



The Book Of Second Chronicles

A Plan To Bring A Nation

Back To God

Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger

2 Chronicles

OVERVIEW: THE slide clicks, and our eyes focus on the image flashed onto the screen in the darkened sanctuary. “This idol,” explains the missionary, “is made of stone and is worshiped daily. The natives believe that this will guarantee good crops and healthy children.” With condescending smiles, we wonder at their ignorance. How could anyone worship an object? Idols are for the naive and the superstitious! But after the presentation we return home to *our* idols of wealth, prestige, or self-fulfillment. If we put anything in God’s place, we worship it, despite what we profess with our lips.

Our experience parallels Israel’s. They were chosen by God to represent him on earth. But too often they forgot the truth and their calling, stumbling blindly after idols as the neighboring nations did. Then prophets, priests, and judgment would push them abruptly back to God, the one true God. Second Chronicles relates this sordid history of Judah’s corrupt and idolatrous kings. Here and there a good king would arise in Judah, and for a time there would be revival, but the downward spiral would continue—ending in chaos, destruction, and captivity.

The chronicler writes this volume to bring the nation back to God by reminding them of their past. Only by following God would they prosper! As you read 2 Chronicles you will catch a vivid glimpse of Judah’s history (the history of Israel, the northern kingdom, is virtually ignored), and you will see the tragic results of idolatry. Learn the lessons of the past: determine to get rid of any idols in your life and to worship God alone.

Second Chronicles continues the history of 1 Chronicles. David’s son, Solomon, was inaugurated as king. Solomon built the magnificent temple in Jerusalem, thus fulfilling his father’s wish and last request (2 Chron. 2-5). Solomon enjoyed a peaceful and prosperous reign of 40 years that made him world famous. After Solomon died, his son Rehoboam assumed the throne, and his immaturity divided the kingdom.

In Judah, there were a few good kings and many evil ones. The writer of Chronicles faithfully records their achievements and failures, noting how each king measured up to God’s standard for success. Clearly a good king obeyed God’s laws, eliminated the places of idol worship, and made no alliances with other

nations. Judah's good kings include Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah (Azariah), Hezekiah, and Josiah. Of its many evil ones, Ahaz and Manasseh were perhaps the worst. Eventually the nation was conquered and taken captive, and the temple was destroyed.

The writer's purpose was to reunite the nation around the true worship of God after the captivity. In these pages, he reminds the people of their past. He clearly broadcasts his message through one of the best-known verses in Scripture, "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). As you read 2 Chronicles, listen to God's voice and obey him; and receive his redemptive, healing touch.

THE BLUEPRINT

A. THE REIGN OF SOLOMON (2 Chron. 1:1-9:31)

Solomon achieved much in business and government, but most important, he was the man God used to build the glorious temple. This beautiful building was the religious center of the nation. It symbolized the unity of all the tribes, the presence of God among them, and the nation's high calling. We may achieve great things in life, but we must not neglect any effort that will help nurture God's people or bring others into God's kingdom. It is easy for us to get the wrong perspective on what's really important in life.

1. Solomon asks for wisdom
2. Solomon builds the temple
3. Solomon dedicates the temple
4. Solomon's riches and wisdom

2 Chron. 1:1-9:31

Solomon, the son of King David, now took firm control of the kingdom, for the Lord his God was with him and made him very powerful. [2] He called together all Israel—the generals and captains of the army, the judges, and all the political and clan leaders. [3] Then Solomon led the entire assembly to the hill at Gibeon where God's Tabernacle was located. This was the Tabernacle that Moses, the Lord's servant, had constructed in the wilderness. [4] David had already moved the Ark of God from Kiriath-jearim to the special tent he had prepared for it in Jerusalem. [5] But the bronze altar made by Bezalel son of Uri and grandson of Hur was still at Gibeon in front of the Tabernacle of the Lord. So Solomon and the people gathered in front of it to consult the Lord. [6] There in front of the Tabernacle, Solomon went up to the bronze altar in the Lord's presence and sacrificed a thousand burnt offerings on it.

[7] That night God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, "What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!"

[8] Solomon replied to God, "You have been so faithful and kind to my father, David, and now you have made me king in his place. [9] Now, Lord God, please keep your promise to David my father, for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth! [10] Give me wisdom and knowledge to rule them properly, for who is able to govern this great nation of yours?"

[11] God said to Solomon, "Because your greatest desire is to help your people, and you did not ask for personal wealth and honor or the death of your enemies or even a long life, but rather you asked for wisdom and knowledge to properly govern my people, [12] I will certainly give you the wisdom and knowledge you requested. And I will also give you riches, wealth, and

honor such as no other king has ever had before you or will ever have again!" [13] Then Solomon returned to Jerusalem from the Tabernacle at the hill of Gibeon, and he reigned over Israel.

[14] Solomon built up a huge military force, which included fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses. He stationed many of them in the chariot cities, and some near him in Jerusalem. [15] During Solomon's reign, silver and gold were as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones. And valuable cedarwood was as common as the sycamore wood that grows in the foothills of Judah. [16] Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Cilicia; the king's traders acquired them from Cilicia at the standard price. [17] At that time, Egyptian chariots delivered to Jerusalem could be purchased for 600 pieces of silver, and horses could be bought for 150 pieces of silver. Many of these were then resold to the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Aram.

[2:1] Solomon now decided that the time had come to build a Temple for the Lord and a royal palace for himself. [2] He enlisted a force of 70,000 common laborers, 80,000 stonecutters in the hill country, and 3,600 foremen. [3] Solomon also sent this message to King Hiram at Tyre:

"Send me cedar logs like the ones that were supplied to my father, David, when he was building his palace. [4] I am about to build a Temple to honor the name of the Lord my God. It will be a place set apart to burn incense and sweet spices before him, to display the special sacrificial bread, and to sacrifice burnt offerings each morning and evening, on the Sabbaths, at new moon celebrations, and at the other appointed festivals of the Lord our God. He has commanded Israel to do these things forever.

[5] "This will be a magnificent Temple because our God is an awesome God, greater than any other. [6] But who can really build him a worthy home? Not even the highest heavens can contain him! So who am I to consider building a Temple for him, except as a place to burn sacrifices to him?

[7] "So send me a master craftsman who can work with gold, silver, bronze, and iron; someone who is expert at dyeing purple, scarlet, and blue cloth; and a skilled engraver who can work with the craftsmen of Judah and Jerusalem who were selected by my father, David. [8] Also send me cedar, cypress, and almug logs from Lebanon, for I know that your men are without equal at cutting timber. I will send my men to help them. [9] An immense amount of timber will be needed, for the Temple I am going to build will be very large and magnificent. [10] I will pay your men 100,000 bushels of crushed wheat, 100,000 bushels of barley, 110,000 gallons of wine, and 110,000 gallons of olive oil."

[11] King Hiram sent this letter of reply to Solomon:

"It is because the Lord loves his people that he has made you their king! [12] Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who made the heavens and the earth! He has given David a wise son, gifted with skill and understanding, who will build a Temple for the Lord and a royal palace for himself.

[13] "I am sending you a master craftsman named Hiram-abi. He is a brilliant man, [14] the son of a woman from Dan in Israel; his father is from Tyre. He is skillful at making things from gold, silver, bronze, and iron. He also knows all about stonework, carpentry, and weaving. He is an expert in dyeing purple, blue, and scarlet cloth and in working with linen. He is also an

engraver and can follow any design given to him. He will work with your craftsmen and those appointed by my lord David, your father.

[15] "Send along the wheat, barley, olive oil, and wine that you mentioned. [16] We will cut whatever timber you need from the Lebanon Mountains and will float the logs in rafts down the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to Joppa. From there you can transport the logs up to Jerusalem."

[17] Solomon took a census of all foreigners in the land of Israel, like the census his father had taken, and he counted 153,600. [18] He enlisted 70,000 of them as common laborers, 80,000 as stonecutters in the hill country, and 3,600 as foremen.

[3:1] So Solomon began to build the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to Solomon's father, King David. The Temple was built on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the site that David had selected. [2] The construction began in midspring, during the fourth year of Solomon's reign.

[3] The foundation for the Temple of God was ninety feet long and thirty feet wide. [4] The foyer at the front of the Temple was thirty feet wide, running across the entire width of the Temple. The inner walls of the foyer and the ceiling were overlaid with pure gold. The roof of the foyer was thirty feet high.

[5] The main room of the Temple was paneled with cypress wood, overlaid with pure gold, and decorated with carvings of palm trees and chains. [6] The walls of the Temple were decorated with beautiful jewels and with pure gold from the land of Parvaim. [7] All the walls, beams, doors, and thresholds throughout the Temple were overlaid with gold, and figures of cherubim were carved on the walls.

[8] The Most Holy Place was thirty feet wide, corresponding to the width of the Temple, and it was also thirty feet deep. Its interior was overlaid with about twenty-three tons of pure gold. [9] They used gold nails that weighed about twenty ounces each. The walls of the upper rooms were also overlaid with pure gold.

[10] Solomon made two figures shaped like cherubim and overlaid them with gold. These were placed in the Most Holy Place. [11] The total wingspan of the two cherubim standing side by side was 30 feet. One wing of the first figure was 7 1/2 feet long, and it touched the Temple wall. The other wing, also 7 1/2 feet long, touched one of the wings of the second figure. [12] In the same way, the second figure had one wing 7 1/2 feet long that touched the opposite wall. The other wing, also 7 1/2 feet long, touched the wing of the first figure. [13] So the wingspan of both cherubim together was 30 feet. They both stood and faced out toward the main room of the Temple. [14] Across the entrance of the Most Holy Place, Solomon hung a curtain made of fine linen and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, with figures of cherubim embroidered on it.

[15] For the front of the Temple, Solomon made two pillars that were 27 feet tall, each topped by a capital extending upward another 7 1/2 feet. [16] He made a network of interwoven chains and used them to decorate the tops of the pillars. He also made one hundred decorative pomegranates and attached them to the chains. [17] Then he set up the two pillars at the entrance of the Temple, one to the south of the entrance and the other to the north. He named the one on the south Jakin, and the one on the north Boaz.

[4:1] Solomon also made a bronze altar 30 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 15 feet high. [2] Then he cast a large round tank, 15 feet across from rim to rim; it was called the Sea. It was 7 1/2 feet deep and about 45 feet in circumference. [3] The Sea was encircled just below its rim by two rows of figures that resembled oxen. There were about six oxen per foot all the way around, and they had been cast as part of the tank.

[4] The Sea rested on a base of twelve bronze oxen, all facing outward. Three faced north, three faced west, three faced south, and three faced east. [5] The walls of the Sea were about three inches thick, and its rim flared out like a cup and resembled a lily blossom. It could hold about 16,500 gallons of water.

[6] He also made ten basins for water to wash the offerings, five to the south of the Sea and five to the north. The priests used the Sea itself, and not the basins, for their own washing.

[7] Solomon then cast ten gold lampstands according to the specifications that had been given and put them in the Temple. Five were placed against the south wall, and five were placed against the north wall. [8] He also built ten tables and placed them in the Temple, five along the south wall and five along the north wall. Then he molded one hundred gold basins.

[9] Solomon also built a courtyard for the priests and the large outer courtyard. He made doors for the courtyard entrances and overlaid them with bronze. [10] The Sea was placed near the southeast corner of the Temple.

[11] Hiram-abi also made the necessary pots, shovels, and basins.

So at last Hiram-abi completed everything King Solomon had assigned him to make for the Temple of God:

[12] two pillars,

two bowl-shaped capitals on top of the pillars,

two networks of chains that decorated the capitals,

[13] four hundred pomegranates that hung from the chains on the capitals (two rows of pomegranates for each of the chain networks that were hung around the capitals on top of the pillars),

[14] the water carts holding the basins,

[15] the Sea and the twelve oxen under it,

[16] the pots, the shovels, the meat hooks, and all the related utensils.

Hiram-abi made all these things out of burnished bronze for the Temple of the Lord, just as King Solomon had requested. [17] The king had them cast in clay molds in the Jordan Valley between Succoth and Zarethan. [18] Such great quantities of bronze were used that its weight could not be determined.

[19] So Solomon made all the furnishings for the Temple of God:

the gold altar;

the tables for the Bread of the Presence;

[20] the lampstands and their lamps of pure gold to burn in front of the Most Holy Place as prescribed;

[21] the flower decorations, lamps, and tongs, all of pure gold;

[22] the lamp snuffers, basins, dishes, and firepans, all of pure gold; the doors for the entrances to the Most Holy Place and the main room of the Temple, overlaid with gold.

[5:1] When Solomon had finished all the work related to building the Temple of the Lord, he brought in the gifts dedicated by his father, King David, including all the silver and gold and all the utensils. These were stored in the treasuries of the Temple of God.

[2] Solomon then summoned the leaders of all the tribes and families of Israel to assemble in Jerusalem. They were to bring the Ark of the Lord's covenant from its location in the City of David, also known as Zion, to its new place in the Temple. [3] They all assembled before the king at the annual Festival of Shelters in early autumn. [4] When all the leaders of Israel arrived, the Levites moved the Ark, [5] along with the special tent and all its sacred utensils.

The Levitical priests carried them all up to the Temple. [6] King Solomon and the entire community of Israel sacrificed sheep and oxen before the Ark in such numbers that no one could keep count!

[7] Then the priests carried the Ark of the Lord's covenant into the inner sanctuary of the Temple—the Most Holy Place—and placed it beneath the wings of the cherubim. [8] The cherubim spread their wings out over the Ark, forming a canopy over the Ark and its carrying poles. [9] These poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the front entrance of the Temple's main room—the Holy Place—but not from outside it. They are still there to this day. [10] Nothing was in the Ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed there at Mount Sinai, when the Lord made a covenant with the people of Israel after they left Egypt.

[11] Then the priests left the Holy Place. All the priests who were present had purified themselves, whether or not they were on duty that day. [12] And the Levites who were musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and all their sons and brothers—were dressed in fine linen robes and stood at the east side of the altar playing cymbals, harps, and lyres. They were joined by 120 priests who were playing trumpets. [13] The trumpeters and singers performed together in unison to praise and give thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals, and other instruments, they raised their voices and praised the Lord with these words:

"He is so good!
His faithful love endures forever!"

