



1 & 2

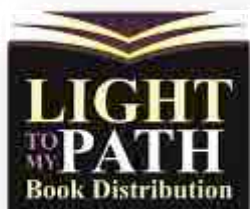
# Chronicles

*A Devotional look at the Kings of Judah  
from David to her return from Exile*

**F. WAYNE MAC LEOD**

# 1 & 2 Chronicles

*A Devotional look at the Kings of Judah  
from David to her Exile*



F. Wayne Mac Leod

**Light To My Path Book Distribution**  
Sydney Mines, NS. CANADA

## **1 & 2 Chronicles**

Copyright © 2011 by F. Wayne Mac Leod  
Revised February 2016

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission of the author.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise specified are taken from the New International Version of the Bible (Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used with permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers. All rights reserved.)

A Special thanks to the proof readers:

Diane Mac Leod, Lee Tuson, Marilyn Tuson

## Table of Contents

Preface .....	1
Introduction.....	3
1 From Adam to Esau and the Edomites .....	6
2 From Judah to David .....	12
3 David's Descendants .....	19
4 Notable Descendants of Judah and Simeon .....	23
5 the Tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh.....	29
6 The Descendants of Levi .....	34
7 The Descendants of Issachar, Benjamin, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim and Asher.....	39
8 Those who resettled in Israel after the Exile.....	46
9 Defeat or Victory in Disguise?.....	53
10 David's Reign Established .....	58
11 David's Army.....	64
12 David and the Ark of God.....	71
13 Philistine Problems .....	77
14 A Lesson Learned.....	83
15 A Psalm of Thanksgiving .....	91
16 God's Promise to David .....	103
17 David's Military Success .....	111
18 A Misunderstood Act of Kindness .....	116
19 David's Census.....	122

20 David Prepares for the Temple.....	131
21 A Restructuring of the Levitical Ministry.....	139
22 Musicians, Gatekeepers, Treasurers, Judges and Administrators .....	146
23 David's Officers .....	152
24 David Prepares Solomon and His Officials .....	158
25 Israel Commits to Building the Temple .....	165
26 Solomon Begins the Work .....	171
27 The Temple and its Furnishings .....	177
28 The Ark is brought to the Temple.....	182
29 God Answers Solomon's Prayer .....	192
30 Solomon's Wealth and Prosperity.....	200
31 Israel is Divided .....	207
32 Rehoboam's Reign in Jerusalem .....	213
33 Abijah, King of Judah.....	220
34 King Asa of Judah .....	227
35 Asa's Later Years .....	234
36 Jehoshaphat's Secret of Success.....	241
37 Jehoshaphat's Alliance with Ahab .....	245
38 Sinful Alliances .....	255
39 Jehoram, Evil King of Judah.....	264
40 Ahaziah and Athaliah's Evil Reign .....	270
41 Joash, King of Judah.....	277
42 King Amaziah of Judah.....	283

43 Uzziah and Jotham of Judah.....	290
44 King Ahaz of Judah.....	296
45 The Worship of God Restored .....	302
46 Hezekiah is Tested .....	313
47 Manasseh and Amon of Judah .....	321
48 Revival under Josiah: The Discovery of the Book of the Law.....	327
49 A Passover and Final Battle.....	334
50 The Last Kings of Judah .....	340



## PREFACE

---

The books of 1 & 2 Chronicles record the history of the nation of Judah from the reign of David to its return from exile in Babylon. The focus of the author is to show the reader the connection between the prosperity of the nation of Judah and their faith in God.

As you study these books, take the time to see the connection between obedience to the Lord and blessing in the land. Take note of the intense spiritual battle that rages. Even the great King David fell into sin and yielded to the temptations around him. Notice also, however, the incredible patience of God toward His people. So many times He could have judged or turned His back on them but He didn't.

While circumstances have changed in our day, the same battle rages. The same temptations exist. Years later God continues to offer His salvation and healing to our land. The history of the kings of Judah ought to be an example for us. Remember, as you read these books, that they are not just stories but God's way of showing us how we need to live. Every leader needs to understand the truth of these books. Success in ministry or blessing as a nation is more a result of a relationship with God than leadership skills.

There are serious consequences to ignoring the truth of these books. We watch the nation of Judah slide from



prosperity under David to the loss of everything they had. What keeps God from repeating the same thing in our lives? We marvel at the incredible patience of God with His people in these books but see clearly from 1 & 2 Chronicles that there is a serious cost to ignoring God.

