised a very effective military machine and soon had surrounding nations paying tribute. His economic affairs were in excellent shape for gold and silver were as plentiful as stones and his treasures under capable management. It is interesting to see how generous he was in his preparation for the building of the temple. The concern for his inexperienced son, Solomon, led him to arrange the building supplies, the teams of skilled artisans, blue prints for the construction and the organisation of temple services. This he did under the inspiration of the Lord (1 Chron. 28:11f.). How capable was this anointed man: poet, musician, shepherd, warrior, administrator, architect, judge and monarch. He was thoroughly theocentric, it would appear, for his relationship with God was intimate. When he sinned in taking a census, there is no resentment of the prophetic denunciation, no self-justification but a humble confession before the Lord. No wonder that the God of grace could have him labelled "a man after God's own heart." Nevertheless, as a man of blood it was not appropriate that he be the temple builder. Not even the sound of a hammer was to be heard on site in the construction of the temple (1 Kings 6:7). A peaceful environment was essential. So slowly and quietly Christ is still adding living stones to His church.

1 Chronicles ends on a happy note with the installation of Solomon on the throne by the aged David. We read: "The LORD highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him royal splendor such as no king over Israel ever had before."(29:25). The kingdom was at its zenith. No wonder that throughout the book there rings a note of joyous praise. Many are the allusions to musicians, musical instruments, prayer and praise. Following the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C., harps were hung on the willows in the exile, and music got largely displaced from Jewish worship. This may explain why little is mentioned in the New Testament about instrumental music. As a genuine handmaid of heart worship, surely the church has done well to restore it to its important place. Evidently trumpets and harps have their place in heaven!

The monarchy was an ordained instrument to promote the theocracy, as David's reign indicates. However, with the wrong king it could be the reverse. In the days of the crowning of Saul there had been a condemnation of Israel for desiring to be like other nations with monarchs. Still the promises of kings to Abraham and Jacob, as well as the provision under Moses that kings should write their own copy of the law, indicate that it was an essential part of the divine programme. The system of types required the three offices of prophet, priest and king. The real solution to mankind's woe is to be found in the reign of a greater David and a greater Solomon. In days when democracy has often been exalted to the heavens and churches have championed the rights of individuals, a reminder of the sovereign rule of Christ is surely in order. Those born from above are citizens of a **kingdom**. The movement from type to antitype should also warn us against materialising the blessings which God promised His people. Sound pedagogy required the presentation of the concrete before the abstract.

Preaching From The History of Solomon

2 Chronicles may be divided into two main portions: chapters 1-9 deal with the reign of Solomon, chapters 10- 36 take us through the reigns of the kings from Rehoboam down to Zedekiah. Throughout the whole, focus is on the temple; first with its building and then with emphasis on the monarchs who promoted its ministry. As we sweep through the five centuries covered, we also observe entropy at work. In spite of occasional revivals, moral decay marches on. The covenantal curses announced in such passages as Deuteronomy 28 occasion both the Assyrian and the Babylonian exiles. Throughout the period much prophetic activity is apparent in Judah, for the prophets are watchmen of God's interests. God's covenants must not be forgotten!

Solomon was a man of world renown. He was famous for his wisdom and for the splendour of his court. As a son of David, a person of *shalom* and a temple builder, he was another type of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was divinely chosen. Like all types there are only some analogies that may be made. If all were perfect, then there would be no need of an antitype! The chronicler focuses on his contribution to Israel's worship. Nearly all the material on Solomon relates to his organising, building and dedicating the temple, for which his father had made preparation. We do not hear of the promotion of syncretism, which resulted from his marriage to foreign women, but we hear of the judgment of the division of the kingdom.