At that moment a cloud filled the Temple of the Lord. [14] The priests could not continue their work because the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple of God.

[6:1] Then Solomon prayed, "O Lord, you have said that you would live in thick darkness. [2] But I have built a glorious Temple for you, where you can live forever!"

[3] Then the king turned around to the entire community of Israel standing before him and gave this blessing: [4] "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who has kept the promise he made to my father, David. For he told my father,

[5] 'From the day I brought my people out of Egypt, I have never chosen a city among the tribes of Israel as the place where a temple should be built to honor my name. Nor have I chosen a king to lead my people Israel. [6] But now I have chosen Jerusalem as that city, and David as that king.' "

[7] Then Solomon said, "My father, David, wanted to build this Temple to honor the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. [8] But the Lord told him, 'It is right for you to want to build the Temple to honor my name, [9] but you will not be the one to do it. One of your sons will build it instead.'

[10] "And now the Lord has done what he promised, for I have become king in my father's place. I have built this Temple to honor the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. [11] There I have placed the Ark, and in the Ark is the covenant that the Lord made with the people of Israel."

[12] Then Solomon stood with his hands spread out before the altar of the Lord in front of the entire community of Israel. [13] He had made a bronze platform 7 1/2 feet long, 7 1/2 feet wide, and 4 1/2 feet high and had placed it at the center of the Temple's outer courtyard. He stood on the platform before the entire assembly, and then he knelt down and lifted his hands toward heaven. [14] He prayed, "O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in all of heaven and earth. You keep your promises and show unfailing love to all who obey you and are eager to do your will. [15] You have kept your promise to your servant David, my father. You made that promise with your own mouth, and today you have fulfilled it with your own hands. [16] And now, O Lord, God of Israel, carry out your further promise to your servant David, my father. For you said to him, 'If your descendants guard their behavior and obey my law as you have done, they will always reign over Israel.' [17] Now, O Lord, God of Israel, fulfill this promise to your servant David.

[18] "But will God really live on earth among people? Why, even the highest heavens cannot contain you. How much less this Temple I have built! [19] Listen to my prayer and my request, O Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is making to you. [20] May you watch over this Temple both day and night, this place where you have said you would put your name. May you always hear the prayers I make toward this place. [21] May you hear the humble and earnest requests from me and your people Israel when we pray toward this place. Yes, hear us from heaven where you live, and when you hear, forgive.

[22] "If someone wrongs another person and is required to take an oath of innocence in front of the altar at this Temple, [23] then hear from heaven and judge between your servants—the accuser and the accused. Punish the guilty party, and acquit the one who is innocent.

[24] "If your people Israel are defeated by their enemies because they have sinned against you, and if they turn to you and call on your name and pray to you here in this Temple, [25] then hear from heaven and forgive their sins and return them to this land you gave their ancestors.

[26] "If the skies are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and then they pray toward this Temple and confess your name and turn from their sins because you have punished them, [27] then hear from heaven and forgive the sins of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them to do what is right, and send rain on your land that you have given to your people as their special possession.

[28] "If there is a famine in the land, or plagues, or crop disease, or attacks of locusts or caterpillars, or if your people's enemies are in the land besieging their towns—whatever the trouble is— [29] and if your people offer a prayer concerning their troubles or sorrow, raising their hands toward this Temple, [30] then hear from heaven where you live, and forgive. Give your people whatever they deserve, for you alone know the human heart. [31] Then they will fear you and walk in your ways as long as they live in the land you gave to our ancestors.

[32] "And when foreigners hear of you and your mighty miracles, and they come from distant lands to worship your great name and to pray toward this Temple, [33] then hear from heaven where you live, and grant what they ask of you. Then all the people of the earth will come to know and fear you, just as your own people Israel do. They, too, will know that this Temple I have built bears your name.

[34] "If your people go out at your command to fight their enemies, and if they pray to you toward this city that you have chosen and toward this Temple that I have built for your name, [35] then hear their prayers from heaven and uphold their cause.

[36] "If they sin against you—and who has never sinned?—you may become angry with them and let their enemies conquer them and take them captive to a foreign land far or near. [37] But in that land of exile, they may turn to you again in repentance and pray, 'We have sinned, done evil, and acted wickedly.' [38] Then if they turn to you with their whole heart and soul and pray toward the land you gave to their ancestors, toward this city you have chosen, and toward this Temple I have built to honor your name, [39] then hear their prayers from heaven where you live. Uphold their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you.

[40] "O my God, be attentive to all the prayers made to you in this place. [41] And now, O Lord God, arise and enter this resting place of yours, where your magnificent Ark has been placed. May your priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and may your saints rejoice in your goodness. [42] O Lord God, do not reject your anointed one. Remember your unfailing love for your servant David."

[7:1] When Solomon finished praying, fire flashed down from heaven and burned up the burnt offerings and sacrifices, and the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple. [2] The priests could not even enter the Temple of the Lord because the glorious presence of the Lord filled it. [3] When all the people of Israel saw the fire coming down and the glorious presence of the Lord filling the Temple, they fell face down on the ground and worshiped and praised the Lord, saying,

"He is so good!
His faithful love endures forever!"

[4] Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices to the Lord. [5] King Solomon offered a sacrifice of 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. And so the king and all the people dedicated the Temple of God. [6] The priests took their assigned positions, and so did the Levites who were singing, "His faithful love endures forever!" They accompanied the singing with music from the instruments King David had made for praising the Lord. On the other side of the Levites, the priests blew the trumpets, while all Israel stood.

[7] Solomon then dedicated the central area of the courtyard in front of the Lord's Temple so they could present burnt offerings and the fat from peace offerings there. He did this because the bronze altar he had built could not handle all the burnt offerings, grain offerings, and sacrificial fat.

[8] For the next seven days they celebrated the Festival of Shelters with huge crowds gathered from all the tribes of Israel. They came from as far away as Lebo-hamath in the north, to the brook of Egypt in the south. [9] On the eighth day they had a closing ceremony, for they had celebrated the dedication of the altar for seven days and the Festival of Shelters for seven days. [10] Then at the end of the celebration, Solomon sent the people home. They were all joyful and happy because the Lord had been so good to David and Solomon and to his people Israel.

[11] So Solomon finished building the Temple of the Lord, as well as the royal palace. He completed everything he had planned to do. [12] Then one night the Lord appeared to Solomon and said, "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this Temple as the place for making sacrifices. [13] At times I might shut up the heavens so that no rain falls, or I might command locusts to devour your crops, or I might send plagues among you. [14] Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land. [15] I will listen to every prayer made in this place, [16] for I have chosen this Temple and set it apart to be my home forever. My eyes and my heart will always be here.

[17] "As for you, if you follow me as your father, David, did and obey all my commands, laws, and regulations, [18] then I will not let anyone take away your throne. This is the same promise I gave your father, David, when I said, 'You will never fail to have a successor who rules over Israel.'

[19] "But if you abandon me and disobey the laws and commands I have given you, and if you go and worship other gods, [20] then I will uproot the people of Israel from this land of mine that I have given them. I will reject this Temple that I have set apart to honor my name. I will make it a spectacle of contempt among the nations. [21] And though this Temple is impressive now, it will become an appalling sight to all who pass by. They will ask, 'Why has the Lord done such terrible things to his land and to his Temple?' [22] And the answer will be, 'Because his people abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who brought them out of Egypt, and they worshiped other gods instead. That is why he brought all these disasters upon them.' "

[8:1] It was now twenty years since Solomon had become king, and the great building projects of the Lord's Temple and his own royal palace were completed. [2] Solomon now turned his attention to rebuilding the towns that King Hiram had given him, and he settled Israelites in them. [3] It was at this time, too, that Solomon fought against the city of Hamath-zobah and conquered it. [4] He rebuilt Tadmor in the desert and built towns in the region of Hamath as supply centers. [5] He fortified the cities of Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon, rebuilding their walls and installing barred gates. [6] He also rebuilt Baalath and other supply centers at this time and constructed cities where his chariots and horses could be kept. He built to his heart's content in Jerusalem and Lebanon and throughout the entire realm.

[7] There were still some people living in the land who were not Israelites, including Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. [8] These were descendants of the nations that Israel had not completely destroyed. So Solomon conscripted them for his labor force, and they serve in the labor force to this day. [9] But Solomon did not conscript any of the Israelites for forced labor. Instead, he assigned them to serve as fighting men, officers in his army, commanders of his chariots, and charioteers. [10] King Solomon also appointed 250 of them to supervise the various projects.

[11] Solomon moved his wife, Pharaoh's daughter, from the City of David to the new palace he had built for her. He said, "My wife must not live in King David's palace, for the Ark of the Lord has been there, and it is holy ground."

[12] Then Solomon sacrificed burnt offerings to the Lord on the altar he had built in front of the foyer of the Temple. [13] The number of sacrifices varied from day to day according to the commands Moses had given. Extra sacrifices were offered on the Sabbaths, on new moon festivals, and at the three annual festivals—the Passover celebration, the Festival of Harvest, and the Festival of Shelters. [14] In assigning the priests to their duties, Solomon followed the regulations of his father, David. He also assigned the Levites to lead the people in praise and to assist the priests in their daily duties. And he assigned the gatekeepers to their gates by their divisions, following the commands of David, the man of God. [15] Solomon did not deviate in any way from David's commands concerning the priests and Levites and the treasuries.

[16] So Solomon made sure that all the work related to building the Temple of the Lord was carried out, from the day its foundation was laid to the day of its completion.

[17] Later Solomon went to Ezion-geber and Elath, ports in the land of Edom, along the shore of the Red Sea. [18] Hiram sent him ships commanded by his own officers and manned by experienced crews of sailors. These ships sailed to the land of Ophir with Solomon's men and brought back to Solomon almost seventeen tons of gold.

[9:1] When the queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's reputation, she came to Jerusalem to test him with hard questions. She arrived with a large group of attendants and a great caravan of camels loaded with spices, huge quantities of gold, and precious jewels. [2] When she met with Solomon, they talked about everything she had on her mind. Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too hard for him to explain to her. [3] When the queen of Sheba realized how wise Solomon was, and when she saw the palace he had built, [4] she was breathless. She was also amazed at the food on his tables, the organization of his officials and their splendid clothing, the cup-bearers and their robes, and the burnt offerings Solomon made at the Temple of the Lord.

[5] She exclaimed to the king, "Everything I heard in my country about your achievements and wisdom is true! [6] I didn't believe it until I arrived here and saw it with my own eyes. Truly I had not heard the half of it! Your wisdom is far greater than what I was told. [7] How happy these people must be! What a privilege for your officials to stand here day after day, listening to your wisdom! [8] The Lord your God is great indeed! He delights in you and has placed you on the throne to rule for him. Because God loves Israel so much and desires this kingdom to last forever, he has made you king so you can rule with justice and righteousness."

[9] Then she gave the king a gift of nine thousand pounds of gold, and great quantities of spices and precious jewels. Never before had there been spices as fine as those the queen of Sheba gave to Solomon.

[10] (When the crews of Hiram and Solomon brought gold from Ophir, they also brought rich cargoes of almug wood and precious jewels. [11] The king used the almug wood to make steps for the Temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and to construct harps and lyres for the musicians. Never before had there been such beautiful instruments in Judah.)

[12] King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba whatever she asked for—gifts of greater value than the gifts she had given him. Then she and all her attendants left and returned to their own land.

[13] Each year Solomon received about 25 tons of gold. [14] This did not include the additional revenue he received from merchants and traders. All the kings of Arabia and the governors of the land also brought gold and silver to Solomon.

[15] King Solomon made two hundred large shields of hammered gold, each containing over 15 pounds of gold. [16] He also made three hundred smaller shields of hammered gold, each containing about 7 1/2 pounds of gold. The king placed these shields in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon.

[17] Then the king made a huge ivory throne and overlaid it with pure gold. [18] The throne had six steps, and there was a footstool of gold attached to it. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with the figure of a lion standing on each side of the throne. [19] Solomon made twelve other lion figures, one standing on each end of each of the six steps. No other throne in all the world could be compared with it!

[20] All of King Solomon's drinking cups were solid gold, as were all the utensils in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. They were not made of silver because silver was considered of little value in Solomon's day!

[21] The king had a fleet of trading ships manned by the sailors sent by Hiram. Once every three years the ships returned, loaded down with gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

[22] So King Solomon became richer and wiser than any other king in all the earth. [23] Kings from every nation came to visit him and to hear the wisdom God had given him. [24] Year after year, everyone who came to visit brought him gifts of silver and gold, clothing, weapons, spices, horses, and mules.

[25] Solomon had four thousand stalls for his chariot horses and twelve thousand horses. He stationed many of them in the chariot cities, and some near him in Jerusalem. [26] He ruled over all the kings from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines and the border of Egypt. [27] The king made silver as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones. And valuable cedarwood was as common as the sycamore wood that grows in the foothills of Judah. [28] Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and many other countries.

[29] The rest of the events of Solomon's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded in The Record of Nathan the Prophet and in The Prophecy of Ahijah from Shiloh, and also in The Visions of Iddo the Seer, concerning Jeroboam son of Nebat. [30] Solomon ruled in Jerusalem over all Israel for forty years. [31] When he died, he was buried in the city of his father, David. Then his son Rehoboam became the next king.

B. THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH (2 Chron. 10:1-36:23)

Throughout the reigns of 20 kings, the nation of Judah wavered between obedience to God and apostasy. The reigning king's response to God determined the spiritual climate of the nation and whether or not God would send judgment upon his people. Our personal history is shaped by our response to God. Just as Judah's failure to repent brought them captivity in Babylon, so the abuse of our high calling by sinful living will ultimately bring us catastrophe and destruction.