As you read these books, open your heart to listen to what the Holy Spirit might say to you about falling into the same error. Ask God to allow you to hear His warning in these books. Ask Him to deepen your dependence on Him as you face the same temptations. Ask Him to allow you to experience the fullness of what He has in store for you.

This commentary is not meant to replace the Bible. Its sole purpose is to help you to apply the lessons of these two important books to your life. If you are challenged by the Spirit and given further insight into what 1 & 2 Chronicles have to say to your own life and society, then my prayers will have been answered. May the Lord be pleased to use this simple study to draw you closer to Himself.

F. Wayne MacLeod

# INTRODUCTION

---

## *Author:*

1 & 2 Chronicles does not record the name of their author. Some believe that the books were written by Ezra but there is no clear evidence of this in the books. If the books were written by a single author, the author would have had to live during the days of the return from exile in Babylon. The fact that the books were written from a religious or spiritual perspective shows us that this is the central concern of the author. He spends very little time on what happened during the Babylonian exile. This shows us that his concern was for the land promised to Israel as a nation. Another point of interest is that the author examines the history of the nation of Judah through David and places very little focus on the separate nation of Israel.

## *Background:*

The books of 1 & 2 Chronicles examine the history of Judah from David to its return from exile in Babylon. Originally, they were one book. 1 Chronicles 1-9 gives us the genealogical record of the nation down to King David. The remainder of 1 Chronicles deals with the history of David's reign. 2 Chronicles begins with David's son Solomon and traces the history of Judah down to its exile in Babylon.

The focus of 1 & 2 Chronicles is not so much political as it is spiritual. God, and a relationship with Him, seems to be the central theme in these books. Success as a nation is attributed not to good leadership but to a right relationship with God.

*Importance of the Books for Today:*

1 & 2 Chronicles gives us a spiritual history of the nation of Judah. We see how the nation progressed from the blessing of God under David to judgement and the loss of the nation. This focus is important for a number of reasons.

First, we can see how an entire nation can fall away from God. We see how errors and sins were repeated and lessons ignored. This shows us that human nature is prone to sin and wander from God.

We see in 1 & 2 Chronicles the connection between obedience to God and blessing as a nation. This connection is important in our day as well. We cannot hope to know the fullness of God's blessing in our land if we are not ready to seek Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. What a difference it would make if our churches and nations sought God in this way.

These books teach us how even those who seek God can fall into sin and wander from God. David was tempted and fell into serious sin. We meet kings who started their reign seeking God but who fell into pride or through ungodly advice turned their backs on God. This serves as a warning about the need to persevere or be on guard in our commitment to the Lord God. Even in our day, we have seen whole churches and nations walk away from the truth they knew and fall into temptations and false doctrines.

The wonderful faithfulness of God is seen in 1 & 2 Chronicles. You cannot read these books without wondering what it was that kept God from turning His back on His people. God's love for His people is very strong. While He punishes and we suffer the consequences of our disobedience, God remains faithful.

As you read these books take the time to see the various temptations that confronted God's people. These temptations are as real today as they were in days of the kings of Judah. Ask the Lord to open your eyes to the temptations you see in this book. Ask Him also to keep you from falling into the same sins.

1 & 2 Chronicles show us the nature of the spiritual battle that rages around us. Satan is very real and his efforts are focused on destroying the work of God. He delights in getting our eyes off the Lord and onto ourselves. The story of these two books is the story of the spiritual battle that raged in Judah during the times of her kings. It is a story we need to take seriously because it is our story as well.

# 1

## FROM ADAM TO ESAU AND THE EDOMITES

---

Read 1 Chronicles 1:1-54

If there is one thing we can learn from the first chapters of 1 Chronicles it is that the story the writer is telling is solidly based in the history of real people. Each of the people mentioned here were important and had a role to play in the unfolding of God's plan. Some of these people served the Lord and others did not, but they were all part of the chain of events that unfolded in God's eternal purpose.

While the list of names is extensive, the writer leaves out many key people. His purpose is to trace a particular line of people and through them to show the unfolding of God's purpose in their lives. In chapter 1 the writer traces the line from Adam to Abraham and his descendants and tells us something about the nation of Edom.

