

## **BIBLE SURVEY – KINGS & CHRONICLES**

### **Preface**

The Serving Today series of programmes surveying of all of the Old Testament has been prepared by Philip Parsons. Philip's study of the Old Testament and his suggested sermon topics have been so helpful that we have endeavoured to put them into written form. This particular volume covers the fascinating period described in the books of Kings and Chronicles. There are great heights of spiritual activity where the kings and the people of Israel honoured and served God, and also great lows when they forsook the Lord and turned to other gods. There are, therefore, many important lessons for the Christian believer to learn from these books, and I am indebted to Philip for writing this volume for us.

It is our prayer that the Lord will use this book to encourage you to a more detailed study of this important part of the Bible and that this will result in you being able to teach others more effectively.

Derek French  
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### **Chapter 1 - 1 & 2 Kings**

Like 1 and 2 Samuel, the books called 1 and 2 Kings were originally written as one but divided into two parts when

the Old Testament was translated into the Greek Septuagint. While the two books of Samuel cover the establishment of the kingdom under Samuel and its consolidation under David, the two books of Kings deal with the remaining period of the monarchy up to the time of the exile to Babylon.

#### **1. Writer and date of writing**

The writer of these books does not give us his name. According to Jewish tradition it was Jeremiah. The general consensus is that the unnamed writer composed his work during the exile, based on a number of other sources. He refers to three of these - the annals of Solomon, the annals of the kings of Israel and the annals of the kings of Judah. It is also very likely that some of the other sources mentioned in 1 and 2 Chronicles were also used.

#### **2. Chronology and content**

The two books of Kings begin with the reign of Solomon (970 BC) and end at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BC. The period covered is 384 years. Both the beginning and end dates have been accurately established by archaeological means. In addition to this data, the length of the reign of each king is given, and during the period of the divided kingdom, each king's reign is synchronized with the corresponding king or kings in the other half of the kingdom. Another factor to be borne in mind is that there were some co-regencies, where sons reigned alongside ageing or sick fathers. We need to take account of this overlap when we consider the precise dates when each king reigned. For example King

Manasseh reigned alongside his father Hezekiah for almost twelve years.

The writer does not describe the reign of Israel's kings in terms of political, economic or social terms, but rather in relation to the covenant. Let me give you an example. From a political standpoint, Omri would have been considered one of the most important rulers in the Northern Kingdom. He established a powerful dynasty, made Samaria his capital city and subjugated the Moabites. But his reign is dismissed in a mere six verses. Similarly, Jeroboam II, who presided over the Northern Kingdom during the period of its greatest political and economic power, is given seven verses! The writer's criterion seems to be, 'Were Israel's kings noteworthy in keeping the covenant with God, or in breaking it?' Hence, Josiah and Hezekiah (the only two kings given unqualified approval) are given extensive treatment for their particular faithfulness and covenant renewal. But space is also allocated to Ahab for his leading of the nation into significant apostasy and idolatry. The writer also emphasizes the interaction between prophets and kings, and considerable detail is included on the lives of the prophets Elijah and Elisha.

God's covenant promise to David is also clearly kept in mind by the writer. On a number of occasions he mentions that David's dynasty would be established forever. The devil made a concerted attempt to thwart God's promise to David, when the wicked Queen Athaliah murdered the entire royal household - except a baby, who was

marvellously preserved. David is also put up as the standard by which the succeeding kings were judged.

A number of kings began well but deteriorated towards the end of their reigns. One notable exception is Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, who by his evil influence upon the nation finally sealed their doom in exile. He did however repent, and at the end of his life restored the worship of the Lord in the temple. Manasseh experienced what we can only call an outstanding conversion by God's grace and the details are in 2 Chronicles 33.

As time progresses through the monarchy, evil kings become more numerous than good ones until both North and South kingdoms became ripe for judgement. After 586 BC the monarchy was never re-established. The Lord Jesus Christ - great David's greater son - was born 500 years after the nation had returned from exile. They gave him the honour and public acclaim due to a king on Palm Sunday but crucified him but a few days later.

### **3. Solomon anointed King (1 Kings 1)**

Although still alive, David had now all but withdrawn from public life. The incident concerning the young virgin Abishag, seems only to be included because of its political implications later. The prescribed remedy for David's chronic hypothermia seems to have proved successful, although no sexual activity took place between them.

But David's troubles were not yet over. He seems to have dithered in the question of appointing his successor, and

his eldest-surviving son Adonijah decided to take the throne as the heir apparent. He had the support of Joab, David's self-perpetuated army commander, and Abiathar the priest. Nathan, the prophet and Zadok the priest with others had not been invited to Adonijah's celebrations. Through Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, they approached David for him to confirm that Solomon was to be ruler after David. The confirmation was provided and so Solomon was anointed king. Adonijah swore allegiance to Solomon and thus was not punished immediately.

#### **4. David's instructions to Solomon (1 Kings 2)**

These instructions are different to David's last words. They relate solely to Solomon taking over the reigns of government. He was to show kindness to the sons of Barzilai, the man who had helped David so much during his exile. But he was also to punish both Joab and Shimei in due course. After David's death, Solomon's first task was to deal with his half-brother Adonijah, whose thinly veiled treachery was evident in requesting Abishag, the late king's concubine, as his wife. Solomon, wise man that he was, saw through the request and ordered Adonijah's execution. Joab, too, was also dealt with, now paying the penalty for his two murders with his own life. In course of time Shimei was also put to death, failing to keep to the instructions which Solomon had given him. And so Solomon's kingdom was firmly established.