1. The northern tribes revolt
2. History of apostasy and reform
3. Judah is exiled to Babylon

2 Chron. 10:1-36:23

Rehoboam went to Shechem, where all Israel had gathered to make him king. [2] When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of Solomon's death, he returned from Egypt, for he had fled to Egypt to escape from King Solomon. [3] The leaders of Israel sent for Jeroboam, and he and all Israel went together to speak with Rehoboam. [4] "Your father was a hard master," they said. "Lighten the harsh labor demands and heavy taxes that your father imposed on us. Then we will be your loyal subjects."

[5] Rehoboam replied, "Come back in three days for my answer." So the people went away.

[6] Then King Rehoboam went to discuss the matter with the older men who had counseled his father, Solomon. "What is your advice?" he asked. "How should I answer these people?"

[7] The older counselors replied, "If you are good to the people and show them kindness and do your best to please them, they will always be your loyal subjects."

[8] But Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders and instead asked the opinion of the young men who had grown up with him and who were now his advisers. [9] "What is your advice?" he asked them. "How should I answer these people who want me to lighten the burdens imposed by my father?"

[10] The young men replied, "This is what you should tell those complainers: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist—if you think he was hard on you, just wait and see what I'll be like! [11] Yes, my father was harsh on you, but I'll be even harsher! My father used whips on you, but I'll use scorpions!' "

[12] Three days later, Jeroboam and all the people returned to hear Rehoboam's decision, just as the king had requested. [13] But Rehoboam spoke harshly to them, for he rejected the advice of the older counselors

[14] and followed the counsel of his younger advisers. He told the people, "My father was harsh on you, but I'll be even harsher! My father used whips on you, but I'll use scorpions!" [15] So the king paid no attention to the people's demands. This turn of events was the will of God, for it fulfilled the prophecy of the Lord spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat by the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh.

[16] When all Israel realized that the king had rejected their request, they shouted, "Down with David and his dynasty! We have no share in Jesse's son! Let's go home, Israel! Look out for your own house, O David!" So all Israel returned home. [17] But Rehoboam continued to rule over the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah.

[18] King Rehoboam sent Adoniram, who was in charge of the labor force, to restore order, but the Israelites stoned him to death. When this news reached King Rehoboam, he quickly jumped into his chariot and fled to Jerusalem. [19] The northern tribes of Israel have refused to be ruled by a descendant of David to this day.

[11:1] When Rehoboam arrived at Jerusalem, he mobilized the armies of Judah and Benjamin—180,000 select troops—to fight against the army of Israel and to restore the kingdom to himself. [2] But the Lord said to Shemaiah, the man of God, [3] "Say to Rehoboam son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the Israelites in Judah and Benjamin: [4] 'This is what the Lord says: Do not fight against your relatives. Go back home, for what has happened is my doing!' "So they obeyed the message of the Lord and did not fight against Jeroboam.

[5] Rehoboam remained in Jerusalem and fortified various cities for the defense of Judah. [6] He built up Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, [7] Beth-zur, Soco, Adullam, [8] Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, [9] Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, [10] Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron. These became the fortified cities of Judah and Benjamin. [11] Rehoboam strengthened their defenses and stationed commanders in them. In each of them, he stored supplies of food, olive oil, and wine. [12] He also put shields and spears in these towns as a further safety measure. So only Judah and Benjamin remained under his control.

[13] But all the priests and Levites living among the northern tribes of Israel sided with Rehoboam. [14] The Levites even abandoned their homes and property and moved to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons would not allow them to serve the Lord as priests. [15] Jeroboam appointed his own priests to serve at the pagan shrines, where they worshiped the goat and calf idols he had made. [16] From all over Israel, those who sincerely wanted to worship the Lord, the God of Israel, followed the Levites to Jerusalem, where they could offer sacrifices to the Lord, the God of their ancestors. [17] This strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and for three years they supported Rehoboam son of Solomon and earnestly sought to obey the Lord as they had done during the reigns of David and Solomon.

[18] Rehoboam married his cousin Mahalath, the daughter of David's son Jerimoth and of Abihail, the daughter of Eliab. (Eliab was one of David's brothers, a son of Jesse.) [19] Mahalath had three sons—Jeush, Shemariah, and Zaham.

[20] Later Rehoboam married another cousin, Maacah, the daughter of Absalom. Maacah gave birth to Abijah, Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith.

[21] Rehoboam loved Maacah more than any of his other wives and concubines. In all, he had eighteen wives and sixty concubines, and they gave birth to twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters. [22] Rehoboam made Maacah's son Abijah chief among the princes, making it clear that he would be the next king. [23] Rehoboam also wisely gave responsibilities to his other sons and stationed them in the fortified cities throughout the land of Judah and Benjamin. He provided them with generous provisions and arranged for each of them to have several wives.

[12:1] But when Rehoboam was firmly established and strong, he abandoned the law of the Lord, and all Israel followed him in this sin. [2] Because they were unfaithful to the Lord, King Shishak of Egypt attacked Jerusalem in the fifth year of King Rehoboam's reign. [3] He came with twelve hundred chariots, sixty thousand horsemen, and a countless army of foot soldiers, including Libyans, Sukkites, and Ethiopians. [4] Shishak conquered Judah's fortified cities and then advanced to attack Jerusalem.

[5] The prophet Shemaiah then met with Rehoboam and Judah's leaders, who had all fled to Jerusalem because of Shishak. Shemaiah told them, "This is what the Lord says: You have abandoned me, so I am abandoning you to Shishak."

[6] The king and the leaders of Israel humbled themselves and said, "The Lord is right in doing this to us!"

[7] When the Lord saw their change of heart, he gave this message to Shemaiah: "Since the people have humbled themselves, I will not completely destroy them and will soon give them some relief. I will not use Shishak to pour out my anger on Jerusalem. [8] But they will become his subjects, so that they can learn how much better it is to serve me than to serve earthly rulers."

[9] So King Shishak of Egypt came to Jerusalem and took away all the treasures of the Temple of the Lord and of the royal palace, including all of Solomon's gold shields. [10] King Rehoboam later replaced them with bronze shields and entrusted them to the care of the captain of his bodyguard. [11] Whenever the king went to the Temple of the Lord, the guards would carry them along and then return them to the guardroom. [12] Because Rehoboam humbled himself, the Lord's anger was turned aside, and he did not destroy him completely. And there was still goodness in the land of Judah.

[13] King Rehoboam firmly established himself in Jerusalem and continued to rule. He was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the Lord had chosen from among all the tribes of Israel as the place to honor his name. Rehoboam's mother was Naamah, a woman from Ammon. [14] But he was an evil king, for he did not seek the Lord with all his heart.

[15] The rest of the events of Rehoboam's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded in The Record of Shemaiah the Prophet and in The Record of Iddo the Seer, which are part of the genealogical record. Rehoboam and Jeroboam were continually at war with each other. [16] When Rehoboam died, he was buried in the City of David. Then his son Abijah became the next king.

[13:1] Abijah began to rule over Judah in the eighteenth year of Jeroboam's reign in Israel. [2] He reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother was Maacah, a daughter of Uriel from Gibeah.

Then war broke out between Abijah and Jeroboam. [3] Judah, led by King Abijah, fielded 400,000 seasoned warriors, while Jeroboam mustered 800,000 courageous men from Israel. [4] When the army of Judah arrived in the hill country of Ephraim, Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim and shouted to Jeroboam and the Israelite army: "Listen to me! [5] Don't you realize that the Lord, the God of Israel, made an unbreakable covenant with David, giving him and his descendants the throne of Israel forever?"

[6] Yet Jeroboam son of Nebat, who was a mere servant of David's son Solomon, became a traitor to his master. [7] Then a whole gang of scoundrels joined him, defying Solomon's son Rehoboam when he was young and inexperienced and could not stand up to them. [8] Do you really think you can stand against the kingdom of the Lord that is led by the descendants of David? Your army is vast indeed, but with you are those gold calves that Jeroboam made as your gods! [9] And you have chased away the priests of the Lord and the Levites and have appointed your own priests, just like the pagan nations. You let anyone become a priest these days! Whoever comes to be dedicated with a young bull and seven rams can become a priest of these so-called gods of yours!

[10] "But as for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not abandoned him. Only the descendants of Aaron serve the Lord as priests, and the Levites alone may help them in their work. [11] They present burnt offerings and fragrant incense to the Lord every morning and evening. They place the Bread of the Presence on the holy table, and they light the gold lampstand every evening. We are following the instructions of the Lord our God, but you have abandoned him. [12] So you see, God is with us. He is our leader. His priests blow their trumpets and lead us into battle against you. O people of Israel, do not fight against the Lord, the God of your ancestors, for you will not succeed!"

[13] Meanwhile, Jeroboam had secretly sent part of his army around behind the men of Judah to ambush them. [14] When Judah realized that they were being attacked from the front and the rear, they cried out to the Lord for help. Then the priests blew the trumpets, [15] and the men of Judah began to shout. At the sound of their battle cry, God defeated Jeroboam and the Israelite army and routed them before Abijah and the army of Judah. [16] The Israelite army fled from Judah, and God handed them over to Judah in defeat. [17] Abijah and his army inflicted heavy losses on them; there were 500,000 casualties among Israel's finest troops that day. [18] So Judah defeated Israel because they trusted in the Lord, the God of their ancestors. [19] Abijah and his army pursued Jeroboam's troops and captured some of his towns, including Bethel, Jeshanah, and Ephron, along with their surrounding villages.

[20] So Jeroboam of Israel never regained his power during Abijah's lifetime, and finally the Lord struck him down and he died. [21] By contrast, Abijah of Judah grew more and more powerful. He married fourteen wives and had twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters. [22] The rest of the events of Abijah's reign, including his words and deeds, are recorded in The Commentary of Iddo the Prophet.

[14:1] When Abijah died, he was buried in the City of David. Then his son Asa became the next king. There was peace in the land for ten years, [2] for Asa did what was pleasing and good in the sight of the Lord his God. [3] He removed the pagan altars and the shrines. He smashed the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah poles. [4] He commanded the people of Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their ancestors, and to obey his law and his commands. [5] Asa also removed the pagan shrines, as well as the incense altars from every one of Judah's towns. So Asa's kingdom enjoyed a period of peace. [6] During those peaceful years, he was able to build up the fortified cities throughout Judah. No one tried to make war against him at this time, for the Lord was giving him rest from his enemies. [7] Asa told the people of Judah, "Let us build towns and fortify them with walls, towers, gates, and bars. The land is ours because we sought the Lord our God, and he has given us rest from our enemies." So they went ahead with these projects and brought them to completion.

[8] King Asa had an army of 300,000 warriors from the tribe of Judah, armed with large shields and spears. He also had an army of 280,000 warriors from the tribe of Benjamin, armed with small shields and bows. Both armies were composed of courageous fighting men.

[9] Once an Ethiopian named Zerah attacked Judah with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots. They advanced to the city of Mareshah, [10] so Asa deployed his armies for battle in the valley north of Mareshah. [11] Then Asa cried out to the Lord his God, "O Lord, no one but you can help the powerless against the mighty! Help us, O Lord our God, for we trust in you alone. It is in your name that we have come against this vast horde. O Lord, you are our God; do not let mere men prevail against you!"

[12] So the Lord defeated the Ethiopians in the presence of Asa and the army of Judah, and the enemy fled. [13] Asa and his army pursued them as far as Gerar, and so many Ethiopians fell that they were unable to rally. They were destroyed by the Lord and his army, and the army of Judah carried off vast quantities of plunder. [14] While they were at Gerar, they attacked all the towns in that area, and terror from the Lord came upon the people there. As a result, vast quantities of plunder were taken from these towns, too. [15] They also attacked the camps of herdsmen and captured many sheep and camels before finally returning to Jerusalem.

[15:1] Then the Spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded, [2] and he went out to meet King Asa as he was returning from the battle. "Listen to me, Asa!" he shouted. "Listen, all you people of Judah and Benjamin! The Lord will stay with you as long as you stay with him! Whenever you seek him, you will find him. But if you abandon him, he will abandon you. [3] For a long time, Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach them, and without God's law. [4] But whenever you were in distress and turned to the Lord, the God of Israel, and sought him out, you found him. [5] During those dark times, it was not safe to travel. Problems troubled the nation on every hand. [6] Nation fought against nation, and city against city, for God was troubling you with every kind of problem. [7] And now, you men of Judah, be strong and courageous, for your work will be rewarded."

[8] When Asa heard this message from Azariah the prophet, he took courage and removed all the idols in the land of Judah and Benjamin and in the towns he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim. And he repaired the altar of the Lord, which stood in front of the foyer of the Lord's Temple.

[9] Then Asa called together all the people of Judah and Benjamin, along with the people of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who had settled among them. Many had moved to Judah during Asa's reign when they saw that the Lord his God was with him. [10] The people gathered at Jerusalem in late spring, during the fifteenth year of Asa's reign. [11] On that day they sacrificed to the Lord some of the animals they had taken as plunder in the battle—seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep and goats. [12] Then they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord, the God of their ancestors, with all their heart and soul. [13] They agreed that anyone who refused to seek the Lord, the God of Israel, would be put to death—whether young or old, man or woman. [14] They shouted out their oath of loyalty to the Lord with trumpets blaring and horns sounding. [15] All were happy about this covenant, for they had entered into it with all their hearts. Eagerly they sought after God, and they found him. And the Lord gave them rest from their enemies on every side.

[16] King Asa even deposed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother because she had made an obscene Asherah pole. He cut down the pole, broke it up, and burned it in the Kidron Valley. [17] Although the pagan shrines were not completely removed from Israel, Asa remained fully committed to the Lord throughout his life. [18] He brought into the Temple of God the silver and gold and the utensils that he and his father had dedicated. [19] So there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign.

[16:1] In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign, King Baasha of Israel invaded Judah and fortified Ramah in order to prevent anyone from entering or leaving King Asa's territory in Judah. [2] Asa responded by taking the silver and gold from the treasuries of the Lord's Temple and from the royal palace. He sent it to King Ben-hadad of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus, along with this message:

[3] "Let us renew the treaty that existed between your father and my father. See, I am sending you a gift of silver and gold. Break your treaty with King Baasha of Israel so that he will leave me alone."