The author begins with Adam as the first man. Notice that the only son mentioned is Seth. There is no mention of Cain and Abel. The author omits them from his list and chooses to trace the line of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve. He mentions the name of the descendants of

Seth until he gets to Noah who was powerfully used of God to bring judgment on the earth through the flood (1:1-3).

## NOAH'S DESCENDANTS

### *The Line of Japheth, son of Noah*

In verses 4-27 the author traces Noah's line through his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. He begins first by showing us the line of Japheth.

In verse 5 we read the names of seven sons of Japheth son of Noah (Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras). Of these seven sons mentioned here, the author only traces the lines of Gomer and Javan. He mentions three sons of Gomer in verse 6 (Ashkenaz, Riphath and Togarmah) and four sons of Javan in verse 7 (Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim and Rodanim).

### *The Line of Ham, Son of Noah*

The second son of Noah mentioned is Ham. Verse 8 tells us the names of four of Ham's sons (Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan). The descendants of three of these sons are briefly traced in verses 9-16. Cush's sons were Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raamah and Sabteca (verse 9). Two grandchildren through Raamah, Cush's son, are mentioned in verse 9 (Sheba and Dedan). Mention is also made of Nimrod who was a descendant of Cush. The word father used here does not always imply that he was a direct biological father but could also be a reference to an ancestor. Nimrod became famous for his skills as a warrior. Historically, his descendants were the Assyrians.

Mizraim was the second son of Ham mentioned. Verse 11 tells us that he was the father of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, Pathrusites, Caphtorites and the Casluhites. The Philistines were descendants of the Casluhites (verse 12).

The final son of Ham mentioned in this list is Canaan. He became the father of Sidon and the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites and the Hamathites (verses 13-16).

### *The Line of Shem, Son of Noah*

Five sons of Shem, son of Noah, are mentioned in verse 17 (Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram). The writer traces the line of only two of these sons, Aram and Arphaxad. Four of Aram's sons are noted in verse 17 (Uz, Hul, Gether and Meshech). Two sons of Arphaxad are recorded in verse 18 (Shelah and Eber). Eber had two sons (Peleg and Joktan). Twelve sons of Joktan are recorded in verse 20-23.

Of deeper concern for the author are the descendants of Shelah, Ham's grandson through Arphaxad. In verses 24-27 he shows the line from Shem, Arphaxad and Shelah to Abraham. This line is traced in more detail in Genesis 11:10-26.

### ABRAHAM'S DESCENDANTS

Two of Abraham's sons are listed in verse 28 (Isaac and Ishmael). These are not all the sons of Abraham but they were certainly the most well-known. The author divides the children of Abraham into several categories. This may be because of how God would work differently in each of these lines.

*The line of Ishmael*

Ishmael was born to Abraham when Sarah, his wife, gave him her servant Hagar (see Genesis 16:1-12). In verses 29-31 the author lists the names of twelve of Ishmael's sons.

*Sons of Abraham through his wife Keturah*

In Genesis 25:1 we read how Abraham took another wife by the name of Keturah. We have the names of six of Abraham's sons through his wife Keturah in verse 32 (Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah). Of these six sons the author only traces the line of two (Jokshan and Midian). Two of Jokshan's sons are mentioned (Sheba and Dedan). Five sons of Midian are listed in verse 33 (Ephah, Ephraim, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah).

*Abraham's Son through Sarah*

Isaac was Abraham's son through his wife Sarah. Isaac had two sons Esau and Jacob (who would become known as Israel). Five of Esau's children are recorded in verse 35 (Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam and Korah). Only two of these sons are of interest to the writer (Eliphaz and Reuel). Six of Eliphaz's sons are recorded in verse 36. One of these sons (Amalek) was a son through his concubine Timna (see Genesis 36:12). Four of Reuel's sons are mentioned in verse 37.

Esau descendants would become known as the Edomites. Genesis 36:8-9 tells us:



So Esau (that is, Edom) settled in the hill country of Seir. This is the account of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir.

In verses 38-44 we have a list of the names of the descendants of Seir. As we have said, the region of Seir would become known as Edom. Esau's family became part of this nation. Verses 43-54 give us the names of the various kings who reigned in Edom. Bela reigned in the city of Dinhabah (verse 43). He was succeeded by Jobab from Bozrah (verse 44). When Jobab died Husham from the land of the Temanites ruled in Edom (verse 45). Hadad, the next king, defeated Midian in the country of Moab (verse 46). When Hadad died Samlah from Masrekah became king in his place (verse 47). Shaul from Rehoboth succeeded Samlah (verse 48). When Shaul died, Baal-Hanan took his place on the throne (verse 49). Hadad would succeed him as king and rule in the city of Pau. Verses 51-54 give us the names of the chief officers of Edom during this time period.