The temple is referred to as the house of the LORD (2 Chron. 5:1) and as God's resting place (7:41). While the Lord had made "visits" to Eden and occasional theophanies were given

in the days of the patriarchs, from Mt. Sinai God had journeyed with Israel. Thus He had demonstrated the incarnation principle. The transcendent Jehovah manifested that He was also immanent. With the erection of the temple God identifies Himself with Jerusalem and establishes His throne there in the capital city of the land of promise (1 Chron. 29:23; 2 Chron. 6:38). Even the location of the temple on Mt. Moriah was selected by God's staying the judgment on David's unlawful census-taking. This was at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. Here in earlier days Abraham had been prepared to offer his beloved son Isaac. It was truly a place where grace had been manifested. Prior to the erection of the temple Solomon had been fully aware of the magnitude of the undertaking. He declared: "But who is able to build a temple for him, since the heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain him?" (2 Chron. 2:6). The Creator was omnipresent and yet He was prepared to reveal His special presence among His covenant people. As Joseph A. Seiss stated:

The Tabernacle of Moses, and the Temple of Solomon, (which was only a more substantial and permanent renewal of the same thing,) were as much typical "of good things to come," as the priests who officiated, or the services that were celebrated in them. They were a part of the same grand system, by which God, in those early times shadowed forth his future dispensations. And we are the more easily led to entertain this belief, from the fact that everything pertaining to the form and furniture of these sacred structures was of divine origin. The model was exhibited to Moses from heaven (*Holy Types*, 367).

The plans that David drew up for Solomon were also inspired (1 Chron. 28:11f.). Let us remember that will worship, or self made religion, is condemned (Col. 2:23). Of course, the full manifestation of God's special presence would not be possible until Christ would tabernacle among us.

It is of interest that Hiram, a man of Tyre, was the master craftsman and that aliens were employed as the labourers (2 Chron. 8:7). At the dedication of the temple Solomon prayed that all on earth might know God's name and fear Him (6:33). The promise to Abraham had been multi-racial and the temple's antitype would embrace those of every race. Churches today must denounce the nationalistic tendencies which would exclude foreigners from their midst. The field which Christ spoke about is the world! We all must do more to promote missions.

Upon the building's completion the *shekhina* glory descended. God was with them. Israel needed a preparatory lesson that the Messiah would one day condescend to become a kinsman, who was prepared to live among them and even touch leprous sinners. More than this is typified. God would allow His Holy Spirit to reside in all believers and so form the body of Christ, the bride who is also named the New Jerusalem. What condescension!

Here in the temple Solomon was assured: "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 will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (2 Chron. 7:14). Likewise, in time of invasion, exile or pestilence repentance would bring the desired deliverance, because God was their God and they were His people. Surely there is preaching material here as we think that God is a very present help in trouble! The main items of the temple are all predictive symbols or types. The bronze of the altar may be seen to speak of divine righteousness (cf. Rev. 1:15). The altar also is the necessary primary meeting place for the sinner and his Lord, for

without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. So, the altar leads to Calvary, where the final atoning sacrifice was offered. The bronze laver, or sea, standing on twelve oxen points to unlimited cleansing necessary for those entering the Holy Place. So the royal priesthood of believers enjoys cleansing through the blood of the Lamb. No wonder that, as the trumpeters and singers made one sound, they exclaimed: "He is good; his love (*chesed*) endures forever." (2 Chron. 5:13). God's covenantal loyalty continues for a thousand generations.

Patrick Fairbairn in *The Typology of Scripture* wisely states:

On the whole, therefore, we perceive that the Jewish theocracy, as to its actual working, was of a mixed description. It had results connected with it of a most important and interesting character, on account of which the world then, and indeed for all time, has become largely its debtor. But at the same time there were imperfections in its framework, which gave rise to many failures in the accomplishment of what it aimed at; so that the idea it embodied of a kingdom of God on earth was never more than very partially realized, and, as became but too manifest in the progress of time, *could* not be realized under so imperfect and provisional a state of things.... Still it did not properly die; for nothing that is of God perishes, or ultimately fails of its destination: in so far as there may be change, it can only be in the particular form assumed, or the mode of operation (Vol. II, 438f.).