#### **5. Solomon's wise rule (1 Kings 3-4)**

Not long after ascending the throne, God appeared to Solomon in a dream and told him to ask for anything he

wished. Solomon's request for wisdom showed outstanding spirituality, and in keeping with his own gracious nature, God gave him much, much more. An important principle is at work here. When we desire a truly spiritual and unselfish request, then God will often give us abundantly more besides. The test example of Solomon's wisdom is so well known (his suggestion of dividing of a child) that I only refer to it in passing. Chapter 4 describes the outworking of Solomon's wise rule in the organization of his kingdom and its peaceful fruits for the whole nation. This was the golden age for the kingdom.

#### **6. Building and dedicating the Temple (1 Kings 5-9)**

Chapters 5-9 describe the building of Solomon's temple. By all accounts it was a magnificent structure. With dimensions 90' x 30' x 45' high, its construction was of stone and cedar, with everything overlaid with gold (including the floor). This was made possible by the annual inflow of 25 tons of gold. All the materials were prepared off-site so that the minimum of noise was heard during the construction phase of the building. After 20 years, when the temple was finished, Solomon brought the ark into it. To show God's approval, the cloud of his presence then filled the temple, so that the priests for a while could not enter. The latter part of chapter 8 is that wonderful prayer of dedication in which Solomon clearly has in mind the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 30. And Solomon's prayer must also have been in Daniel's mind when he offered his prayer just before the return from exile (Dan 9), some 450 years later. If you want to know how to pray, then begin by having your mind saturated with the

teaching of the Scriptures. Would that Solomon had continued as he began. Tragically God's warning to him in chapter 9 became true, with the apostasy beginning towards the end of his own life.

### **7. Apostasy and division (1 Kings 10-11)**

When the glory of Solomon had reached its zenith, he received the celebrated visit from the queen of Sheba, who confirmed that what she had been told was but a shadow of the reality. But Solomon's glory was short-lived. His marriage alliances with many foreign princesses turned his heart away from the Lord whom he had served so faithfully in his youth. He not only built them heathen shrines (probably in the palace precincts) but also joined in their idol worship. Early piety is no guarantee of continuing faithfulness. There is always need for watchfulness and vigilance. And so the Lord sent troubles into his life - God always does this when his people turn aside from him to idols. Bit by bit his kingdom began to crumble until it was split into two when his son Rehoboam came to the throne. Did Solomon repent of his apostasy? This writer does not address the question, but if we accept that he wrote Ecclesiastes in old age, then it would appear that he had returned to the only true God. But we are left in sufficient doubt so that the backslider should never presume upon the grace of God.

### **8. Israel and Judah - Evil and good kings (1 Kings 12-16)**

One of the seeds of the rebellion of the north was the concentration of too much wealth in Judah at the expense

of the northern tribes. When Rehoboam listened to the 'wisdom' of his clever young advisers, he was encouraging Jeroboam's revolt. But like many before and after him, Jeroboam exceeded his mandate. He had not been commanded to set up any rival worship in the north, but he not only appointed priests from any tribe but also set up shrines with golden calves at the two extremes of his kingdom '*for the worship of the Lord*'. He was rebuked by a prophet from Judah who predicted that his dynasty would fall, with the sign of the altar splitting and the ashes pouring out (13:3). Unfortunately, this prophet did not wholly obey his brief, for which he paid with his life. Those holding leadership in the Church are still judged with greater strictness (James 3:1; Hebs 13:17).

From now on there is little change in the spiritual leadership given by Israel's kings. They all do evil in the sight of the Lord, with one or two exceptions. But the evil referred to is always in the context of false and idolatrous worship, from which all other evils spring. One dynasty after another is cut short in bloody revolution. Only in Jehu's case does his great-grandson sit on his throne.

In Judah, things are somewhat better. After the poor start under Rehoboam and his son Ahijah, Asa ruled for 41 years. He put away the idolatrous worship of his predecessors and deposed his grandmother. But his spiritual vitality seems to have declined with age and his trust in the Lord was lacking in his defence of the kingdom, relying on a foreign nation for help instead of the Lord. Even in the question of his diseased feet we see

more reliance upon medical assistance than on the Lord (2 Chron 16:12). But overall, his reign was good and his son Jehoshaphat also continued his father's reforming activities.

And so we come to a kind of parenthesis in the description of the kings of Israel and Judah (ch 17 - 2 Kings 8). I refer to the lives of those two notable Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elisha, whose ministries coincided with some of the most evil kings of both Israel and Judah. Both Elijah and Elisha were prophets in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and were sent by God to call the nation back from worshipping idols to the worship of the true God. It is during this period that the concept of the remnant is first introduced, that even in days of great apostasy in the Church, the Lord has kept and will keep his own true people.

### **9. The life of Elijah (1 Kings 17 - 2 Kings 2)**

We know next to nothing about the origins of this great prophet. He suddenly bursts onto the scene in a period of great apostasy in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. All we know about his origin is that he came from somewhere in Gilead, to the east of the river Jordan. His life does however show that he was well versed in the Scriptures; his first pronouncement to Ahab that there would be a drought is based upon the curses outlined in Deuteronomy 28:22-24. During the early part of the drought, God provided for his servant's needs by a stream and food brought by the ravens. When, because of the drought, the brook dried up, Elijah was directed to a widow of Sidon,

situated to the north-west of Israel. He, the widow and her son were miraculously provided for by the inexhaustible supply of flour and oil. When the widow's son became ill and died, Elijah raised him from the dead. This, like the rest of the miracles which Elijah performed, was a sign to attest that he was a true prophet sent by the Lord. The appearance of Elijah marks a transition in the life of the nation of Israel with the prophetic office now having increased prominence.