[4] Ben-hadad agreed to King Asa's request and sent his armies to attack Israel. They conquered the towns of Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah, and all the store cities in Naphtali. [5] As soon as Baasha of Israel heard what was happening, he abandoned his project of fortifying Ramah. [6] Then King Asa called out all the men of Judah to carry away the building stones and timbers that Baasha had been using to fortify Ramah. Asa used these materials to fortify the towns of Geba and Mizpah.

[7] At that time Hanani the seer came to King Asa and told him, "Because you have put your trust in the king of Aram instead of in the Lord your God, you missed your chance to destroy the army of the king of Aram."

[8] Don't you remember what happened to the Ethiopians and Libyans and their vast army, with all of their chariots and horsemen? At that time you relied on the Lord, and he handed them all over to you. [9] The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. What a fool you have been! From now on, you will be at war." [10] Asa became so angry with Hanani for saying this that he threw him into prison. At that time, Asa also began to oppress some of his people.

[11] The rest of the events of Asa's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded in The Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. [12] In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa developed a serious foot disease. Even when the disease became life threatening, he did not seek the Lord's help but sought help only from his physicians. [13] So he died in the forty-first year of his reign. [14] He was buried in the tomb he had carved out for himself in the City of David. He was laid on a bed perfumed with sweet spices and ointments, and at his funeral the people built a huge fire in his honor.

[17:1] Then Jehoshaphat, Asa's son, became the next king. He strengthened Judah to stand against any attack from Israel. [2] He stationed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah, and he assigned additional garrisons to the land of Judah and to the towns of Ephraim that his father, Asa, had conquered.

[3] The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the example of his father's early years and did not worship the images of Baal. [4] He sought his father's God and obeyed his commands instead of following the practices of the kingdom of Israel. [5] So the Lord established Jehoshaphat's control over the kingdom of Judah. All the people of Judah brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, so he became very wealthy and highly esteemed. [6] He was committed to the ways of the Lord. He knocked down the pagan shrines and destroyed the Asherah poles.

[7] In the third year of his reign, Jehoshaphat sent out his officials to teach in all the towns of Judah. These officials included Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah. [8] He sent Levites along with them, including Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah. He also sent out the priests, Elishama and Jehoram. [9] They took copies of the Book of the Law of the Lord and traveled around through all the towns of Judah, teaching the people.

[10] Then the fear of the Lord fell over all the surrounding kingdoms so that none of them declared war on Jehoshaphat. [11] Some of the Philistines brought him gifts and silver as tribute, and the Arabs brought seventy-seven hundred rams and seventy-seven hundred male goats.

[12] So Jehoshaphat became more and more powerful and built fortresses and store cities throughout Judah. [13] He stored numerous supplies in Judah's towns and stationed an army of seasoned troops at Jerusalem. [14] His army was enrolled according to ancestral clans.

From Judah, there were 300,000 troops organized in units of one thousand, under the command of Adnah. [15] Next in command was Jehohanan, who commanded 280,000 troops. [16] Next was Amasiah son of Zicri, who volunteered for the Lord's service, with 200,000 troops under his command.

[17] From Benjamin, there were 200,000 troops equipped with bows and shields. They were under the command of Eliada, a veteran soldier. [18] Next in command was Jehozabad, who commanded 180,000 armed men.

[19] These were the troops stationed in Jerusalem to serve the king, besides those Jehoshaphat stationed in the fortified cities throughout Judah.

[18:1] Now Jehoshaphat enjoyed great riches and high esteem, and he arranged for his son to marry the daughter of King Ahab of Israel. [2] A few years later, he went to Samaria to visit Ahab, who prepared a great banquet for him and his officials. They butchered great numbers of sheep and oxen for the feast. Then Ahab enticed Jehoshaphat to join forces with him to attack Ramoth-gilead. [3] "Will you join me in fighting against Ramoth-gilead?" Ahab asked.

And Jehoshaphat replied, "Why, of course! You and I are brothers, and my troops are yours to command. We will certainly join you in battle." [4] Then Jehoshaphat added, "But first let's find out what the Lord says."

[5] So King Ahab summoned his prophets, four hundred of them, and asked them, "Should we go to war against Ramoth-gilead or not?"

They all replied, "Go ahead, for God will give you a great victory!"

[6] But Jehoshaphat asked, "Isn't there a prophet of the Lord around, too? I would like to ask him the same question."

[7] King Ahab replied, "There is still one prophet of the Lord, but I hate him. He never prophesies anything but bad news for me! His name is Micaiah son of Imlah."

"You shouldn't talk like that," Jehoshaphat said. "Let's hear what he has to say."

[8] So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, "Quick! Go and get Micaiah son of Imlah."

[9] King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah, dressed in their royal robes, were sitting on thrones at the threshing floor near the gate of Samaria. All of Ahab's prophets were prophesying there in front of them. [10] One of them, Zedekiah son of Kenaanah, made some iron horns and proclaimed, "This is what the Lord says: With these horns you will gore the Arameans to death!"

[11] All the other prophets agreed. "Yes," they said, "go up to Ramoth-gilead and be victorious. The Lord will give you a glorious victory!"

[12] Meanwhile, the messenger who went to get Micaiah said to him, "Look, all the prophets are promising victory for the king. Be sure that you agree with them and promise success."

[13] But Micaiah replied, "As surely as the Lord lives, I will say only what my God tells me to say."

[14] When Micaiah arrived before the king, Ahab asked him, "Micaiah, should we go to war against Ramoth-gilead or not?"

And Micaiah replied, "Go right ahead! It will be a glorious victory!"

[15] But the king replied sharply, "How many times must I demand that you speak only the truth when you speak for the Lord?"

[16] So Micaiah told him, "In a vision I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep without a shepherd. And the Lord said, 'Their master has been killed. Send them home in peace.' "

[17] "Didn't I tell you?" the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat. "He does it every time. He never prophesies anything but bad news for me."

[18] Then Micaiah continued, "Listen to what the Lord says! I saw the Lord sitting on his throne with all the armies of heaven on his right and on his left. [19] And the Lord said, 'Who can entice King Ahab of Israel to go into battle against Ramoth-gilead so that he can be killed there?' There were many suggestions, [20] until finally a spirit approached the Lord and said, 'I can do it!'

"How will you do this?' the Lord asked.

[21] "And the spirit replied, 'I will go out and inspire all Ahab's prophets to speak lies.'

"You will succeed,' said the Lord. 'Go ahead and do it.'

[22] "So you see, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouths of your prophets. For the Lord has determined disaster for you."

[23] Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah walked up to Micaiah and slapped him across the face. "When did the Spirit of the Lord leave me to speak to you?" he demanded.

[24] And Micaiah replied, "You will find out soon enough, when you find yourself hiding in some secret room!"

[25] King Ahab of Israel then ordered, "Arrest Micaiah and take him back to Amon, the governor of the city, and to my son Joash. [26] Give them this order from the king: 'Put this man in prison, and feed him nothing but bread and water until I return safely from the battle!'"

[27] But Micaiah replied, "If you return safely, the Lord has not spoken through me!" Then he added to those standing around, "Take note of what I have said."

[28] So the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah led their armies against Ramoth-gilead. [29] Now King Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "As we go into battle, I will disguise myself so no one will recognize me, but you wear your royal robes." So Ahab disguised himself, and they went into battle.

[30] Now the king of Aram had issued these orders to his charioteers: "Attack only the king of Israel!" [31] So when the Aramean charioteers saw Jehoshaphat in his royal robes, they went after him. "There is the king of Israel!" they shouted. But Jehoshaphat cried out to the Lord to save him, and God helped him by turning the attack away from him. [32] As soon as the charioteers realized he was not the king of Israel, they stopped chasing him.

[33] An Aramean soldier, however, randomly shot an arrow at the Israelite troops, and the arrow hit the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. "Get me out of here!" Ahab groaned to the driver of his chariot. "I have been badly wounded!" [34] The battle raged all that day, and Ahab propped himself up in his chariot facing the Arameans until evening. Then, just as the sun was setting, he died.

[19:1] When King Jehoshaphat of Judah arrived safely home to Jerusalem, [2] Jehu son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him. "Why should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord?" he asked the king. "What you have done has brought the Lord's anger against you. [3] There is some good in you, however, for you have removed the Asherah poles throughout the land, and you have committed yourself to seeking God."

[4] So Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem, but he went out among the people, traveling from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, encouraging the people to return to the Lord, the God of their ancestors. [5] He appointed judges throughout the nation in all the fortified cities, [6] and he gave them these instructions: "Always think carefully before pronouncing judgment. Remember that you do not judge to please people but to please the Lord. He will be with you when you render the verdict in each case that comes before you. [7] Fear the Lord and judge with care, for the Lord our God does not tolerate perverted justice, partiality, or the taking of bribes."

[8] Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites and priests and clan leaders in Israel to serve as judges in Jerusalem for cases concerning both the law of the Lord and civil disputes. [9] These were his instructions to them: "You must always act in the fear of the Lord, with integrity and with undivided hearts. [10] Whenever a case comes to you from fellow citizens in an outlying town, whether a murder case or some other violation of God's instructions, commands, laws, or regulations, you must warn them not to sin against the Lord, so that his anger will not come against you and them. Do this and you will not be guilty."

[11] "Amariah the high priest will have final say in all cases concerning the Lord. Zebadiah son of Ishmael, a leader from the tribe of Judah, will have final say in all civil cases. The Levites will assist you in making sure that justice is served. Take courage as you fulfill your duties, and may the Lord be with those who do what is right."

[20:1] After this, the armies of the Moabites, Ammonites, and some of the Meunites declared war on Jehoshaphat. [2] Messengers came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army from Edom is marching against you from beyond the Dead Sea. They are already at Hazazon-tamar." (This was another name for En-gedi.) [3] Jehoshaphat was alarmed by this news and sought the Lord for guidance. He also gave orders that everyone throughout Judah should observe a fast. [4] So people from all the towns of Judah came to Jerusalem to seek the Lord.

[5] Jehoshaphat stood before the people of Judah and Jerusalem in front of the new courtyard at the Temple of the Lord. [6] He prayed, "O Lord, God of our ancestors, you alone are the God who is in heaven. You are ruler of all the kingdoms of the earth. You are powerful and mighty; no one can stand against you! [7] O our God, did you not drive out those who lived in this land when your people arrived? And did you not give this land forever to the descendants of your friend Abraham? [8] Your people settled here and built this Temple for you. [9] They said, 'Whenever we are faced with any calamity such as war, disease, or famine, we can come to stand in your presence before this Temple where your name is honored. We can cry out to you to save us, and you will hear us and rescue us.'

[10] "And now see what the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir are doing. You would not let our ancestors invade those nations when Israel left Egypt, so they went around them and did not destroy them. [11] Now see how they reward us! For they have come to throw us out of your land, which you gave us as an inheritance. [12] O our God, won't you stop them? We are powerless against this mighty army that is about to attack us. We do not know what to do, but we are looking to you for help."

[13] As all the men of Judah stood before the Lord with their little ones, wives, and children, [14] the Spirit of the Lord came upon one of the men standing there. His name was Jahaziel son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite who was a descendant of Asaph. [15] He said, "Listen, King Jehoshaphat! Listen, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says: Do not be afraid! Don't be discouraged by this mighty army, for the battle is not yours, but God's. [16] Tomorrow, march out against them. You will find them coming up through the ascent of Ziz at the end of the valley that opens into the wilderness of Jeruel. [17] But you will not even need to fight. Take your positions; then stand still and watch the Lord's victory. He is with you, O people of Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid or discouraged. Go out there tomorrow, for the Lord is with you!"

[18] Then King Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground. And all the people of Judah and Jerusalem did the same, worshiping the Lord. [19] Then the Levites from the clans of Kohath and Korah stood to praise the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud shout.

[20] Early the next morning the army of Judah went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. On the way Jehoshaphat stopped and said, "Listen to me, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be able to stand firm. Believe in his prophets, and you will succeed." [21] After consulting the leaders of the people, the king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to the Lord and praising him for his holy splendor. This is what they sang:

"Give thanks to the Lord;
his faithful love endures forever!"

[22] At the moment they began to sing and give praise, the Lord caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves. [23] The armies of Moab and Ammon turned against their allies from Mount Seir and killed every one of them. After they had finished off the army of Seir, they turned on each other.

[24] So when the army of Judah arrived at the lookout point in the wilderness, there were dead bodies lying on the ground for as far as they could see. Not a single one of the enemy had escaped. [25] King Jehoshaphat and his men went out to gather the plunder. They found vast amounts of equipment, clothing, and other valuables—more than they could carry. There was so much plunder that it took them three days just to collect it all! [26] On the fourth day they gathered in the Valley of Blessing, which got its name that day because the people praised and thanked the Lord there. It is still called the Valley of Blessing today.

[27] Then they returned to Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat leading them, full of joy that the Lord had given them victory over their enemies. [28] They marched into Jerusalem to the music of harps, lyres, and trumpets and proceeded to the Temple of the Lord. [29] When the surrounding kingdoms heard that the Lord himself had fought against the enemies of Israel, the fear of God came over them. [30] So Jehoshaphat's kingdom was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.

[31] So Jehoshaphat ruled over the land of Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-five years. His mother was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi. [32] Jehoshaphat was a good king, following the ways of his father, Asa. He did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight. [33] During his reign, however, he failed to remove all the pagan shrines, and the people never fully committed themselves to following the God of their ancestors. [34] The rest of the events of Jehoshaphat's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded in The Record of Jehu Son of Hanani, which is included in The Book of the Kings of Israel.

[35] But near the end of his life, King Jehoshaphat of Judah made an alliance with King Ahaziah of Israel, who was a very wicked man. [36] Together they built a fleet of trading ships at the port of Ezion-geber. [37] Then Eliezer son of Dodavahu from Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat. He said, "Because you have allied yourself with King Ahaziah, the Lord will destroy your work." So the ships met with disaster and never put out to sea.