Fairbairn quotes Ewald as stating that the Old "carries also in its bosom the germ of an eternal duration, in spite of all incidental change, preserves still its inner truth, and revives anew in Christianity as with the freshness of a second youth." (*ibid.* 439).

This first section of 2 Chronicles significantly ends with the visit of the Queen of Sheba. Here a Gentile exclaims: "Praise be to the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on his throne as king to rule for the LORD your God. Because of the love of your God for Israel and his desire to uphold them forever, he has made you king over them, to maintain justice and righteousness." (9:8).

Preaching from the History of Judah from Rehoboam to the Exile

This history is narrated throughout at greater length than in the books of Kings. We are introduced to prophets such as Shemaiah, Azariah, Hanani, Jehu, and Ebenezer, while the ministries in Israel of Elijah and Elisha are ignored, apart from a reference to a letter by Elijah (Keil, 13). Likewise, more details on the fortification of the kingdom by Rehoboam, Asa and Jehoshaphat are given (*ibid.*). Keil asserts:

it is clear that the author of the Chronicle, as Bertheau expresses it, "has turned his attention to *those times* especially in which Israel's religion had showed itself to be a power dominating the people and their leaders, and bringing them prosperity; and to *those men* who had endeavoured to give a more enduring form to the arrangements for the service of God, and to restore the true worship of Jahve; and to *those events* in the history of the worship so intimately bound up with Jerusalem, which had important bearings." (*ibid.*, 14).

2 Chronicles 10-20 covers the period from Rehoboam to Jehoshaphat. The folly and arrogant pride of Rehoboam led to ten tribes of Israel declaring their independence of Judah. The king despised the counsel of his elders. Most of his reign was disturbed by civil strife with his departed brethren. How grievous to the Lord must be the schisms in the church. As the northern kingdom of Israel rebelled against the Lord, the rejected priests and Levites returned to Jerusalem, as did all who set their heart to seek the LORD God of Israel (11:13-16). Thus Judah became the repository of all of Israel and this is recognised by the remnant being addressed as Israel (15:17; 24:16; 28:19). Also the New Testament apparently knows nothing of ten lost tribes, according to the epistles of James and Peter. From Judah would come, with

the addition of the Gentiles, the glorious new Israel that the prophets envisage (Amos 9:11f.; Acts 15:15ff.). Nevertheless, the transition certainly would not be smooth. From the time that the king had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD as did all the country with him (2 Chron.12:1). It took an Egyptian invasion, along with the faithful denunciation of Shemaiah the prophet, to humble him and his people. Judah was certainly on the path that would lead to the exile! Rehoboam's Ammonite mother, perhaps, did not encourage loyalty to Jehovah. So pride and self-sufficiency continue to lead God's people astray.

S. G. De Graaf has four volumes entitled *Promise and Deliverance*. He expounds passages from the whole Bible to show God's sovereignty over the entire life of His people. As he deals with the Lord's covenantal relationship with Israel, he illustrates well how we may preach from passages such as those found in Chronicles. Referring to Rehoboam and to most of his descendants, De Graaf shows how the kings of Judah provoked the Lord to jealousy by withdrawing their hearts from Him (Vol. 2, 235ff.). The consequences were serious. The very house of David put David's greater Son to shame.

Rehoboam's son, Abijah, in facing Jeroboam's battle formation pleaded with Israel: "Don't you know that the LORD, the God of Israel, has given the kingship to David and his descendants forever by a covenant of salt?" So Jeroboam's rebellion was strongly denounced by a king convinced that God was with him and that Jeroboam was doomed to failure (2 Chron. 13:15). This courageous stand was blessed by the Lord. We notice that God sides with Judah against Israel.