Meanwhile, the famine had become very severe because of more than three years of drought. Apart from 7000 that were faithful to the Lord, there was no indication of national repentance, so Elijah was sent to Ahab to confront him. The result of this meeting was that Elijah summoned all the false prophets to meet him on Mount Carmel, where the Lord answered him by fire, whereas the false god Baal was unable to respond to the frantic cries of his false prophets.

It was a great moment of crisis for the nation, with the people who had gathered declaring that the Lord was indeed God and putting the false prophets to death. In response, the Lord lifted the drought, but not without the urgent and effective prayers of his servant. Ahab and Jezebel were, however, unmoved. With the removal of the judgement, Jezebel threatened Elijah with a similar fate to Baal's prophets. Completely out of character, this great man of God weakened and fled into the desert, south of Judah, and eventually to Sinai. God was gracious to his faltering servant and sent angelic help to provide for his

needs. When he finally reached Sinai, the Lord again spoke to him, not in the dramatic earthquake, wind and fire, but in a *'gentle whisper'*. God gently rebuked Elijah and gave him instructions for the remainder of his life's work. This was to include the anointing of Jehu to be king over Israel in the place of Ahab and the appointment of Elisha to be the prophet's successor. Not long after Elijah returned to Israel he was involved in a further confrontation with Ahab and Jezebel over the murder of Naboth and the purloining of his vineyard. It was not long before the prophet's predictive judgements upon the evil couple came to pass exactly as prophesied.

Elijah was so highly regarded by God that he was taken directly into heaven, was selected as the representative of all the prophets on the mount of transfiguration, and is held up as the example 'par excellence' of believing prayer (James 5:17,18).

### **10. Elisha follows Elijah**

Elisha had already been prepared to take the place of Elijah by serving him during the latter part of his ministry. This is often God's method. He takes a younger man and gives him a kind of apprenticeship, by putting him as a personal assistant to one of his servants. e.g. Moses and Joshua, Paul and Timothy. And so when the time came for Elijah to depart this scene, Elisha had been prepared. He was not backward in continuing the miraculous signs that had been the feature of his master's ministry. Using Elijah's cloak, he parted the river Jordan and crossed back to the waiting company of the prophets, who now acknowledged

him as their leader. This was one of the three periods in Biblical history when miraculous signs were particularly in evidence. The other two eras were through Moses at the giving of the law, and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles.

### **11. Elisha's miraculous signs (2 Kings 2:19 – 6:23)**

It seems significant that ten miracles are recorded in chapters 2-6. This is doubtless intended to be a comparison with the ten miraculous signs worked by Moses in Egypt. They are as follows:

1. **The healing of the spring at Jericho.** Here Elisha symbolically pours salt on the spring, which is thus purified.
2. **Judgement upon the Lord's enemies.** The youths in this incident were doubtless, as many have been since, arrogant and derisive of God's ministers. Such swift and severe judgements are not a mark of the New Testament era, but that should never encourage such an evil attitude towards God's ministers today.
3. **Water in the desert.** Three armies had joined together against the kingdom of Moab and after several days' march through the desert they found the stream to be dry. It is interesting to note the different reactions of the kings. Joram king of Israel began to blame God, but godly Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, sought help and advice from Elisha. And not only was water quickly provided, probably by a cloudburst in the mountains, but the ditches which had been dug, when filled with

water, looked like blood to the enemy and contributed to their victory over Moab.

4. **The widow's oil.** This miracle is well known where provision is made for the widow of one of the prophets and her two sons. The similarity between this miracle and one worked by Elijah is interesting.
5. **The raising of a dead boy.** As if to counter any argument about the divine nature of the miracles, Elisha next raises a young boy to life, from a family who had shown him great kindness and hospitality.
6. **The poisoned stew made edible.** During a period of famine a poisonous plant was accidentally put in the stew, which Elisha made edible for the prophets by symbolically pouring flour into it.
7. **Feeding the 100.** This was achieved with twenty loaves (rolls). Clearly the bread was multiplied and in Elisha's words we have a prediction of the feeding of the 5000 (2 Kings 4:43,44).
8. **Cleansing leprosy.** The story of Naaman the Syrian is so well known that I do not need to elaborate on it. Surely it points forward to the miracles of our Lord, who healed many leprosy sufferers, and to the provision under the gospel of cleansing for the Gentiles.
9. **The floating axe-head.** This miracle shows the care of the Lord even for the minor details of the lives of his servants.
10. **Blindness on the Syrian army.** The Syrians had surrounded the city where Elisha was, in order to capture him, but Elisha prayed and God struck them with blindness and led them to the heart of Samaria.

The foreign army was given a square meal and then sent home.

The end of chapter 6 and chapter 7 describe a severe famine in Samaria, under siege by the Syrians, and how God drove the enemy away and the siege was lifted. This was not a miracle worked by Elisha but was predicted by him.

### 12. Elisha's final tasks (ch 8-9)

Rather like Elijah before him, Elisha was given two final tasks to perform. First he informed Hazael that he would become king of Syria after Benhadad. This was fulfilled when Hazael murdered his master.

Then Elisha sent one of the prophets to anoint Jehu king of Israel. Jehu would bring God's judgements down upon the house of Ahab.