[21:1] When Jehoshaphat died, he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David. Then his son Jehoram became the next king. [2] Jehoram's brothers—the other sons of Jehoshaphat—were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael, and Shephatiah. [3] Their father had given each of them valuable gifts of silver, gold, and costly items, and also the ownership of some of Judah's fortified cities. However, Jehoram became king because he was the oldest. [4] But when Jehoram had become solidly established as king, he killed all his brothers and some of the other leaders of Israel.

[5] Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. [6] But Jehoram followed the example of the kings of Israel and was as wicked as King Ahab, for he had married one of Ahab's daughters. So Jehoram did what was evil in the Lord's sight. [7] But the Lord was not willing to destroy David's dynasty, for he had made a covenant with David and promised that his descendants would continue to rule forever.

[8] During Jehoram's reign, the Edomites revolted against Judah and crowned their own king. [9] So Jehoram went to attack Edom with his full army and all his chariots. The Edomites surrounded him and his charioteers, but he escaped at night under cover of darkness. [10] Edom has been independent from Judah to this day. The town of Libnah revolted about that same time, because Jehoram had abandoned the Lord, the God of his ancestors. [11] He had built pagan shrines in the hill country of Judah and had led the people of Jerusalem and Judah to give themselves to pagan gods.

[12] Then Elijah the prophet wrote Jehoram this letter:

"This is what the Lord, the God of your ancestor David, says: You have not followed the good example of your father, Jehoshaphat, or your grandfather King Asa of Judah. [13] Instead, you have been as evil as the kings of Israel. You have led the people of Jerusalem and Judah to worship idols, just as King Ahab did in Israel. And you have even killed your own brothers, men who were better than you. [14] So now the Lord is about to strike you, your people, your children, your wives, and all that is yours with a heavy blow. [15] You yourself will be stricken with a severe intestinal disease until it causes your bowels to come out."

[16] Then the Lord stirred up the Philistines and the Arabs, who lived near the Ethiopians, to attack Jehoram. [17] They marched against Judah, broke down its defenses, and carried away everything of value in the royal palace, including his sons and his wives. Only his youngest son, Ahaziah, was spared.

[18] It was after this that the Lord struck Jehoram with the severe intestinal disease. [19] In the course of time, at the end of two years, the disease caused his bowels to come out, and he died in agony. His people did not build a great fire to honor him at his funeral as they had done for his ancestors. [20] Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. No one was sorry when he died. He was buried in the City of David, but not in the royal cemetery.

[22:1] Then the people of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, Jehoram's youngest son, their next king. The marauding bands of Arabs had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah son of Jehoram reigned as king of Judah. [2] Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem one year. His mother was Athaliah, a granddaughter of King Omri of Israel. [3] Ahaziah also followed the evil example of King Ahab's family, for his mother encouraged him in doing wrong. [4] He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, just as Ahab had done. After the death of his father, members of Ahab's family became his advisers, and they led him to ruin.

[5] Following their evil advice, Ahaziah made an alliance with King Joram, the son of King Ahab of Israel. They went out to fight King Hazael of Aram at Ramoth-gilead, and the Arameans wounded Joram in the battle.

[6] Joram returned to Jezreel to recover from his wounds, and King Ahaziah of Judah went to Jezreel to visit him. [7] But this turned out to be a fatal mistake, for God had decided to punish Ahaziah. It was during this visit that Ahaziah went out with Joram to meet Jehu son of Nimshi, whom the Lord had appointed to end the dynasty of Ahab.

[8] While Jehu was executing judgment against the family of Ahab, he happened to meet some of Judah's officials and Ahaziah's relatives who were attending Ahaziah. So Jehu killed them all. [9] Then Jehu's men searched for Ahaziah, and they found him hiding in the city of Samaria. They brought him to Jehu, who killed him. Ahaziah was given a decent burial because the people said, "He was the grandson of Jehoshaphat—a man who sought the Lord with all his heart." None of the surviving members of Ahaziah's family was capable of ruling the kingdom.

[10] When Athaliah, the mother of King Ahaziah of Judah, learned that her son was dead, she set out to destroy the rest of Judah's royal family. [11] But Ahaziah's sister Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram, took Ahaziah's infant son, Joash, and stole him away from among the rest of the king's children, who were about to be killed. She put Joash and his nurse in a bedroom. In this way, Jehosheba, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, hid the child so that Athaliah could not murder him. [12] Joash remained hidden in the Temple of God for six years while Athaliah ruled over the land.

[23:1] In the seventh year of Athaliah's reign, Jehoiada the priest decided to act. He got up his courage and made a pact with five army commanders: Azariah son of Jeroham, Ishmael son of Jehohanan, Azariah son of Obed, Maaseiah son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat son of Zicri. [2] These men traveled secretly throughout Judah and summoned the Levites and clan leaders in Judah's towns to come to Jerusalem. [3] They all gathered at the Temple of God, where they made a covenant with Joash, the young king.

Jehoiada said to them, "The time has come for the king's son to reign! The Lord has promised that a descendant of David will be our king. [4] This is what you must do. When the priests and Levites come on duty on the Sabbath, a third of them will serve as gatekeepers. [5] Another third will go over to the royal palace, and the final third will be at the Foundation Gate. Everyone else should stay in the courtyards of the Lord's Temple. [6] Remember, only the priests and Levites on duty may enter the Temple of the Lord, for they are set apart as holy. The rest of the people must obey the Lord's instructions and stay outside. [7] You Levites, form a bodyguard for the king and keep your weapons in hand. Any unauthorized person who enters the Temple must be killed. Stay right beside the king at all times."

[8] So the Levites and the people did everything just as Jehoiada the priest ordered. The commanders took charge of the men reporting for duty that Sabbath, as well as those who were going off duty. Jehoiada the priest did not let anyone go home after their shift ended. [9] Then Jehoiada supplied the commanders with the spears and shields that had once belonged to King David and were stored in the Temple of God. [10] He stationed the guards around the king, with their weapons ready. They formed a line from the south side of the Temple around to the north side and all around the altar.

[11] Then Jehoiada and his sons brought out Joash, the king's son, and placed the crown on his head. They presented Joash with a copy of God's laws and proclaimed him king. Then they anointed him, and everyone shouted, "Long live the king!"

[12] When Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and the shouts of praise to the king, she hurried to the Lord's Temple to see what was happening. [13] And she saw the newly crowned king standing in his place of authority by the pillar at the Temple entrance. The officers and trumpeters were surrounding him, and people from all over the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Singers with musical instruments were leading the people in a great celebration. When Athaliah saw all this, she tore her clothes in despair and shouted, "Treason! Treason!"

[14] Then Jehoiada the priest ordered the commanders who were in charge of the troops, "Take her out of the Temple, and kill anyone who tries to rescue her. Do not kill her here in the Temple of the Lord." [15] So they seized her and led her out to the gate where horses enter the palace grounds, and they killed her there.

[16] Then Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and the king and the people that they would be the Lord's people. [17] And all the people went over to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They demolished the altars and smashed the idols, and they killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars.

[18] Jehoiada now put the Levitical priests in charge of the Temple of the Lord, following all the instructions given by David. He also commanded them to present burnt offerings to the Lord, as prescribed by the Law of Moses, and to sing and rejoice as David had instructed. [19] He stationed gatekeepers at the gates of the Lord's Temple to keep those who were ceremonially unclean from entering.

[20] Then the commanders, nobles, rulers, and all the people escorted the king from the Temple of the Lord. They went through the Upper Gate and into the palace, and they seated the king on the royal throne. [21] So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was peaceful because Athaliah had been killed.

[24:1] Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem forty years. His mother was Zibiah, from Beersheba. [2] Joash did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight throughout the lifetime of Jehoiada the priest. [3] Jehoiada chose two wives for Joash, and he had sons and daughters.

[4] Some time later, Joash decided to repair and restore the Temple of the Lord. [5] He summoned the priests and Levites and gave them these instructions: "Go at once to all the towns of Judah and collect the required annual offerings, so that we can repair the Temple of your God. Do not delay!" But the Levites did not act right away.

[6] So the king called for Jehoiada the high priest and asked him, "Why haven't you demanded that the Levites go out and collect the Temple taxes from the towns of Judah and from Jerusalem? Moses, the servant of the Lord, levied this tax on the community of Israel in order to maintain the Tabernacle of the Covenant."

[7] Over the years, the followers of wicked Athaliah had broken into the Temple of God, and they had used all the dedicated things from the Temple of the Lord to worship the images of Baal. [8] So now Joash gave instructions for a chest to be made and set outside the gate leading to the Temple of the Lord. [9] Then a proclamation was sent throughout Judah and Jerusalem, telling the people to bring to the Lord the tax that Moses, the servant of God, had required of the Israelites in the wilderness. [10] This pleased all the leaders and the people, and they gladly brought their money and filled the chest with it.

[11] Whenever the chest became full, the Levites carried it to the king's officials. Then the court secretary and an officer of the high priest counted the money and took the chest back to the Temple again. This went on day after day, and a large amount of money was collected.

[12] The king and Jehoiada gave the money to the construction supervisors, who hired masons and carpenters to restore the Temple of the Lord. They also hired metalworkers, who made articles of iron and bronze for the Lord's Temple.

[13] So the men in charge of the renovation worked hard, and they made steady progress. They restored the Temple of God according to its original design and strengthened it. [14] When all the repairs were finished, they brought the remaining money to the king and Jehoiada. It was used to make utensils for the Temple of the Lord—utensils for worship services and for burnt offerings, including ladles and other vessels made of gold and silver. And the burnt offerings were sacrificed continually in the Temple of the Lord during the lifetime of Jehoiada the priest.

[15] Jehoiada lived to a very old age, finally dying at 130. [16] He was buried among the kings in the City of David, because he had done so much good in Israel for God and his Temple.

[17] But after Jehoiada's death, the leaders of Judah came and bowed before King Joash and persuaded the king to listen to their advice. [18] They decided to abandon the Temple of the Lord, the God of their ancestors, and they worshiped Asherah poles and idols instead! Then the anger of God burned against Judah and Jerusalem because of their sin. [19] The Lord sent prophets to bring them back to him, but the people would not listen.

[20] Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. He stood before the people and said, "This is what God says: Why do you disobey the Lord's commands so that you cannot prosper? You have abandoned the Lord, and now he has abandoned you!"

[21] Then the leaders plotted to kill Zechariah, and by order of King Joash himself, they stoned him to death in the courtyard of the Lord's Temple. [22] That was how King Joash repaid Jehoiada for his love and loyalty—by killing his son. Zechariah's last words as he died were, "May the Lord see what they are doing and hold them accountable!"

[23] At the beginning of the year, the Aramean army marched against Joash. They invaded Judah and Jerusalem and killed all the leaders of the nation. Then they sent all the plunder back to their king in Damascus. [24] Although the Arameans attacked with only a small army, the Lord helped them conquer the much larger army of Judah. The people of Judah had abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors, so judgment was executed against Joash.

[25] The Arameans withdrew, leaving Joash severely wounded. But his own officials decided to kill him for murdering the son of Jehoiada the priest. They assassinated him as he lay in bed. Then he was buried in the City of David, but not in the royal cemetery. [26] The assassins were Jozabad, the son of an Ammonite woman named Shimeath, and Jehozabad, the son of a Moabite woman named Shomer.

[27] The complete story about the sons of Joash, the prophecies about him, and the record of his restoration of the Temple of God are written in The Commentary on the Book of the Kings. When Joash died, his son Amaziah became the next king.

[25:1] Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother was Jehoaddin, from Jerusalem. [2] Amaziah did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight, but not wholeheartedly.

[3] When Amaziah was well established as king, he executed the men who had assassinated his father. [4] However, he did not kill the children of the assassins, for he obeyed the command of the Lord written in the Book of the Law of Moses: "Parents must not be put to death for the sins of their children, nor the children for the sins of their parents. Those worthy of death must be executed for their own crimes."

[5] Another thing Amaziah did was to organize the army, assigning leaders to each clan from Judah and Benjamin. Then he took a census and found that he had an army of 300,000 men twenty years old and older, all trained in the use of spear and shield. [6] He also paid about 7,500 pounds of silver to hire 100,000 experienced fighting men from Israel.

[7] But a man of God came to the king and said, "O king, do not hire troops from Israel, for the Lord is not with Israel. He will not help those people of Ephraim! [8] If you let them go with your troops into battle, you will be defeated no matter how well you fight. God will overthrow you, for he has the power to help or to frustrate."

[9] Amaziah asked the man of God, "But what should I do about the silver I paid to hire the army of Israel?"

The man of God replied, "The Lord is able to give you much more than this!" [10] So Amaziah discharged the hired troops and sent them back to Ephraim. This made them angry with Judah, and they returned home in a great rage.

[11] Then Amaziah summoned his courage and led his army to the Valley of Salt, where they killed ten thousand Edomite troops from Seir. [12] They captured another ten thousand and took them to the top of a cliff and threw them off, dashing them to pieces on the rocks below.

[13] Meanwhile, the hired troops that Amaziah had sent home raided several of the towns of Judah between Samaria and Beth-horon, killing three thousand people and carrying off great quantities of plunder.

[14] When King Amaziah returned from defeating the Edomites, he brought with him idols taken from the people of Seir. He set them up as his own gods, bowed down in front of them, and presented sacrifices to them! [15] This made the Lord very angry, and he sent a prophet to ask, "Why have you worshiped gods who could not even save their own people from you?"

[16] But the king interrupted him and said, "Since when have I asked your advice? Be quiet now before I have you killed!"

So the prophet left with this warning: "I know that God has determined to destroy you because you have done this and have not accepted my counsel."

[17] After consulting with his advisers, King Amaziah of Judah sent this challenge to Israel's king Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz and grandson of Jehu: "Come and meet me in battle!"

[18] But King Jehoash of Israel replied to King Amaziah of Judah with this story: "Out in the Lebanon Mountains, a thistle sent a message to a mighty cedar tree: 'Give your daughter in marriage to my son.' But just then a wild animal came by and stepped on the thistle, crushing it! [19] You may be very proud of your conquest of Edom, but my advice is to stay home. Why stir up trouble that will bring disaster on you and the people of Judah?"