#### For Consideration:

- While many people have a hard time reading through the list of names mentioned in these first chapters of 1 Chronicles, how do these names show us that what we are reading is solidly based in historical fact? What confidence does this give you in reading the rest of the book?
- We read here about the various nations that originated from Noah and Abraham's descendants. God seemed to have a particular purpose for each

of their children and their family lines. How has God been working spiritually in your family line?

- Notice how Esau and Jacob had the same father, but Esau would become the father of the Edomites while Jacob would become the father of Israel, whom God chose to be His own. What does this teach us about the sovereign purposes of God?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord for the fact that His word can be absolutely trusted.
- Are there evidences of God's working in your family line? Thank the Lord for this. Is there evidence of your family wandering from God and the truth of His word? Take a moment to pray that God would break that trend and bring your family back to Himself.

## 2

### FROM JUDAH TO DAVID

---

Read 1 Chronicles 2:1-55

In the previous chapter we saw how the author traced the line of God's people from Adam to Esau and the Edomites. Here in chapter 2 he will trace the descendants of Jacob (Israel), the other son of Isaac.

Jacob, who became known as Israel (see Genesis 32:28), had twelve sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad and Asher). The concern of the author is to trace the line of Judah, Jacob's son. God had a very specific purpose and plan for this son and his descendants.

Three sons were born to Judah through the daughter of Shua, a Canaanite woman (see Genesis 38:1-5). Their names were Er, Onan and Shelah. Of these three sons, both Er and Onan were wicked before the Lord and the Lord struck them so that they died (see Genesis 38:7-10). Judah also had twin sons through his daughter-in-law Tamar (see Genesis 38:11-29). The names of these twins were Perez and Zerah.

Notice here that Judah had five sons. Three of these sons were from a union with a Canaanite woman. God had

forbidden marriage between Israel and the pagan nations. The other two sons were from his daughter-in-law with whom he slept thinking she was a prostitute. Obviously, the Lord's blessing on Judah was purely by grace.

Perez, the illegitimate son of Judah, is recorded to have had two sons in verse 5 (Hezron and Hamul). We will return to Perez in a moment.

In verses 6-8 the author takes a small detour to show the readers the descendants of Perez's twin brother Zerah. Verse 6 tells us that Zerah had five sons (Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol and Darda). Of particular interest is a descendant called Achar. Many commentators believe that "Achar" is Achan, whose story is recorded for us in Joshua 7. This seems quite clear by the reference in verse 7 to the fact that he had violated the ban by taking devoted things. "Achar" literally means "trouble." It is possible that his name was changed from Achan to Achar to reflect the trouble he had caused for Israel. Achar was a descendant of Judah. According to Joshua 7:1 Achar would have been the great great grandson of Zerah through his son Zimri:

"But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the LORD's anger burned against Israel."

This again shows us how the descendants of Judah were not perfect. Achan in particular caused tremendous problems for the nation as a whole.

After this small detour we return to Perez the son of Judah through his daughter-in-law Tamar. We have already seen

from verse 5 that Perez had two sons (Hezron and Hamul). The author traces the line of Hezron for us.

Hezron, Perez's son, had three sons born to him (Jerahmeel, Ram and Caleb). We begin with the descendants of Ram.

### *Ram's Descendants*

Ram had a son by the name of Amminadab. Amminadab was the father of Nahshon who would become a leader in Judah (verse 10). Nahshon in turn had a son by the name of Salmon (verse 11). Salmon was the father of Boaz (of whom we read in the book of Ruth). Boaz was the father of Obed who would become the father of Jesse. Verses 13-15 list seven sons of Jesse ending with David, who would become king in Judah. Also mentioned in verses 16 and 17 are two sisters (Zeruiah and Abigail). Zeruiah had three sons (Abishai, Joab and Asahel). Abigail was the mother of Amasa. These men had important positions in the time of David.