Repeatedly we are surprised in the history of Judah that ungodly men can be blessed with godly descendants and godly men can be humbled by ungodly children. All speaks of the need of a new covenant in which blessing is not a matter of ethnic ties but of individual regeneration. How foolish then to fail to recognise the great disparity between the old and the new covenants. This leads some to attempt to identify baptism of infants with circumcision and ignores the failure of the old on account of Israel's mixed multitude. The new provides for 100% regeneration, so that the righteousness of the Law might actually be fulfilled. A new covenant requires new ordinances.

Abijah's son, Asa, introduced various revivals. He commanded Judah to seek the God of their fathers and to observe His law. He removed altars that had been erected to honour pagan gods and displaced his mother from being queen. So he was loyal all his days (2 Chron.15:17). When confronted with an invasion by a superior force from Ethiopia, he put full confidence in his God and the enemy was routed. Azariah, the prophet, reminded him: "The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you." (15:2). Such was the blessing on his long reign that we read: "Then he assembled all Judah and Benjamin and the people from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon who had settled among them, for large numbers had come over to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him." (15:9). The assembly renewed their covenantal relation with Jehovah. Still we find his last years disappointing for when threatened by the northern kingdom he resorted to calling Syria to help him. Also, in his last sickness his trust was not in the Lord but in physicians (16:12ff.). Let us remember the proverbs: "The end of a matter is better than its beginning." (Eccles. 7:8) and "One who puts on his armor should not boast like

one who takes it off." (1 Kings 20:11) and "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Cor. 10:12). As far as Judah is concerned a radical weakness continues to manifest itself. However, for David's sake a lamp is left in Judah.

Asa's son, Jehoshaphat, walked in the ways of his father David (2 Chron.17:3). The account of his reign is much more extensive in Chronicles than that in Kings. Asa strengthened and instructed his nation and did much that was commendable. We read: "The fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdom of the lands surrounding Judah, so that they did not make war with Jehoshaphat." (17:10). The early years were happy ones and typified the reign of Christ. However, he by marriage allied himself with Ahab (18:1), for his daughter in law was Athaliah. Was this a political marriage designed to avoid civil warfare? Jehoshaphat, with some spiritual concerns, still went with Israel to war against the king of Syria, although expressly warned of the consequences by Micaiah. He saw his friend slain and himself barely escaped. Jehu, the son of Hanani, rebuked Jehoshaphat, saying: "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, the wrath of the LORD is upon you." (19:2). Evidently Jehoshaphat received the message with humility, for he continued his work of restoration by appointing judges to administer righteously. In days of syncretism what lessons may be drawn from this sinful alliance. The call to separate from evil taught in 2 Corinthians 6 needs to be emphasised. Too many evangelicals are flirting with Roman Catholicism, even though its soteriology is irreconcilable with that of the Bible. On a personal level, we must warn our people of the sin and folly of mixed marriages.

Yet Jehoshaphat's action profoundly influenced his family and country, for Jehoram, his son, followed in his footsteps and continued to ally himself with Israel. He married Ahab's daughter, Athaliah. What a curse this woman proved to be for Judah. She was a true daughter of Jezebel! Jehoram killed his brothers and caused his people to prostitute themselves with false worship. In judgment God caused Edom and Libnah to revolt against Judah and Jehoram's reign only lasted eight years. Jehovah in His sovereignty can use pagan nations to do His bidding. Jehoram died in agony after two years of sickness as his intestines came out. He was not mourned. Satan is a harsh taskmaster! In spite of Jehoram's evil we read: "the LORD was not willing to destroy Judah, for the sake of David His servant, since He had promised him to give a lamp to him through his sons always." (1 Kings 8:19).

The people addressed by Ezra needed to remember that God has set enmity between the seed of the woman and that of the Evil One (Gen. 3:15), so "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers." (Ps. 1:1). We also must remember to love righteousness and to hate iniquity (Heb. 1:9). It had been said of Jehoshaphat that he walked in the ways of David his father (2 Chron. 17:3), but his son walked in the ways of wicked kings of Israel (21:6). The mistake of Jehoshaphat became a fixation for his son and for many of his descendants. A little leaven leavens the whole! Lessons on the great responsibilities of leaders and parents to set godly examples should be stressed. Warnings also may be given that no sin is a private matter.