[20] But Amaziah would not listen, for God was arranging to destroy him for worshiping the gods of Edom. [21] So King Jehoash of Israel mobilized his army against King Amaziah of Judah. The two armies drew up their battle lines at Beth-shemesh in Judah. [22] Judah was routed by the army of Israel, and its army scattered and fled for home. [23] King Jehoash of Israel captured King Amaziah of Judah at Beth-shemesh and brought him back to Jerusalem. Then Jehoash ordered his army to demolish six hundred feet of Jerusalem's wall, from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate. [24] He carried off all the gold and silver and all the utensils from the Temple of God that had been in the care of Obed-edom. He also seized the treasures of the royal palace, along with hostages, and then returned to Samaria.

[25] King Amaziah of Judah lived on for fifteen years after the death of King Jehoash of Israel. [26] The rest of the events of Amaziah's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded in The Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. [27] After Amaziah turned away from the Lord, there was a conspiracy against his life in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. But his enemies sent assassins after him, and they killed him there. [28] They brought him back to Jerusalem on a horse, and he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David.

[26:1] The people of Judah then crowned Amaziah's sixteen-year-old son, Uzziah, as their next king. [2] After his father's death, Uzziah rebuilt the town of Elath and restored it to Judah. [3] Uzziah was sixteen when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-two years. His mother was Jecoliah, from Jerusalem. [4] He did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight, just as his father, Amaziah, had done. [5] Uzziah sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. And as long as the king sought the Lord, God gave him success.

[6] He declared war on the Philistines and broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod. Then he built new towns in the Ashdod area and in other parts of Philistia. [7] God helped him not only with his wars against the Philistines, but also in his battles with the Arabs of Gur and in his wars with the Meunites. [8] The Meunites paid annual tribute to him, and his fame spread even to Egypt, for he had become very powerful.

[9] Uzziah built fortified towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate, and at the angle in the wall. [10] He also constructed forts in the wilderness and dug many water cisterns, because he kept great herds of livestock in the foothills of Judah and on the plains. He was also a man who loved the soil. He had many workers who cared for his farms and vineyards, both on the hillsides and in the fertile valleys.

[11] Uzziah had an army of well-trained warriors, ready to march into battle, unit by unit. This great army of fighting men had been mustered and organized by Jeiel, the secretary of the army, and his assistant, Maaseiah. They were under the direction of Hananiah, one of the king's officials. [12] Twenty-six hundred clan leaders commanded these regiments of seasoned warriors. [13] The army consisted of 307,500 men, all elite troops. They were prepared to assist the king against any enemy. [14] Uzziah provided the entire army with shields, spears, helmets, coats of mail, bows, and sling stones. [15] And he produced machines mounted on the walls of Jerusalem, designed by brilliant men to shoot arrows and hurl stones from the towers and the corners of the wall. His fame spread far and wide, for the Lord helped him wonderfully until he became very powerful.

[16] But when he had become powerful, he also became proud, which led to his downfall. He sinned against the Lord his God by entering the sanctuary of the Lord's Temple and personally burning incense on the altar. [17] Azariah the high priest went in after him with eighty other priests of the Lord, all brave men. [18] They confronted King Uzziah and said, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord. That is the work of the priests alone, the sons of Aaron who are set apart for this work. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have sinned. The Lord God will not honor you for this!"

[19] Uzziah was furious and refused to set down the incense burner he was holding. But as he was standing there with the priests before the incense altar in the Lord's Temple, leprosy suddenly broke out on his forehead. [20] When Azariah and the other priests saw the leprosy, they rushed him out. And the king himself was eager to get out because the Lord had struck him. [21] So King Uzziah had leprosy until the day he died. He lived in isolation, excluded from the Temple of the Lord. His son Jotham was put in charge of the royal palace, and he governed the people of the land.

[22] The rest of the events of Uzziah's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. [23] So Uzziah died, and since he had leprosy, he was buried nearby in a burial field belonging to the kings. Then his son Jotham became the next king.

[27:1] Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. His mother was Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok. [2] He did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight, just as his father, Uzziah, had done. But unlike him, Jotham did not enter the Temple of the Lord. Nevertheless, the people continued in their corrupt ways.

[3] Jotham rebuilt the Upper Gate to the Lord's Temple and also did extensive rebuilding on the wall at the hill of Ophel. [4] He built towns in the hill country of Judah and constructed fortresses and towers in the wooded areas. [5] Jotham waged war against the Ammonites and conquered them. For the next three years, he received from them an annual tribute of 7,500 pounds of silver, 50,000 bushels of wheat, and 50,000 bushels of barley.

[6] King Jotham became powerful because he was careful to live in obedience to the Lord his God.

[7] The rest of the events of Jotham's reign, including his wars and other activities, are recorded in The Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. [8] He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. [9] When he died, he was buried in the City of David, and his son Ahaz became the next king.

[28:1] Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. He did not do what was pleasing in the sight of the Lord, as his ancestor David had done. [2] Instead, he followed the example of the kings of Israel and cast images for the worship of Baal. [3] He offered sacrifices in the valley of the son of Hinnom, even sacrificing his own sons in the fire. He imitated the detestable practices of the pagan nations whom the Lord had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites.

[4] He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the pagan shrines and on the hills and under every green tree.

[5] That is why the Lord his God allowed the king of Aram to defeat Ahaz and to exile large numbers of his people to Damascus. The armies of Israel also defeated Ahaz and inflicted many casualties on his army. [6] In a single day Pekah son of Remaliah, Israel's king, killed 120,000 of Judah's troops because they had abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors. [7] Then Zicri, a warrior from Ephraim, killed Maaseiah, the king's son; Azrikam, the king's palace commander; and Elkanah, the king's second-in-command. [8] The armies of Israel captured 200,000 women and children from Judah and took tremendous amounts of plunder, which they took back to Samaria.

[9] But a prophet of the Lord named Oded was there in Samaria when the army of Israel returned home. He went out to meet them and said, "The Lord, the God of your ancestors, was angry with Judah and let you defeat them. But you have gone too far, killing them without mercy, and all heaven is disturbed. [10] And now you are planning to make slaves of these people from Judah and Jerusalem. What about your own sins against the Lord your God? [11] Listen to me and return these captives you have taken, for they are your own relatives. Watch out, because now the Lord's fierce anger has been turned against you!"

[12] Then some of the leaders of Israel—Azariah son of Jehohanan, Berekiah son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah son of Shallum, and Amasa son of Hadlai—agreed with this and confronted the men returning from battle. [13] "You must not bring the prisoners here!" they declared. "We cannot afford to add to our sins and guilt. Our guilt is already great, and the Lord's fierce anger is already turned against Israel."

[14] So the warriors released the prisoners and handed over the plunder in the sight of all the leaders and people. [15] Then the four men mentioned by name came forward and distributed clothes from the plunder to the prisoners who were naked. They provided clothing and sandals to wear, gave them enough food and drink, and dressed their wounds with olive oil. They put those who were weak on donkeys and took all the prisoners back to their own land—to Jericho, the city of palms. Then they returned to Samaria.

[16] About that time King Ahaz of Judah asked the king of Assyria for help against his enemies. [17] The armies of Edom had again invaded Judah and taken captives. [18] And the Philistines had raided towns located in the foothills of Judah and in the Negev. They had already captured Beth-shemesh, Aijalon, Gederath, Soco with its villages, Timnah with its villages, and Gimzo with its villages, and the Philistines had occupied these towns. [19] The Lord was humbling Judah because of King Ahaz of Judah, for he had encouraged his people to sin and had been utterly unfaithful to the Lord. [20] So when King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria arrived, he oppressed King Ahaz instead of helping him. [21] Ahaz took valuable items from the Lord's Temple, the royal palace, and from the homes of his officials and gave them to the king of Assyria as tribute. But even this did not help him.

[22] And when trouble came to King Ahaz, he became even more unfaithful to the Lord. [23] He offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus who had defeated him, for he said, "These gods helped the kings of Aram, so they will help me, too, if I sacrifice to them." But instead, they led to his ruin and the ruin of all Israel. [24] The king took the utensils from the Temple of God and broke them into pieces. He shut the doors of the Lord's Temple so that no one could worship there and then set up altars to pagan gods in every corner of Jerusalem. [25] He made pagan shrines in all the towns of Judah for offering sacrifices to other gods. In this way, he aroused the anger of the Lord, the God of his ancestors.

[26] The rest of the events of Ahaz's reign and all his dealings, from beginning to end, are recorded in The Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. [27] When King Ahaz died, he was buried in Jerusalem but not in the royal cemetery. Then his son Hezekiah became the next king.

[29:1] Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became the king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. [2] He did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight, just as his ancestor David had done.

[3] In the very first month of the first year of his reign, Hezekiah reopened the doors of the Temple of the Lord and repaired them. [4] He summoned the priests and Levites to meet him at the courtyard east of the Temple. [5] He said to them, "Listen to me, you Levites! Purify yourselves, and purify the Temple of the Lord, the God of your ancestors. Remove all the defiled things from the sanctuary. [6] Our ancestors were unfaithful and did what was evil in the sight of the Lord our God. They abandoned the Lord and his Temple; they turned their backs on him. [7] They also shut the doors to the Temple's foyer, and they snuffed out the lamps. They stopped burning incense and presenting burnt offerings at the sanctuary of the God of Israel.

[8] That is why the Lord's anger has fallen upon Judah and Jerusalem. He has made us an object of dread, horror, and ridicule, as you can so plainly see. [9] Our fathers have been killed in battle, and our sons and daughters and wives are in captivity. [10] But now I will make a covenant with the Lord, the God of Israel, so that his fierce anger will turn away from us. [11] My dear Levites, do not neglect your duties any longer! The Lord has chosen you to stand in his presence, to minister to him, and to lead the people in worship and make offerings to him."

[12] Then these Levites got right to work:

From the clan of Kohath: Mahath son of Amasai and Joel son of Azariah.

From the clan of Merari: Kish son of Abdi and Azariah son of Jehallelel.

From the clan of Gershon: Joah son of Zimmah and Eden son of Joah.

[13] From the family of Elizaphan: Shimri and Jeiel.

From the family of Asaph: Zechariah and Mattaniah.

[14] From the family of Heman: Jehiel and Shimei.

From the family of Jeduthun: Shemaiah and Uzziel.

[15] These men called together their fellow Levites, and they purified themselves. Then they began to purify the Temple of the Lord, just as the king had commanded. They were careful to follow all the Lord's instructions in their work. [16] The priests went into the sanctuary of the

Temple of the Lord to cleanse it, and they took out to the Temple courtyard all the defiled things they found. From there the Levites carted it all out to the Kidron Valley.

[17] The work began on a day in early spring, and in eight days they had reached the foyer of the Lord's Temple. Then they purified the Temple of the Lord itself, which took another eight days. So the entire task was completed in sixteen days.

[18] Then the Levites went to King Hezekiah and gave him this report: "We have purified the Temple of the Lord, the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the table of the Bread of the Presence with all its utensils. [19] We have also recovered all the utensils taken by King Ahaz when he was unfaithful and closed the Temple. They are now in front of the altar of the Lord, purified and ready for use."

[20] Early the next morning King Hezekiah gathered the city officials and went to the Temple of the Lord. [21] They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats as a sin offering for the kingdom, for the Temple, and for Judah. The king commanded the priests, who were descendants of Aaron, to sacrifice the animals on the altar of the Lord. [22] So they killed the bulls, and the priests took the blood and sprinkled it on the altar. Next they killed the rams and sprinkled their blood on the altar. And finally, they did the same with the lambs. [23] The male goats for the sin offering were then brought before the king and the assembly of people, who laid their hands on them.

[24] The priests then killed the goats as a sin offering and sprinkled their blood on the altar to make atonement for the sins of all Israel. The king had specifically commanded that this burnt offering and sin offering should be made for all Israel.

[25] King Hezekiah then stationed the Levites at the Temple of the Lord with cymbals, harps, and lyres. He obeyed all the commands that the Lord had given to King David through Gad, the king's seer, and the prophet Nathan. [26] The Levites then took their positions around the Temple with the instruments of David, and the priests took their positions with the trumpets. [27] Then Hezekiah ordered that the burnt offering be placed on the altar. As the burnt offering was presented, songs of praise to the Lord were begun, accompanied by the trumpets and other instruments of David, king of Israel. [28] The entire assembly worshiped the Lord as the singers sang and the trumpets blew, until all the burnt offerings were finished. [29] Then the king and everyone with him bowed down in worship. [30] King Hezekiah and the officials ordered the Levites to praise the Lord with the psalms of David and Asaph the seer. So they offered joyous praise and bowed down in worship.

[31] Then Hezekiah declared, "The dedication ceremony has come to an end. Now bring your sacrifices and thanksgiving offerings to the Temple of the Lord." So the people brought their sacrifices and thanksgiving offerings, and those whose hearts were willing brought burnt offerings, too. [32] The people brought to the Lord seventy bulls, one hundred rams, and two hundred lambs for burnt offerings. [33] They also brought six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep as sacrifices. [34] But there were too few priests to prepare all the burnt offerings, so their relatives the Levites helped them until the work was finished and until more priests had been purified. For the Levites had been more conscientious about purifying themselves than the priests.

[35] There was an abundance of burnt offerings, along with the usual drink offerings, and a great deal of fat from the many peace offerings. So the Temple of the Lord was restored to service. [36] And Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced greatly because of what God had done for the people, for everything had been accomplished so quickly.

[30:1] King Hezekiah now sent word to all Israel and Judah, and he wrote letters of invitation to Ephraim and Manasseh. He asked everyone to come to the Temple of the Lord at Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover of the Lord, the God of Israel. [2] The king, his officials, and all the community of Jerusalem decided to celebrate Passover a month later than usual. [3] They were unable to celebrate it at the regular time because not enough priests could be purified by then, and the people had not yet assembled at Jerusalem. [4] This plan for keeping the Passover seemed right to the king and all the people. [5] So they sent a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba in the south to Dan in the north, inviting everyone to come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover of the Lord, the God of Israel. The people had not been celebrating it in great numbers as prescribed in the law.