### *Caleb's Descendants*

Perez's son Hezron also had a son by the name of Caleb. Caleb had three sons through his wife Azubah. Their names were Jeshar, Shobab and Ardon (verse 18). When his wife Azubah died, Caleb married Ephrath who bore him a son by the name of Hur. Hur became the father of Uri. Uri was the father of Bezalel. Bezalel was the man God gifted as a craftsman to do the work on the tabernacle in the days of Moses (see Exodus 31:1-7).

Hezron would later have another son through the daughter of Makir. He was sixty years old when he married her. She bore him a son by the name of Segub (verse 21).

Segub, Hezron's son, was the father of Jair (verse 22). Jair became famous as a warrior who captured a number of towns (verse 23).

After Hezron died, his wife Abijah bore him a son, by the name of Asshur, who would become the father of the region of Tekoa (verse 24).

1 Chronicles 2:9 mentions three sons of Hezron. We have traced the line of Ram and Caleb. The third son of Hezron was Jerahmeel. The author now traces his line.

### *Jerahmeel's Descendants*

Jerahmeel was the firstborn of Hezron (verse 25). Verse 25 lists five sons born to him (Ram, Bunah, Oren, Ozem and Ahijah). Jerahmeel had another son through Atarah, a second wife. His name was Onam (verse 26). The author traces the lines of two of Jerahmeel's sons here in this chapter (Ram and Onam).

Ram, the firstborn of Jerahmeel, had three sons (Maaz, Jamin and Eker). Onam, Jerahmeel's son through his second wife Atarah, had two sons (Shemmai and Jada).

Notice here how the author is very selective in how he traces these lines. Onam's son Shemmai had two sons (Nadab and Abishur). Abishur married a woman by the name of Abihail who bore him two sons (Ahban and Molid). Nadab also had two sons (Seled and Appaim). Seled would die without children (verse 30).

Nadab's son Appaim had a son by the name of Ishi. He would become the father of Sheshan. Sheshan's descendant was Ahlai (verse 31). From verse 34 we understand

that Sheshan only had daughters so we must assume that Ahlai was his daughter.

Jerahmeel's son Jada (brother of Shammai) had two sons (Jether and Jonathan). Jether died without children (verse 32). Jonathan, however, had two children by the names of Peleth and Zaza (verse 33).

In verse 34 the author tells us about Sheshan who had no sons. Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant. She bore him a son by the name of Attai (verse 35). Attai would become the father of Nathan. Nathan's son was Zabab (verse 36). Verses 37-41 lists the descendants of Zabab down to Elishama. Some commentators believe that Elishama lived around the time of David.

Verse 42 returns to Caleb son of Hezron and brother to Ram and Jerahmeel. Caleb's son Mesha was the father of Ziph. His other son, Maresha, was the father of Hebron. Four sons were given to Hebron. The lineage of Hebron's son Shema is traced for us in verses 44-45.

Caleb's concubine Ephah was the mother of three sons (verse 46). His concubine Maacah gave birth to Sheber, Tirhanah, Shaaph and Sheva (verses 47-48). The sons of Caleb through Ephrathah were Shobal (who would become the founder or father of the region of Kiriath Jearim), Salma the founder of Bethlehem and Hereph the founder of Beth Gader (verse 50-51).

From these descendants of Caleb came the Manahathites, the clans of Kiriath Jearim, the Ithrites, Puthites, Shumathites and Mishraites, Zorathites and Eshtaolites (verses 52-53).

Verses 54 and 55 give us a list of the various peoples that descended from Caleb through his son Salma.

For Consideration:

- Chapter 2 traces the lineage from Jacob to David. From one man God raised up a great multitude of people. From them, many nations were born. Following this line can be confusing, but God's purposes were being worked out perfectly. How does this encourage you today?
- Some of the descendants of Jacob (Israel) were very evil. Still God used them in this line to accomplish His purposes. What can stand in God's way? Is there anything that can hinder Him from accomplishing His purposes?
- How does this chapter help us to see the bigger picture of what God is doing? Is it possible for us to get focused on the small things and miss the larger picture of what God is doing?

For Prayer:

- Take a moment to thank the Lord that He is able to accomplish His purposes through you even when things appear to be confusing or evil. Thank Him that He is bigger than our failures and shortcomings.



- Take a moment to consider the generations that will come through you. Pray that God would reach out to your descendants and keep them in His path.
- Thank the Lord that the names listed here in this chapter are more than just names. They are all people that God knew and cared for. Thank Him that He cares for you and has a particular purpose for your life as well.