When he died, Elisha's ministry had lasted some 51 years.

### 13. The dynasty of Jehu and fall of Israel (2 Kings 9-17)

Because of the wickedness of King Ahab and his queen Jezebel, God had declared by Elijah, that he would completely destroy both them and their offspring. Jehu, Ahab's army commander, was anointed as king to carry out this task. He was very zealous in performing his mission. He not only put Ahab's entire house to death, but also destroyed the temple of Baal and removed the sacred stones which were used in idolatrous worship. Because he carried out these instructions to the very letter of God's command, God promised that four generations would sit

on his throne. But even though so zealous to destroy Ahab's Baal-worship, Jehu did not bring the nation back to the purity of worship of the Lord. He still kept the golden calves at the high places, which Jeroboam had set up at Bethel and Dan. Because of this unfaithfulness to God, which Jehu's son Jehoahaz continued in, the Lord brought the Syrians against Israel. Jehoahaz repented and the foreign oppression was removed. His son Joash, who reigned for 16 years, still did not remove the calves and the nation continued in its mixed worship. It was during his reign that the prophet Elisha died. The final king of Jehu's dynasty was Jeroboam 2 who had a long and materially prosperous reign of 41 years. During this period the prophets Hosea and Amos sought to call the nation back to God, but their message went largely unheeded, and following Jeroboam's death the kingdom quickly disintegrated. There was coup after coup with many of the kings being assassinated, until finally in 722 BC, the Assyrians came, deported many of the Israelites and resettled the land with people from other nations. The mixed race of those who now lived in Samaria and their impure religion, subsequently became the excuse for the bitter feud between Jews and Samaritans in the time of Christ (John 4:9).

#### **14. The last days of Judah (2 Kings 18-25)**

Intertwined with the record of the last period of the Northern Kingdom of Israel are the records of the kings of Judah. The deterioration in Judah was not as rapid as in Israel, largely due to the influence of two of the nation's godliest rulers, Hezekiah and Josiah. But despite the

efforts of these men and the admonitions of Isaiah and the other prophets, Judah became ripe for judgement. In 606 BC Jerusalem came under Babylonian rule and the deportation commenced. In 586 BC Nebuchadnezzar again came against Jerusalem, destroyed the temple and burned the city with fire. The majority of the remaining inhabitants of Judah were taken into captivity.

For more detail on this period of Judah's history see the next section on 2 Chronicles in part 4.

## **Chapter 2. Sermon subjects from 1 and 2 Kings**

### **1. History with a spiritual perspective**

- a. Faithfulness to the Covenant given prominence
- b. David the standard for covenant faithfulness
- c. Many good kings had serious flaws
- d. Only Hezekiah and Josiah given unqualified approval
- e. David's dynasty preserved – God's covenant promises fulfilled
- f. Interaction between kings and prophets emphasized
- g. Final judgement and deportation because of persistent unfaithfulness

### **2. The life of Solomon**

- a. David hesitates to appoint a successor (ch 1)
- b. Solomon anointed as king (ch 1)

- c. David's instructions to Solomon (ch 2) (Adonijah, Joab and Shimei Executed)
- d. Solomon's wisdom (ch 3)
- e. Building and dedicating the temple (ch 4 – 7)
- f. Solomon's prayer of dedication (ch 8)
- g. The Queen of Sheba (ch 10)
- h. Solomon's apostasy, chastisement and death (ch 11)
- i. Did Solomon repent – Ecclesiastes written in his old age?

### 3. The divided kingdom

- a. Jereboam's revolt (ch 12)
- b. Jereboam's idolatry rebuked (ch 13)
- b. Rapid decline in Israel
- c. Judah's Kings more Faithful
- d. The Rise of the Prophetic Office

### 4. The life of Elijah

- a. Obscure origin
- b. Lived in a period of great apostasy
- c. Predicts a drought (Deut 28:22-24)
- d. Miraculous provision (ravens and the widow)
- e. The crisis on Mount Carmel – Baal's prophets killed
- f. Jezebel threatens revenge - Elijah flees to Horeb
- g. God meets with Elijah
- h. Ahab steals Naboth's vineyard
- i. Elijah taken to heaven
- j. Elijah appears on the mount of transfiguration
- k. An example of believing prayer (James 5:17,18)

### 5. The life of Elisha

- a. Served an Apprenticeship
- b. Elisha's 10 Miraculous Signs
  1. The Purified Spring
  2. Judgement upon Blaspheming Youths
  3. Water in the Desert
  4. The Widow's Oil
  5. Raising the Dead
  6. Poisoned Stew made Edible
  7. Feeding the 100
  8. Cleansing Leprosy – Naaman
  9. The Floating Axe Head
  10. Blindness on the Syrians
- c. Miracles Mark a New Era of Revelation
- d. Elisha's Final Tasks (2 Kings 8 and 9)

### 6. Demise of the monarchy (2 Kings)

- a. Jehu's dynasty (ch 9-15)
- b. Jehu executes judgement on Ahab's house and destroys Baal worship (ch 9 and 10)
- c. Israel's last days (ch 15 and 17)
- d. The fall and deportation of Israel (ch 17)
- e. Judah's last kings – reforms and backslidings (ch 18-24) \*
- f. The fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple (ch 25)
- g. The deportation to Babylon and the end of the monarchy
- h. Jesus Christ the true successor to David

\* For a more detailed account see 2 Chronicles in part 4

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## **Chapter 3 - 1 Chronicles**

### **1. Author and date of writing**

Ancient Jewish tradition ascribes the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, to the reforming priest Ezra, written during the period immediately after the return from exile (c440 - 430 BC). Even if Ezra did not write these four books, they were compiled by someone very close to him. The style of Chronicles is similar to Ezra, and the last verses of 2 Chronicles are identical to the first verses of Ezra. As with many other books in the Bible, Chronicles is based on many other written sources. About half the work is based upon Samuel and Kings, but the writer also drew on Genesis to Ruth, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations and Zechariah. There are also numerous non-Scriptural sources from the annals of the kings and writings of the prophets Samuel, Nathan, Gad, Ahijah, Iddo, Shemaiah and the 'seers'. The work then, is a selection, arrangement and compilation of existing material.