2 Chronicles 21-36 takes us from Azariah to Cyrus the Persian. Ahaziah, Jehoshaphat's son, reigned for only one year, and had to be chastened according to the Davidic Covenant for walking also in the ways

of the house of Ahab. Athaliah, his mother, evidently counselled him to do evil. Jehu, the prophet, was commissioned to eradicate Ahab's seed and he extended his task even to the killing of Ahaziah and his princes. Zeal needs to be married to light.

Athaliah, the foreigner, usurped the throne of Judah for six years. The godly priest Jehoida arranged a *coup* and the boy Joash, the only survivor of the royal family, was installed as monarch. In this episode we have another demonstration of God's *chesed*, his covenantal loyalty. The Davidic household is disciplined, but the dynasty continues. Our people need to be instructed about the importance of the Biblical covenants. How believers need to remember that "His oath, His covenant, and blood, Support me in the whelming flood." We read: "Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the years of Jehoida the priest." (2 Chron. 24:2). Thus important repairs were made to the temple, but upon the priest's death worship was switched to Asherah poles and the denouncing prophet Zechariah was executed, although he was Jehoida's son. This watchman of the theocracy was silenced by a descendant of David. Spirituality does not flow with the genes! In punishment a small army of Aram conquered the much larger army of Judah, for the Lord so ordained. How mysterious is God's providence, and what a source of comfort to the believer!

A regicide followed and Amaziah, his son, ascended the throne. Of him we read: "He did that was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not wholeheartedly." (2 Chron. 25:2). How applicable is this to many in our churches today! His attempt to strengthen his military might with mercenaries from Israel was denounced by a prophet with the words: "O king, these troops from Israel must not march with you, for the LORD is not with Israel - not with any of the people of Ephraim." (25:7). The king's obedience to the prophet brought a great victory over the men of Seir. However, his 100 talents employment fee paid to Israel was lost! We pay for our mistakes. Later his capture and adoption of pagan gods exposed him to divine wrath and when rebuked he silenced the prophet. So his proud attempt to punish an invasion by Israel led to his capture, the destruction of the walls of Jerusalem and the spoiling of his treasures. Finally, the Chronicler tells us that, because he turned away from following the Lord, his own citizens murdered him (25:27). Yes, the wages of sin is death - sometimes in this life, but certainly in the next.

Uzziah followed his father on the throne and had a successful reign of 52 years. Politically Judah reached its peak. A lesser known prophet named Zechariah earlier had instructed Uzziah in the fear of the Lord. As long as he sought the Lord he was successful. With a well-trained army and improved defences fear of him spread among his neighbours. The Philistines and Ammonites fell before him. The chronicler comments: "But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall." (2 Chron. 26:16). So his presumptuous entry into the temple for priestly duties was punished with leprosy and Jotham, his son, took over the administration. How unlike his meek and lowly antitype was Uzziah. Pride rears its head in many forms: physical, racial, intellectual etc. Perhaps the worst form is that of spiritual pride. Much preaching is called for on this topic. Satan still makes the seductive offer: "you will be like God" (Gen. 3:5). Let us remember that at the best we are unprofitable servants.

Jotham his son reigned in his place. We read: "he walked steadfastly before the LORD his God." (2 Chron. 27:2) and so typified the Messiah, who delighted to do the will of His Father.