[6] At the king's command, messengers were sent throughout Israel and Judah. They carried letters which said:

"O people of Israel, return to the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, so that he will return to the few of us who have survived the conquest of the Assyrian kings. [7] Do not be like your ancestors and relatives who abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors, and became an object of derision, as you yourselves can see. [8] Do not be stubborn, as they were, but submit yourselves to the Lord. Come to his Temple which he has set apart as holy forever. Worship the Lord your God so that his fierce anger will turn away from you. [9] For if you return to the Lord, your relatives and your children will be treated mercifully by their captors, and they will be able to return to this land. For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful. If you return to him, he will not continue to turn his face from you."

[10] The messengers went from town to town throughout Ephraim and Manasseh and as far as the territory of Zebulun. But most of the people just laughed at the messengers and made fun of them. [11] However, some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and went to Jerusalem. [12] At the same time, God's hand was on the people in the land of Judah, giving them a strong desire to unite in obeying the orders of the king and his officials, who were following the word of the Lord. [13] And so a huge crowd assembled at Jerusalem in midspring to celebrate Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. [14] They set to work and removed the pagan altars from Jerusalem. They took away all the incense altars and threw them into the Kidron Valley.

[15] On the appointed day in midspring, one month later than usual, the people slaughtered their Passover lambs. Then the priests and Levites became ashamed, so they purified themselves and brought burnt offerings to the Temple of the Lord. [16] They took their places at the Temple according to the regulations found in the Law of Moses, the man of God. The Levites brought the sacrificial blood to the priests, who then sprinkled it on the altar.

[17] Since many of the people there had not purified themselves, the Levites had to slaughter their Passover lambs for them, to set them apart for the Lord. [18] Most of those who came from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun had not purified themselves. But King Hezekiah prayed for them, and they were allowed to eat the Passover meal anyway, even though this was contrary to God's laws. For Hezekiah said, "May the Lord, who is good, pardon those [19] who decide to follow the Lord, the God of their ancestors, even though they are not properly cleansed for the ceremony." [20] And the Lord listened to Hezekiah's prayer and healed the people.

[21] So the people of Israel who were present in Jerusalem celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great joy. Each day the Levites and priests sang to the Lord, accompanied by loud instruments. [22] Hezekiah encouraged the Levites for the skill they displayed as they served the Lord. So for seven days the celebration continued. Peace offerings were sacrificed, and the people confessed their sins to the Lord, the God of their ancestors.

[23] The entire assembly then decided to continue the festival another seven days, so they celebrated joyfully for another week. [24] King Hezekiah gave the people one thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep for offerings, and the officials donated one thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep. Meanwhile, many more priests purified themselves.

[25] The entire assembly of Judah rejoiced, including the priests, the Levites, all who came from the land of Israel, the foreigners who came to the festival, and all those who lived in Judah. [26] There was great joy in the city, for Jerusalem had not seen a celebration like this one since the days of Solomon, King David's son. [27] Then the Levitical priests stood and blessed the people, and God heard them from his holy dwelling in heaven.

[31:1] Now when the festival ended, the Israelites who attended went to all the towns of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh, and they smashed the sacred pillars, cut down the Asherah poles, and removed the pagan shrines and altars. After this, the Israelites returned to their own towns and homes.

[2] Hezekiah then organized the priests and Levites into divisions to offer the burnt offerings and peace offerings, and to worship and give thanks and praise to the Lord at the gates of the Temple. [3] The king also made a personal contribution of animals for the daily morning and evening burnt offerings, as well as for the weekly Sabbath festivals and monthly new moon festivals, and for the other annual festivals as required in the law of the Lord. [4] In addition, he required the people in Jerusalem to bring the prescribed portion of their income to the priests and Levites, so they could devote themselves fully to the law of the Lord.

[5] The people responded immediately and generously with the first of their crops and grain, new wine, olive oil, honey, and all the produce of their fields. They brought a tithe of all they owned. [6] The people who had moved to Judah from Israel, and the people of Judah themselves, brought in the tithes of their cattle and sheep and a tithe of the things that had been dedicated to the Lord their God, and they piled them up in great heaps. [7] The first of these tithes was brought in late spring, and the heaps continued to grow until early autumn. [8] When Hezekiah and his officials came and saw these huge piles, they thanked the Lord and his people Israel!

[9] "Where did all this come from?" Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites.

[10] And Azariah the high priest, from the family of Zadok, replied, "Since the people began bringing their gifts to the Lord's Temple, we have had enough to eat and plenty to spare, for the Lord has blessed his people."

[11] Hezekiah decided to have storerooms prepared in the Temple of the Lord, and this was done. [12] Then all the gifts and tithes were faithfully brought to the Temple. Conaniah the Levite was put in charge, assisted by his brother Shimei. [13] The supervisors under them were Jehiel, Azaziah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismakiah, Mahath, and Benaiah. These appointments were made by King Hezekiah and Azariah, the chief official in the Temple of God.

[14] Kore son of Innah the Levite, who was the gatekeeper at the East Gate, was put in charge of distributing the freewill offerings of God, the gifts, and the things that had been dedicated to the Lord. [15] His faithful assistants were Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah. They distributed the gifts among the families of priests in their towns, by their divisions, dividing the gifts fairly among young and old alike.

[16] They also distributed the gifts to all males three years old or older, regardless of their place in the genealogical records, who came daily to the Lord's Temple to perform their official duties, by their divisions. [17] And they distributed gifts to the priests who were listed in the genealogical records by families, and to the Levites twenty years old or older who were listed according to their jobs and their divisions. [18] Food allotments were also given to all the families listed in the genealogical records, including the little babies, the wives, and the sons and daughters. For they had all been faithful in purifying themselves. [19] As for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who were living in the open villages around the towns, men were appointed to distribute portions to every male among the priests and to all the Levites listed in the genealogical records.

[20] In this way, King Hezekiah handled the distribution throughout all Judah, doing what was pleasing and good in the sight of the Lord his God. [21] In all that he did in the service of the Temple of God and in his efforts to follow the law and the commands, Hezekiah sought his God wholeheartedly. As a result, he was very successful.

[32:1] After Hezekiah had faithfully carried out this work, King Sennacherib of Assyria invaded Judah. He laid siege to the fortified cities, giving orders for his army to break through their walls. [2] When Hezekiah realized that Sennacherib also intended to attack Jerusalem, [3] he consulted with his officials and military advisers, and they decided to stop the flow of the springs outside the city. [4] They organized a huge work crew to stop the flow of the springs, cutting off the brook that ran through the fields. For they said, "Why should the kings of Assyria come here and find plenty of water?"

[5] Then Hezekiah further strengthened his defenses by repairing the wall wherever it was broken down and by adding to the fortifications and constructing a second wall outside the first. He also reinforced the Millo in the City of David and manufactured large numbers of weapons and shields. [6] He appointed military officers over the people and asked them to assemble before him in the square at the city gate. Then Hezekiah encouraged them with this address:

[7] "Be strong and courageous! Don't be afraid of the king of Assyria or his mighty army, for there is a power far greater on our side! [8] He may have a great army, but they are just men. We have the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles for us!" These words greatly encouraged the people.

[9] Then King Sennacherib of Assyria, while still besieging the town of Lachish, sent officials to Jerusalem with this message for Hezekiah and all the people in the city:

[10] "This is what King Sennacherib of Assyria says: What are you trusting in that makes you think you can survive my siege of Jerusalem? [11] Hezekiah has said, 'The Lord our God will rescue us from the king of Assyria.' Surely Hezekiah is misleading you, sentencing you to death by famine and thirst! [12] Surely you must realize that Hezekiah is the very person who destroyed all the Lord's shrines and altars. He commanded Judah and Jerusalem to worship at only the one altar at the Temple and to make sacrifices on it alone.

[13] "Surely you must realize what I and the other kings of Assyria before me have done to all the people of the earth! Were any of the gods of those nations able to rescue their people from my power? [14] Name just one time when any god, anywhere, was able to rescue his people from me! What makes you think your God can do any better? [15] Don't let Hezekiah fool you! Don't let him deceive you like this! I say it again—no god of any nation has ever yet been able to rescue his people from me or my ancestors. How much less will your God rescue you from my power!"

[16] And Sennacherib's officials further mocked the Lord God and his servant Hezekiah, heaping insult upon insult. [17] The king also sent letters scorning the Lord, the God of Israel. He wrote, "Just as the gods of all the other nations failed to rescue their people from my power, so the God of Hezekiah will also fail." [18] The Assyrian officials who brought the letters shouted this in the Hebrew language to the people gathered on the walls of the city, trying to terrify them so it would be easier to capture the city. [19] These officials talked about the God of Jerusalem as though he were one of the pagan gods, made by human hands.

[20] Then King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz cried out in prayer to God in heaven. [21] And the Lord sent an angel who destroyed the Assyrian army with all its commanders and officers. So Sennacherib returned home in disgrace to his own land. And when he entered the temple of his god, some of his own sons killed him there with a sword. [22] That is how the Lord rescued Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from King Sennacherib of Assyria and from all the others who threatened them. So there was peace at last throughout the land. [23] From then on King Hezekiah became highly respected among the surrounding nations, and many gifts for the Lord arrived at Jerusalem, with valuable presents for King Hezekiah, too.

[24] About that time, Hezekiah became deathly ill. He prayed to the Lord, who healed him and gave him a miraculous sign. [25] But Hezekiah did not respond appropriately to the kindness shown him, and he became proud. So the Lord's anger came against him and against Judah and Jerusalem. [26] Then Hezekiah repented of his pride, and the people of Jerusalem humbled themselves. So the Lord's anger did not come against them during Hezekiah's lifetime.

[27] Hezekiah was very wealthy and held in high esteem. He had to build special treasury buildings for his silver, gold, precious stones, and spices, and for his shields and other valuable items. [28] He also constructed many storehouses for his grain, new wine, and olive oil; and he made many stalls for his cattle and folds for his flocks of sheep and goats. [29] He built many towns and acquired vast flocks and herds, for God had given him great wealth. [30] He blocked up the upper spring of Gihon and brought the water down through a tunnel to the west side of the City of David. And so he succeeded in everything he did.

[31] However, when ambassadors arrived from Babylon to ask about the remarkable events that had taken place in the land, God withdrew from Hezekiah in order to test him and to see what was really in his heart.

[32] The rest of the events of Hezekiah's reign and his acts of devotion are recorded in The Vision of the Prophet Isaiah Son of Amoz, which is included in The Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. [33] When Hezekiah died, he was buried in the upper area of the royal cemetery, and all Judah and Jerusalem honored him at his death. Then his son Manasseh became the next king.

[33:1] Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. [2] He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, imitating the detestable practices of the pagan nations whom the Lord had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites. [3] He rebuilt the pagan shrines his father Hezekiah had destroyed. He constructed altars for the images of Baal and set up Asherah poles. He also bowed before all the stars of heaven and worshiped them. [4] He even built pagan altars in the Temple of the Lord, the place where the Lord had said his name should be honored forever. [5] He put these altars for the stars of heaven in both courtyards of the Lord's Temple. [6] Manasseh even sacrificed his own sons in the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom. He practiced sorcery, divination, and witchcraft, and he consulted with mediums and psychics. He did much that was evil in the Lord's sight, arousing his anger.

[7] Manasseh even took a carved idol he had made and set it up in God's Temple, the very place where God had told David and his son Solomon: "My name will be honored here forever in this Temple and in Jerusalem—the city I have chosen from among all the other tribes of Israel. [8] If the Israelites will obey my commands—all the instructions, laws, and regulations given through Moses—I will not send them into exile from this land that I gave their ancestors." [9] But Manasseh led the people of Judah and Jerusalem to do even more evil than the pagan nations whom the Lord had destroyed when the Israelites entered the land.

[10] The Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they ignored all his warnings. [11] So the Lord sent the Assyrian armies, and they took Manasseh prisoner. They put a ring through his nose, bound him in bronze chains, and led him away to Babylon. [12] But while in deep distress, Manasseh sought the Lord his God and cried out humbly to the God of his ancestors. [13] And when he prayed, the Lord listened to him and was moved by his request for help. So the Lord let Manasseh return to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Manasseh had finally realized that the Lord alone is God!

[14] It was after this that Manasseh rebuilt the outer wall of the City of David, from west of the Gihon Spring in the Kidron Valley to the Fish Gate, and continuing around the hill of Ophel, where it was built very high. And he stationed his military officers in all of the fortified cities of Judah. [15] Manasseh also removed the foreign gods from the hills and the idol from the Lord's Temple. He tore down all the altars he had built on the hill where the Temple stood and all the altars that were in Jerusalem, and he dumped them outside the city. [16] Then he restored the altar of the Lord and sacrificed peace offerings and thanksgiving offerings on it. He also encouraged the people of Judah to worship the Lord, the God of Israel. [17] However, the people still sacrificed at the pagan shrines, but only to the Lord their God.

[18] The rest of the events of Manasseh's reign, his prayer to God, and the words the seers spoke to him in the name of the Lord, the God of Israel, are recorded in The Book of the Kings of Israel. [19] Manasseh's prayer, the account of the way God answered him, and an account of all his sins and unfaithfulness are recorded in The Record of the Seers. It includes a list of the locations where he built pagan shrines and set up Asherah poles and idols before he repented. [20] When Manasseh died, he was buried at his palace. Then his son Amon became the next king.

[21] Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem two years. [22] He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, just as his father Manasseh had done. He worshiped and sacrificed to all the idols his father had made. [23] But unlike his father, he did not humble himself before the Lord. Instead, Amon sinned even more.

[24] At last Amon's own officials plotted against him and assassinated him in his palace. [25] But the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against King Amon, and they made his son Josiah the next king.

[34:1] Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. [2] He did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight and followed the example of his ancestor David. He did not turn aside from doing what was right.