### **2. Purpose**

At first sight the two books of Chronicles appear to be a 'rewrite' of the books of Kings, with some genealogies added on the front end. Such a view is however very superficial and unworthy of anyone who accepts the divine authorship of the Scriptures. The author of Kings had

arranged and interpreted Israel's history for the benefit of the nation in exile in Babylon. In Kings there is a sustained emphasis upon the disobedience of the nation and their rulers which had resulted in the terrible judgements upon them: the dethroning of the house of David, the destruction of the northern kingdom, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and the deportation of the nation to Babylon. The purpose of the writer of Chronicles is more directed at the needs of the Israelites who had returned from captivity. The burning questions of that time were: - Is God still interested in us? Are his covenants still in force? Will he cast us off for ever? These were particularly relevant questions, in view of all the judgements which had befallen them. Chronicles is really a 'sermon', in which the writer affirms that 'Yes, God is still with his people' and he does so by the inclusion of a number of themes in the book.

### **3. Themes**

**(a) Continuity with the past.** You cannot miss this, as the book opens with the name of the first human being who ever lived on this earth. He then traces in brief the genealogy of the 'godly line' of the human race, through the patriarchs before and after the flood, with the addition of several 'side shoots' (e.g. Ishmael and Edom). To emphasise this theme of continuity, the writer makes much of the building of the temple under Solomon and the institution of divine worship under the direction of the Levites. The rebuilt city and temple of Jerusalem with its worship and book of praises, were a reminder that God had given these gifts to his people through David.

**(b) The importance of the Law and the Prophets.** If Israel had followed the Law and listened to the Prophets, she would never have been judged and sent into exile. Her kings had been unable to prevent her apostasy, though many made great efforts at reformation. Israel now not having a king should be no excuse for them to fail to obey God's revealed and inscripturated word.

**(c) Hope in the promise of the Messiah.** He would be the only King who would truly judge Israel in righteousness. This Messianic hope is emphasised by the idealised depictions of the godly kings: David, Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah. They sat on the 'throne of the Lord' and ruled over the Lord's kingdom, clearly foreshadowing the reign of 'great David's greater son'.

**(d) A concern with 'all Israel'.** The writer saw the restored community as consisting of the remnant of both North and South. The narrative makes mention of frequent movements of the godly from Israel to Judah during the times of the kings e.g. 2 Chronicles 34:9.

#### **4. The Genealogies**

The first nine chapters of the book are devoted to genealogies. Not perhaps considered as a favourite passage of Scripture, but part of the inspired word of God, and therefore to be considered with due reverence.

##### **(a) The Purpose of Scriptural genealogies**

Genealogies form a significant part of the Bible. They are in fact a very abbreviated version of Biblical history, condensed into a list of the names of the leading characters. They are a brief extract of the record books of God. However, they also had a legal role in establishing ancestral connections. This was particularly important for the Jews returning from exile. They needed to establish their ancestry to know where their allotted portion of land was. In the case of the priests and Levites, they were not allowed to take part in the duties of the Temple worship without establishing their ancestry.

There are two other functions of the Scriptural genealogies: They gave the people of God a definite link with the past, going right back to creation: also the NT writers used genealogical evidence to establish that the Lord Jesus Christ is not only descended from David, but also from Abraham and Adam.

##### **(b) Limitations of Scriptural genealogies**

In the 17th century, Archbishop Ussher of Armagh gave a date for creation as 4004 BC. This was computed from the various years given in the genealogies, particularly in Genesis. It is, however, stretching the purpose of the genealogies to do this. Some names are omitted from some lists; sometimes the first son named is not the eldest, but the most important. e.g. Abraham, who although listed first, was certainly not the eldest son of Terah. So the timescale of Biblical history is almost certainly somewhat longer than Archbishop Ussher's dates, but on the other

hand we have no right to stretch it to meet the demands of evolutionary philosophy.

### **(c) The genealogies of Chronicles**

- (i) The 1st genealogy begins with Adam and traces the Godly line through to Israel. It is interesting to note that the genealogy of the least important branches of the family are given first; for example, Japheth and Ham's descendants are listed before Shem's, who is the ancestor of Abraham.
- (ii) Chapters 2-7 are genealogies of the nation of Israel, tribe by tribe. Although not the firstborn, Judah being the royal tribe, is put first. Three chapters are devoted to this tribe. In addition to the genealogies of the kings through David, considerable space is devoted to other clans of Judah. From chapter 5 onwards the genealogies of the remaining tribes are given with the exception of the two most northern tribes, Dan and Zebulun - probably because these tribes had, by that time, been lost to the nation. The number of tribes is, however, made up to twelve by inclusion of the tribe of Levi and two halves of the tribe of Manasseh. The writer is concerned to show that the remnant returning to their homeland were not only from Judah, but from other tribes of Israel as well.
- (iii) Chapter 8 gives the lineage of Israel's first king Saul, but his descendants are only traced through his Godly son Jonathan.