His son Ahaz, however, did not do what was right in the eyes of his God, for he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel (28:2). He even sacrificed his sons in the fire. So the Lord allowed Israel to conquer Judah. Many were slain and 200,000 taken prisoner. Remarkably the prophecy of Oded caused the northern kingdom to repent of the assault on their brethren. The prisoners were released. Ahaz then sought assistance from Assyria and this had disastrous consequences. Assyria proved to be of no help and in the time of trouble the king promoted more pagan worship and closed the temple. De Graaf wisely comments:

Now Judah looked like the land of Canaan in the old days of the Canaanites. It was as though the Lord had not driven out those Canaanites, as though He had not devoted the land of Canaan to the service of His name. It appeared that there was nothing left of the fear of the Lord. In spite of all of this, the Lord did not want to break with Judah. Because of His covenant, the power of His Word of grace had to triumph. He continued to call the people to love Him. (*Promise and Deliverance*, Vol. 2, 354).

The Bible declares: "The LORD had humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had promoted wickedness in Judah and had been most unfaithful to the LORD." (28:19). What a terrible indictment! From the time of the exodus from Egypt the twelve tribes had been a mixed group, nationally and spiritually. Seeds of self-destruction were now ripening in the theocracy. Let us ever aim for a regenerate church membership. Otherwise we can expect the same consequences.

Another pause in the nation's downward path is seen with the revival under Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz. The chronicler devotes four chapters to show how this godly king promoted true worship. He is said to have walked in the steps of King David (2 Chron. 29:2). Immediately he re-opened the temple and had the Levites remove all the debris that had accumulated. He restored formal worship and made atonement for all Israel with sin offerings. The musical arrangements commanded by David were re-introduced and we learn: "they sang praises with gladness and bowed their heads and worshiped." (29:31). Levites had to be sanctified so that they could assist the priests, so great was the multitude of the sacrifices. A notable step followed. The king sent to all Israel and Judah an invitation to assemble for a celebration of the Passover. The call went from Dan to Beersheba urging the remnant left not to be stiff-necked, but to yield to the Lord. Some laughed the messengers to scorn, but "Nevertheless some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem." We later read of some from Ephraim and Issachar also being present. Along with the religious revival much reformation occurred as efforts to remove all idolatry from Judah were undertaken. Tithing was practised and vast contributions were made by a happy people. Hezekiah's gallant effort was to be commended, but the apostasy had advanced too far for a lasting solution. When the Assyrians besieged Jerusalem, the king with the help of Isaiah the prophet exhorted the people to be courageous. Prayers were heard and the enemy was destroyed by a pestilence sent by God. The king in his old age became proud of his wealth and was afflicted with a fatal sickness. In answer to his humble petitions God granted an extension of

life. To know what was in his heart God left him to test him (32:31). He failed when envoys from Babylon visited him, though the chronicler barely mentions the matter.

Manasseh his son brought Judah to its nadir with his lengthy reign of 55 years. There would be no remedy for this apostasy. The following indictment is made: "But Manasseh led Judah and the people of Jerusalem astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites." (2 Chron. 33:9). Canaanite practices of idolatry, spiritism, sorcery, Baal worship and human sacrifice were re-introduced. A carved image was placed in the temple desecrating the holy precincts. Manasseh refused the divine exhortations, so the Assyrians were allowed to carry him away captive to Babylon. In expounding this 33rd chapter of 2 Chronicles one can present the glorious long- suffering of our gracious Lord. Although he was responsible for hastening the exile, God continued to plead with him. In his distress in prison he humbled himself and his entreaty was heard. He was restored to Jerusalem. The chronicler states: "Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God." (33:13). He engaged in re-fortifying the City of David and in removing the foreign gods. Special mention is made of his prayers. His belated admonition to his citizens fell on deaf ears. We may draw lessons on the nature of repentance from this chapter. Also we need to teach that forgiveness does not necessarily mean that we escape the consequences of our sin. Certainly, in expounding this passage, we should stress the extent of the Lord's sovereign grace. He is the God of Jacob and the God of Manasseh! There is hope for the chief of sinners.

Amon, his son, for the two years of his reign followed the apostate ways of his father's earlier days and never repented. Here we have an opportunity to stress the continual need for repentance and its rich rewards.