[3] During the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, Josiah began to seek the God of his ancestor David. Then in the twelfth year, he began to purify Judah and Jerusalem, destroying all the pagan shrines, the Asherah poles, and the carved idols and cast images. [4] He saw to it that the altars for the images of Baal and their incense altars were torn down. He also made sure that the Asherah poles, the carved idols, and the cast images were smashed and scattered over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. [5] Then he burned the bones of the pagan priests on their own altars, and so he purified Judah and Jerusalem.

[6] He did the same thing in the towns of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, even as far as Naphtali. [7] He destroyed the pagan altars and the Asherah poles, and he crushed the idols into dust. He cut down the incense altars throughout the land of Israel and then returned to Jerusalem.

[8] In the eighteenth year of his reign, after he had purified the land and the Temple, Josiah appointed Shaphan son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of Jerusalem, and Joah son of Joahaz, the royal historian, to repair the Temple of the Lord his God. [9] They gave Hilkiah the high priest the money that had been collected by the Levites who served as gatekeepers at the

Temple of God. The gifts were brought by people from Manasseh, Ephraim, and from all the remnant of Israel, as well as from all Judah, Benjamin, and the people of Jerusalem. [10] He entrusted the money to the men assigned to supervise the restoration of the Lord's Temple. Then they paid the workers who did the repairs and renovation. [11] Thus, they hired carpenters and masons and purchased cut stone for the walls and timber for the rafters and beams. They restored what earlier kings of Judah had allowed to fall into ruin.

[12] The workers served faithfully under the leadership of Jahath and Obadiah, Levites of the Merarite clan, and Zechariah and Meshullam, Levites of the Kohathite clan. Other Levites, all of whom were skilled musicians, [13] were put in charge of the laborers of the various trades. Still others assisted as secretaries, officials, and gatekeepers.

[14] As Hilkiyah the high priest was recording the money collected at the Lord's Temple, he found the Book of the Law of the Lord as it had been given through Moses. [15] Hilkiyah said to Shaphan the court secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the Lord's Temple!" Then Hilkiyah gave the scroll to Shaphan.

[16] Shaphan took the scroll to the king and reported, "Your officials are doing everything they were assigned to do. [17] The money that was collected at the Temple of the Lord has been given to the supervisors and workmen." [18] Shaphan also said to the king, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a scroll." So Shaphan read it to the king.

[19] When the king heard what was written in the law, he tore his clothes in despair. [20] Then he gave these orders to Hilkiyah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Acbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the court secretary, and Asaiah the king's personal adviser: [21] "Go to the Temple and speak to the Lord for me and for all the remnant of Israel and Judah. Ask him about the words written in this scroll that has been found. The Lord's anger has been poured out against us because our ancestors have not obeyed the word of the Lord. We have not been doing what this scroll says we must do."

[22] So Hilkiyah and the other men went to the newer Mishneh section of Jerusalem to consult with the prophet Huldah. She was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah and grandson of Harhas, the keeper of the Temple wardrobe. [23] She said to them, "The Lord, the God of Israel, has spoken! Go and tell the man who sent you, [24] 'This is what the Lord says: I will certainly destroy this city and its people. All the curses written in the scroll you have read will come true. [25] For the people of Judah have abandoned me and worshiped pagan gods, and I am very angry with them for everything they have done. My anger will be poured out against this place, and nothing will be able to stop it.'

[26] "But go to the king of Judah who sent you to seek the Lord and tell him: 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says concerning the message you have just heard: [27] You were sorry and humbled yourself before God when you heard what I said against this city and its people. You humbled yourself and tore your clothing in despair and wept before me in repentance. So I have indeed heard you, says the Lord. [28] I will not send the promised disaster against this city and its people until after you have died and been buried in peace. You will not see the disaster I am going to bring on this place.' " So they took her message back to the king.

[29] Then the king summoned all the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem. [30] And the king went up to the Temple of the Lord with all the people of Judah and Jerusalem and the priests and the Levites—all the people from the greatest to the least. There the king read to them the entire Book of the Covenant that had been found in the Lord's Temple. [31] The king took his place of authority beside the pillar and renewed the covenant in the Lord's presence. He pledged to obey the Lord by keeping all his commands, regulations, and laws with all his heart and soul. He promised to obey all the terms of the covenant that were written in the scroll. [32] And he required everyone in Jerusalem and the people of Benjamin to make a similar pledge. As the people of Jerusalem did this, they renewed their covenant with God, the God of their ancestors.

[33] So Josiah removed all detestable idols from the entire land of Israel and required everyone to worship the Lord their God. And throughout the rest of his lifetime, they did not turn away from the Lord, the God of their ancestors.

[35:1] Then Josiah announced that the Passover of the Lord would be celebrated in Jerusalem on the appointed day in early spring. The Passover lambs were slaughtered at twilight of that day. [2] Josiah also assigned the priests to their duties and encouraged them in their work at the Temple of the Lord. [3] He issued this order to the Levites, who had been set apart to serve the Lord and were teachers in Israel: "Since the Ark is now in Solomon's Temple and you do not need to carry it back and forth on your shoulders, spend your time serving the Lord your God and his people Israel.

[4] Report for duty according to the family divisions of your ancestors, following the written instructions of King David of Israel and the instructions of his son Solomon. [5] Then stand in your appointed holy places and help the families assigned to you as they bring their offerings to the Temple. [6] Slaughter the Passover lambs, purify yourselves, and prepare to help those who come. Follow all the instructions that the Lord gave through Moses."

[7] Then Josiah contributed from his personal property thirty thousand lambs and young goats for the people's Passover offerings, and three thousand bulls. [8] The king's officials also made willing contributions to the people, priests, and Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the administrators of God's Temple, gave the priests twenty-six hundred lambs and young goats and three hundred bulls as Passover offerings. [9] The Levite leaders—Conaniah and his brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, and Hashabiah, Jeiel, and Jozabad—gave five thousand lambs and young goats and five hundred bulls to the Levites for their Passover offerings.

[10] When everything was ready for the Passover celebration, the priests and the Levites took their places, organized by their divisions, according to the king's orders. [11] The Levites then slaughtered the Passover lambs and presented the blood to the priests, who sprinkled the blood on the altar while the Levites prepared the animals. [12] They divided the burnt offerings among the people by their family groups, so they could offer them to the Lord according to the instructions recorded in the Book of Moses. They did the same with the bulls. [13] Then they roasted the Passover lambs as prescribed; and they boiled the holy offerings in pots, kettles, and pans, and brought them out quickly so the people could eat them.

[14] Afterward the Levites prepared a meal for themselves and for the priests, because the priests had been busy from morning till night offering the burnt offerings and the fat portions. The Levites took responsibility for all these preparations. [15] The musicians, descendants of Asaph, were in their assigned places, following the orders given by David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, the king's seer. The gatekeepers guarded the gates and did not need to leave their posts of duty, for their meals were brought to them by their fellow Levites.

[16] The entire ceremony for the Lord's Passover was completed that day. All the burnt offerings were sacrificed on the altar of the Lord, as King Josiah had ordered. [17] All the Israelites present in Jerusalem celebrated Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days. [18] Never since the time of the prophet Samuel had there been such a Passover. None of the kings of Israel had ever kept a Passover as Josiah did, involving all the priests and Levites, all the people of Jerusalem, and people from all over Judah and Israel. [19] This Passover celebration took place in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign.

[20] After Josiah had finished restoring the Temple, King Neco of Egypt led his army up from Egypt to do battle at Carchemish on the Euphrates River, and Josiah and his army marched out to fight him. [21] But King Neco sent ambassadors to Josiah with this message:

"What do you want with me, king of Judah? I have no quarrel with you today! I only want to fight the nation with which I am at war. And God has told me to hurry! Do not interfere with God, who is with me, or he will destroy you."

[22] But Josiah refused to listen to Neco, to whom God had indeed spoken, and he would not turn back. Instead, he led his army into battle on the plain of Megiddo. He laid aside his royal robes so the enemy would not recognize him. [23] But the enemy archers hit King Josiah with their arrows and wounded him. He cried out to his men, "Take me from the battle, for I am badly wounded!"

[24] So they lifted Josiah out of his chariot and placed him in another chariot. Then they brought him back to Jerusalem, where he died. He was buried there in the royal cemetery. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him. [25] The prophet Jeremiah composed funeral songs for Josiah, and to this day choirs still sing these sad songs about his death. These songs of sorrow have become a tradition and are recorded in The Book of Laments. [26] The rest of the events of Josiah's reign and his acts of devotion done according to the written law of the Lord, [27] from beginning to end, are recorded in The Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

[36:1] then the people of the land took Josiah's son Jehoahaz and made him the next king in Jerusalem. [2] Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, but he reigned only three months. [3] Then he was deposed by Neco, the king of Egypt, who demanded a tribute from Judah of 7,500 pounds of silver and 75 pounds of gold. [4] The king of Egypt appointed Eliakim, the brother of Jehoahaz, as the next king of Judah and Jerusalem, and he changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. Then Neco took Jehoahaz to Egypt as a prisoner.

[5] Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. But he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord his God. [6] Then King

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and captured it, and he bound Jehoiakim in chains and led him away to Babylon. [7] Nebuchadnezzar also took some of the treasures from the Temple of the Lord, and he placed them in his palace in Babylon. [8] The rest of the events of Jehoiakim's reign, including all the evil things he did and everything found against him, are recorded in The Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. Then his son Jehoiachin became the next king.

[9] Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, but he reigned in Jerusalem only three months and ten days. Jehoiachin did what was evil in the Lord's sight. [10] In the spring of the following year, Jehoiachin was summoned to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. Many treasures from the Temple of the Lord were taken to Babylon at that time. And Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, to be the next king in Judah and Jerusalem.

[11] Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. [12] He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and he refused to humble himself in the presence of the prophet Jeremiah, who spoke for the Lord. [13] He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, even though he had taken an oath of loyalty in God's name. Zedekiah was a hard and stubborn man, refusing to turn to the Lord, the God of Israel.

[14] All the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful. They followed the pagan practices of the surrounding nations, desecrating the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem.

[15] The Lord, the God of their ancestors, repeatedly sent his prophets to warn them, for he had compassion on his people and his Temple. [16] But the people mocked these messengers of God and despised their words. They scoffed at the prophets until the Lord's anger could no longer be restrained and there was no remedy.

[17] So the Lord brought the king of Babylon against them. The Babylonians killed Judah's young men, even chasing after them into the Temple. They had no pity on the people, killing both young and old, men and women, healthy and sick. God handed them all over to Nebuchadnezzar. [18] The king also took home to Babylon all the utensils, large and small, used in the Temple of God, and the treasures from both the Lord's Temple and the royal palace. He also took with him all the royal princes. [19] Then his army set fire to the Temple of God, broke down the walls of Jerusalem, burned all the palaces, and completely destroyed everything of value. [20] The few who survived were taken away to Babylon, and they became servants to the king and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. [21] So the message of the Lord spoken through Jeremiah was fulfilled. The land finally enjoyed its Sabbath rest, lying desolate for seventy years, just as the prophet had said.

[22] In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, the Lord fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy by stirring the heart of Cyrus to put this proclamation into writing and to send it throughout his kingdom:

[23] "This is what King Cyrus of Persia says: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has appointed me to build him a Temple at Jerusalem in the land of Judah. All of you who are the Lord's people may return to Israel for this task. May the Lord your God be with you!"

MEGATHEMES

THEME: Temple

EXPLANATION:

The temple was the symbol of God's presence and the place set aside for worship and prayer. Built by Solomon from the plans God gave to David, the temple was the spiritual center of the nation.

IMPORTANCE:

As Christians meet together to worship God, they experience the presence of God in a way that no individual believer could. For the dwelling place of God is the people of God. The body of Christ is God's temple.

THEME: Peace

EXPLANATION:

As Solomon and his descendants were faithful to God, they experienced victory in battle, success in government, and peace with other nations. Peace was the result of the people being unified and loyal to God and his law.

IMPORTANCE:

Only God can bring true peace. God is greater than any enemy, army, or nation. Just as Israel's faithful response was key to her peace and survival as a nation, so our obedience to God as individuals and nations is vital to peace today.

THEME: Prayer

EXPLANATION:

After Solomon died, David's kingdom was divided. When a king led the Israelites into idolatry, the nation suffered. When the king and his people prayed to God for deliverance and they turned from their sinful ways, God delivered them.

IMPORTANCE:

God still answers prayer today. We have God's promise that if we humble ourselves, seek him, turn from our sin, and pray, God will hear, heal, and forgive us. If we are alert, we can pray for God's guidance before we get into trouble.

THEME: Reform

EXPLANATION:

Although idolatry and injustice were common, some kings turned to God and led the people in spiritual revival—renewing their commitment to God and reforming their society. Revival included the destruction of idols, obedience to the law, and the restoration of the priesthood.

IMPORTANCE:

We must constantly commit ourselves to obeying God. We are never secure in what others have done before us. Each generation of believers must rededicate themselves to the task of carrying out God's will in their own lives as well as in society.

THEME: National collapse

EXPLANATION:

In 586 B.C. the Babylonians completely destroyed Solomon's beautiful temple. The formal worship of God was ended. The Israelites had abandoned God. As a result, God brought judgment upon his people and they were carried off into captivity.

IMPORTANCE:

Although our disobedience may not be as blatant as Israel's, quite often our commitment to God is insincere and casual. When we forget that all our power, wisdom, and wealth come from God and not ourselves, we are in danger of the same spiritual and moral collapse that Israel experienced.

TIMELINE

Solomon becomes king 970 B.C.
Temple built 966 959
The kingdom divides 930
Asa becomes king of Judah 910
Jehoshaphat becomes king of Judah 872
Ahab killed in battle 853
Athaliah seizes the throne 841
Uzziah becomes king of Judah 792
Israel (northern kingdom) falls 722
Hezekiah becomes king of Judah 715
Sennacherib taunts Hezekiah 701
Josiah becomes king 640
Book of the Law found 622
Judah (southern kingdom) falls 586
Cyrus's decree 538

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print