- (iv) Chapter 9 lists those who had returned from Babylon. Particular emphasis is placed on the priests and the Levites, who were responsible for the restored temple worship.

The genealogies contain names of both great and small and should encourage us to remember that God is interested in all his people and in the details of their lives.

By reviewing these genealogies, the writer first establishes that the remnant of all Israel are in fact firmly rooted in God's purposes in the past, going back as far as Adam. The writer now moves on to consider the original setting aside of Jerusalem under David, the extensive preparations he made for the building of the first temple, and the ordering of the worship of God in it. Nearly 600 years had elapsed since the beginning of David's reign.

The writer is anxious to show that the rebuilding of the temple and the re-establishment of the worship taking place under Ezra and Nehemiah are according to the same pattern as under David and Solomon. The apparently idealised portraits of David and Solomon make much more sense if they are considered primarily as temple-builders. Mention is made of some of the other activities of David and Solomon, but clearly the building of the temple and the setting up of the true worship of God in it are dominant themes. With this understanding of the writer's apparent purpose, let us look at the remainder of 1 Chronicles.

## **5. Preparations for building the 1st temple (ch 10-29)**

Saul is given little space. A brief genealogy is followed by an account of his death. The reason for his death is given as his unfaithfulness to the Lord and his complete lack of concern for the true worship of God (1 Chron 10:13).

Nothing is said of David's exploits as a young man. His life as a fugitive, and the civil war which began his reign, are dealt with in terms of lists of those who assisted him to establish his kingdom. After all Israel had asked him to be king, his first act was to take Jerusalem and establish it as his capital city. Then there is the account of the abortive attempt to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (1 Chron 13). When this is compared with the second and successful attempt, it is clear that on the second occasion David had 'done his homework' (1 Chron 15:13). This is a very important point to make when considering the re-establishment of the worship of God in the rebuilt temple! The details given in this section concerning the music and singing are meant to emphasise that only the Levites were to take on this work and they were to keep to the pattern established by David.

1 Chronicles 17 records David's desire to build a house for the worship of God and of God's will to defer it to Solomon. God's covenant with David's posterity, together with David's response are also included. (We considered these in our study of 2 Samuel and the survey of that book is available at the address on the back of this book.)

In 1 Chronicles 18-20, David's victories are set in the context of his using the spoil to provide materials for

building the temple, and subjecting the surrounding nations so that they could provide revenue and some of the captured peoples as labourers to build the temple (18:7-11, 20:2,3). Even the numbering of the people (1 Chron 21), with its attendant judgement, is included because the place where the angel of death was stopped and where God then "*answered by fire*", was to be the very site for the temple.

Chapter 22 describes the detailed preparations which David made to procure the materials for Solomon to start building. Note v14!

In Chapters 23-26 we have the genealogies of the priests and Levites as an introduction to the details of their various duties associated with the temple and its worship. Whether the Levites assisted the priests in the sacrifices or were singers, gatekeepers or treasurers, they were all essential and their duties were laid down in detail.

David was not permitted to actually build the house of God, but he did all that was humanly possible to make preparations for its building (1 Chron. 28-29). Would that we all had such a zeal for the spiritual building of the Church of God!

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## **Chapter 4 - 2 Chronicles**

The latter part of 1 Chronicles is a selective portrait of the life of David. The reason the writer is so selective is that he is concentrating on David as the temple-builder. Not

that David built the temple, but he did make extensive preparations in advance for its building. This study takes up the narrative in chapter 28 of 1 Chronicles, with David's final contribution to the temple building project and Solomon as the one who actually brought it to pass. (Chapter 27 is a list of the army divisions and civil servants, without which David could never have achieved what he did in preparation for the work.)

Before looking at the details of Solomon's actual construction of the temple, it is interesting to note the parallels between the Moses/Joshua combination and that of David and Solomon. Moses was not allowed to take the people into the Promised Land, but Joshua did. David was not permitted to build the temple, but Solomon did. The tabernacle was built to the plans given by God to Moses. The temple was built to equally specific plans given to David (ch 28:19). The spoils of war were used as building materials for both structures. The people contributed willingly and generously for both projects (ch 29). The glory-cloud appeared at the dedication of both structures.

### **1. Solomon builds the Temple**

In the first verse of 2 Chronicles the writer summarises the problems Solomon had in establishing his reign as undisputed king over Israel. Note again that the detail of 1 Kings is left out in the interests of the writer's purpose in emphasising the importance and continuity of the worship of the one true God in his temple.

After a further brief introduction to and overview of some of the key economic features of Solomon's reign, the description of the temple building work is commenced. This section is similar to that recorded in 1 Kings 5-9.

The narrative includes a description of the construction of the building itself, with the furnishings and fittings. This description is not dissimilar to the description of the construction and setting up of the tabernacle in Exodus. Also covered in this section is Solomon's prayer of dedication. A significant difference between this account and the one in 1 Kings is that the writer here speaks of the fire of God falling upon the sacrifice in response to Solomon's prayer. The two other occasions prior to this, when the fire of God fell on the sacrifice, were at the inauguration of the tabernacle and following David's purchasing of the site for the temple (1 Chron 21:26). So Elijah (1 Kings 18) had good precedent when he too asked for God to answer by fire!