Following Amon's assassination his son Josiah made what was to be the last effort by a ruler in Judah to bring about revival. Two chapters are devoted to his reign of 31 years. Again it is stated that a king walked in the ways of David (2 Chron. 34:2). As a boy of 16 he purged the land of the externals of paganism. He also burned the bones of the offending priests on their altars, and thus fulfilled the prophet's prediction to Jeroboam, made some 300 years before (1 Kings 13:2). How reliable are God's predictions! In repairing the temple Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD. We need to point out that apostasy can only flourish when God's special revelation is ignored. It is sad to realise that even in many evangelical churches there are those who are illiterate as far as the Scriptures are concerned. The Bible can still be lost in the church! Josiah was alarmed when he learned of the contents of the Book. He gave orders that enquiry should be made of the Lord to see if there were any possible remedy for the king and the remnant in Israel (2 Chron. 34:21). He realised that the wrath of God was great. Huldah the prophetess assured the king that the covenantal curses would inevitably fall, but because of Josiah's repentance the judgment would not occur in his lifetime. Exposition of this chapter will afford good gospel application. Note also that the godly king was still involved in the national guilt, for the sins of the fathers would still be visited. The king immediately assembled all the people from the least to the greatest, so that all might hear the thunder of the Law. Yes, there is still a place for Law preaching, for people must know that they are lost before a genuine interest in salvation will be awakened. There follows a renewal of the covenant (34:31). All made a pledge to obey God's commandments with all their hearts and souls. As

long as Josiah lived the people did not fail to follow the Lord. Again we see how powerful a personal witness may be. Judah celebrates another remarkable Passover and the music prescribed by David is prominent. The chronicler declares: "The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel" (35:19). Josiah's foolish attempt to interfere in the Battle of Carchemish occasioned his death. He did this, even though the Lord used the Egyptian King Neco to warn him against meddling. The clock was ticking down. Three of his sons and one grandson who followed him on the throne all proved to be evil and Jeremiah the prophet suffered imprisonment under some of them.

Jehoahaz reigned for only three months, his brother Jehoiakim eleven years, his son Jehoiachin for three months and Zedekiah his uncle for eleven years. While Israel broke the marriage covenant established at Sinai, God did not, and so the covenantal curses go into operation. Jerusalem the holy city is desecrated and the temple destroyed by the Babylonians. However, the Lord's redemptive purposes were still operative, for He is faithful to His covenants.

The chronicler ends his history by recording that the land kept its Sabbath for 70 years until the kingdom of Persia came to power. Then, in fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy, Cyrus granted permission for the rebuilding of the temple and the return to Palestine of those desirous. God's design for Israel had not been abandoned. To the great surprise of the Israelites no Davidic king remained on the throne. It appeared that God's covenantal faithfulness had failed. It would take time to realise that the Davidic monarchy had gone underground and that there was a transition of the kingdom from the physical type to a spiritual antitype. Yes, a little leaven leavens the whole batch. A new Israel was on the horizon, according to the exilic prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. This would be totally regenerate, with none left to be evangelised. All would know the Lord in an intimate way. He would then really be their God and they would be His people.

In summary, we note how the chronicler helped to encourage the Israelites gathered under the umbrella of Judah. The covenant with Abraham would see a world-wide blessing coming from his seed. The Sinaitic Covenant organised a group of tribes into an elect race which would typify a heavenly kingdom. The Davidic Covenant was still operative, even though no descendant was on the literal throne. So the way was prepared for the Messiah.

Malachi would follow in the steps of Ezra and prophesy: "suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come." (Mal. 3:1). Four centuries later, after the famine of the Word predicted by Amos (Amos 8:11), John Baptist would come as the messenger preparing the way for his Lord. There would be found a faithful remnant, made up of people like godly Simeon, who would greet the One whose kingdom was not of this world. Thus it is apparent that the chronicler helped to bring about the transition of the kingdom from something weak and faltering to the glorious dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ. So the history covered is full of exhortations to be faithful to the covenant and warnings of the disaster that follows disobedience. God's presence is still among them.

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