This portrait of the life of Solomon concludes with the account of the visit of the Queen of Sheba and a final review of the glory of Solomon's kingdom and the prosperity that his reign brought to the nation.

Surely in this account of Solomon's reign we have an indication of the glory and prosperity of the kingdom of Christ in the gospel age. It is also significant to note that in the visit of the queen of Sheba and the part played by Hiram king of Tyre, there is a foreshadowing of the

inclusion of the Gentiles into the blessings of the Gospel and the worship of the true God (Isaiah 2:2).

## 2. Reforms and backslidings

The remainder of 2 Chronicles (chapters 10-36) surveys the reigns of the kings of Judah from the disruption following Solomon, up to the return from exile in Babylon.

The writer brings out the consequences of what one man has called the '*wavering devotion to the pure worship of Jehovah*'. This is illustrated through the lives and times of the kings of Judah only. Some of her kings were faithful to Jehovah and his worship; some were unfaithful. Unfaithfulness was always followed by judgement, and faithfulness by blessing.

As we review the lives of these men, we can see that the most important feature of their lives was their relationship to the Lord. Aspects of that relationship are included in the narrative, which are not to be found in 1 and 2 Kings.

Rehoboam's reign at first began a spiritual decline, but when chastised by the invasion of Pharaoh, we read that he humbled himself and God's anger was turned away (2 Chron 12:9).

Abijah, Rehoboam's son, when at war with Jeroboam of Israel, cried to the Lord for help and God gave him a great victory (2 Chron 13:18).

Asa, the next king, began as a reformer. He removed the idols from Judah and encouraged the true worship of God. His reforms were so thorough that many from the Northern Kingdom settled in Judah to take part in the restored worship of the Lord. But Asa did not continue as he had begun. He sought help from a heathen king and was rebuked for it by war and by a disease in his feet.

Asa's son Jehoshaphat was one of the best kings of Judah. He not only maintained the worship of God but also set up a godly teaching ministry in all the towns of Judah and also provided a just system of judges. He also was given a remarkable victory over a vast army, without even drawing a sword (2 Chron 20). But Jehoshaphat erred in choosing evil king Ahab's ungodly daughter Athaliah, as wife for his son Jehoram. This marriage alliance had disastrous consequences for several generations. First of all there was a massive turning away from the Lord in Jehoram's reign. Jehoram suffered repeated military defeats and then died of a vile disease at the age of forty. Ahaziah his son, who was no better, only lasted for one year and was put to death by Jehu king of Israel. Then Athaliah massacred the whole royal family of Judah, except baby Joash, who was hidden by the wife of one of the priests named Jehoida. Athaliah then reigned for six years and set up the worship of Baal in Judah.

When Joash was seven, Jehoida the priest secured the backing of the army and proclaimed him king. The story of his reforms and reinstatement of the worship of Jehovah are well known. But when the godly priest Jehoida died,

Joash completely changed and reintroduced idolatry and even had Jehoida's son Zechariah murdered in the Temple precincts. He himself ended up being assassinated. Amaziah, the son of Joash, behaved in a similar fashion. He began well but later turned to idols and he too was assassinated.

Uzziah, the next king, was also rather similar, following the Lord in his youth. But in pride he tried to usurp the position of the priests and God struck him with leprosy. It was in the year of Uzziah's death that God called the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1).

Uzziah's son Jotham is only commended, although he died quite young; but his son Ahaz introduced many evil practices, including the burning of babies to the god Moloch (2 Chron 28:12). There is a real improvement with the reign of Hezekiah (2 Chron 29), who began as he intended to continue, by making a covenant to restore the true worship of God. He re-opened and cleansed the temple of God, which had been shut up by his father. The latter part of chapter 29 gives an insight into the divinely ordained Old Testament worship, even the place of music in that worship and the posture they adopted at its climax (bowed heads). Hezekiah then arranged for the Passover to be kept and proclaimed his intentions throughout all Israel (including the North). This was seven years after the fall of the Northern Kingdom. Some mocked the messengers, but some came to keep the Passover about a month and a half late! A great assembly of the people came to Jerusalem to keep the Passover and carried out many reforms. The altars

to other gods were destroyed and thrown into the brook Kidron. It was a time of great revival and rejoicing. After the Passover all the people continued the work of reformation over the whole country until they had utterly destroyed the unauthorized worship. As the initiator of these reforms Hezekiah is highly praised (31:20,21). Then the Lord tested Hezekiah by sending the powerful Assyrian army against him, but he prepared himself to defend the nation and together with Isaiah the prophet cried to the Lord for help. The Assyrian army was decimated by divine intervention and the king of Assyria was later assassinated. Hezekiah's actions are a great encouragement to God's faithful people when they face insurmountable problems. The influence of Isaiah on Hezekiah is also clearly seen in this passage.

Hezekiah, one of the godliest kings, was followed by his son Manasseh, who was one of the most evil. He reverted to all the worst idolatry of former years and seduced the people to follow his evil ways. So, after repeated warnings through his prophets, God had him deported to Babylon and thrown into prison. No doubt he had time to reflect on the godliness and prosperity of his father Hezekiah, and in his misery he turned to the Lord, was restored to his kingdom and re-instated the worship of God in it. As we have said earlier in this book this was a remarkable conversion. But the earlier apostasy of his long reign finally provoked the Lord to the awful judgements of the exile to Babylon. It is small wonder too that such an ungodly life produced an ungodly offspring. His son

continued in all his father's evil ways, but was only permitted to reign for two years.

The next king Josiah is noted for his godly reforms, his restoring the temple worship and keeping of the Passover. God again granted his people a season of refreshing after the evil days of Manasseh. Josiah, however, came to an early grave, because he entered a quarrel that need not have concerned him, and despite a warning from the ungodly Pharaoh, was killed on the battlefield. During Josiah's latter years, the prophet Jeremiah began his ministry, and the early chapters of his prophecy show that despite the reforms of Josiah, many of the people had only outwardly reformed their ways. So the Lord finally gave them over to their idolatrous desires and after the brief reigns of three of Josiah's sons and one of his grandsons, the bulk of the nation were deported to Babylon. The temple was destroyed and Jerusalem made into a heap of ruins. But the Lord had not forgotten his covenant, and the book ends with the decree of the Persian king Cyrus to restore the worship of God at Jerusalem after the exile of 70 years. Despite the repeated unfaithfulness of the people of God, he had remained true to all his promises and always will!

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## **Chapter 5. Sermon subjects from 1 and 2 Chronicles**

### **1. Themes from 1 and 2 Chronicles**

- a. Continuity with the past
- b. The importance of the law and the prophets

- c. Hope in the promised Messiah
- d. A concern for all Israel
- e. The importance of the temple and its worship
- f. The godly remnant kept by God

### **2. Genealogies**

- a. Genealogies – condensed history
- b. All God's people are important to him
- c. Genealogies cannot be used for exact dating purposes
- d. Genealogies used by returning exiles to prove ancestral land rights

### **3. Preparing to build the first temple**

- a. David brings the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chron 13-15)
- b. David not permitted to build the temple (1 Chron 17)
- c. David's victory spoils provide materials for the temple (1 Chron 18-20)
- d. The temple site chosen (1 Chron 21)
- e. Preparations for building the temple (1 Chron 22)
- f. Institution of the temple worship (1 Chron 23-26)
- g. The National Infrastructure to support the work (1 Chron 27)
- h. The plans for the temple (1 Chron 28)
- i. Gifts for the temple (1 Chron 29)

### **4. Solomon and the building of the Temple**

- a. Solomon builds the temple (2 Chron 2-5)
- b. Patterned on the tabernacle but much larger and grander
- c. Solomon's prayer of dedication (2 Chron 6)
- d. The fire of God and the consecration (2 Chron 7)
- e. The glory of Solomon's kingdom foreshadows that of Christ
- f. Hiram of Tyre and the Queen of Sheba foreshadows the calling of the gentiles

### **5. Comparison between Moses/Joshua and David/Solomon**

- a. Moses not permitted to enter the promised land but Joshua did
- b. David not permitted to build the temple but Solomon did
- c. The tabernacle built to plans given by God to Moses
- d. The temple built to plans given by God to David (1 Chron 28:19)
- e. The spoils of war used as building materials for both projects
- f. The people contributed willingly and generously for both projects
- g. The glory cloud appeared at the dedication of both structures

### **6. Judah's wavering devotion to the Lord**

- a. Not all Judah's kings were godly
- b. Some kings began well but ended badly
- c. Even the best kings had weaknesses

- d. The period marked a decline of the monarchy but the prophets became more prominent
- e. God is faithful even when man isn't

### **7. Lessons from Judah's Kings**

Rehoboam turns from God and is chastised by Pharaoh's invasion (12:9)

Abijah trusts in the Lord and is given victory over Israel (13:18)

Asa – reforms and backsliding

- a. Removes idols and reinstates true worship
- b. Many from the northern kingdom resettle in Judah
- c. Seeks help from a heathen king
- d. Ignores the prophet's warning
- e. Chastised with disease and war

### **Jehoshaphat – one of Judah's best kings**

- a. Establishes the worship of God
- b. Sets up a teaching ministry
- c. Establishes good justice
- d. Given a remarkable victory
- e. Disastrous marriage alliance with Ahab
- f. Evil consequences for several generations – apostasy, military defeat, near elimination of the royal family
- g. Baal worship in Judah for 6 years

### **Joash and his family – good beginnings but an evil end**

- a. Rescued from Athaliah's murderous coup by Jehoida the priest

- b. Recovers the word of God and reinstates the worship of God
- c. Reverts to idolatry after Jehoida's death
- d. Assassinates Jehoida's son in the temple
- e. Joash himself finally assassinated
- f. Amaziah begins well but later turns to idols
- g. Uzziah - follows the Lord in his youth
  - usurps the position of priest
  - struck with leprosy
  - Isaiah called during the year of his death

#### **Hezekiah – a model king**

- a. Makes a covenant to restore the worship of God
- b. Re-opens and cleanses the temple
- c. Keeps the Passover
- d. Some from the northern kingdom come to celebrate it
- e. Purges the land of idols
- f. Tested by the Assyrian invasion
- g. Prepares and prays – God gives a great victory over the Assyrians
- h. Clearly influenced by Isaiah's ministry

#### **Manasseh – one of Judah's most evil kings**

- a. Did not follow in his godly father's ways
- b. Returns to the very worst of idolatry
- c. Ignores warnings and is deported to Babylon
- d. Repents in prison and is released
- e. Restores the worship of God

#### **Josiah – Judah's last good king**

- a. An outwardly thorough reformation
- b. Likened to David for his faithfulness
- c. Served the Lord from his youth
- d. Contemporary with Jeremiah
- e. Unwise action leads to an early death (609 BC)
- f. The nation soon turns away from God
- g. Judgement falls on Judah soon after his death (606 BC)

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