### 3

## DAVID'S DESCENDANTS

---

Read 1 Chronicles 3:1-24

Chapter 3 of Chronicles gives us a list of the names of David's descendants. David is a central figure in 1 Chronicles.

In verses 1-4 we have the list of the sons born to David in Hebron where he lived prior to becoming king in Jerusalem. He reigned in Hebron for seven years and six months (verse 4). It should be noted that each of the six sons listed here had a different mother.

From Hebron, David moved to Jerusalem, which he established as the capital of the nation. He reigned as king in Jerusalem for thirty-three years (verse 4). Verses 5-9 give us a list of sons born to him in Jerusalem. The sons born to David through his wife Bathsheba, with whom he committed adultery, are listed separately from the other children born to him. This is likely because Bathsheba's story was well known and her son Solomon would become the next king of Israel. Bathsheba gave David four sons (verse 5). Nine other sons born to David through his wives in Jerusalem are mentioned in verses 6-8. The sons David had through his various concubines were not listed by name. Of special note in verse 9 is the mention of Tamar, David's

daughter. The story of how her brother Ammon raped her is recorded in 2 Samuel 13.

Solomon was to become king of Israel after his father David. Solomon's descendants are recorded in the remainder of the chapter. Verses 10-14 record the descendants of David and Solomon down to the reign of Josiah. Josiah was a good king who repaired the temple and restored the worship of the Lord God in Judah. His story is told in 2 Kings 22.

Of the four sons of Josiah, the author traces the line of Jehoiakim, his second son. Jehoiakim was put on the throne by the Pharaoh Neco, who changed his name from Eliakim to Jehoiakim (see 2 Kings 23:34).

Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin succeeded him on the throne of Judah, but was taken captive and sent to Babylon. The king of Babylon would place Jehoiachin's uncle Mattaniah on the throne and change his name to Zedekiah (see 2 Kings 24:17).

The descendants of Jehoiachin, who had been taken into captivity, are listed in verses 17-18. Seven sons are listed in these verses. Of particular note is his son Pedaiah who had two sons (Zerubbabel and Shimei).

Eight names are listed as descendants of Zerubbabel in verses 19-20. Of these descendants, Zerubbabel's son Hananiah's line is traced in verse 21. Of Hananiah's descendant Shecaniah, six names are listed in verse 22 (Shemaiah and his five sons). Of Shemaiah's sons, Neariah's line is traced in verse 23. Three of his sons are listed. Seven sons of Eliezer, Neariah's son are named in verse 24.

The names in this list trace the descendants of David to the time that Judah went into exile in Babylon. Much took place during that time. God's people had gone from prosperity during the reigns of David and Solomon to losing everything and being held as captives in the land of their exile. The people in this list struggled deeply. They lost all they had and ended up as foreigners in a strange land.

#### For Consideration:

- As we begin this chapter we trace the line of David. How difficult would it have been for David and his sons to imagine that their descendants would know nothing of the prosperity they enjoyed? What impact do our actions today have on future generations?
- Some of the names on this list are of people who had an important impact on the life of their nation and those around them. Would your name be among those who had an impact for good on your neighbourhood and nation?

#### For Prayer:

- Take a moment to thank the Lord for the blessings He has given to you today.
- Ask the Lord to make you useful in the expansion of His kingdom. Ask Him to show you how you can make an impact for good on your society.

- Take a moment to pray for your children. Ask God to open their heart to Him and His ways. Ask Him to help them to represent Him well to the next generation.

## 4

# NOTABLE DESCENDANTS OF JUDAH AND SIMEON

---

Read 1 Chronicles 4:1-43

Chapter 4 is a list of notable men and women from the line of Judah. The attempt of the author is not to trace the line of Judah so much as it is to give us some high points in this line. We are introduced here to some key and notable individuals who came through the line of Judah.

We begin in verse 1 with the mention of five of Judah's descendants (Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur and Shobal). Perez was Judah's son but Hezron was his grandson. Carmi was the father of Achan who lived in the days of Joshua. Hur was the grandfather of Bezalel who worked with Moses on the construction of the tabernacle. These were men of distinction who had a role to play in the history of God's people.

Judah's descendant Shobal's line is traced in verse 2. His descendants would form the clans of the Zorathites (verse 2).

Etam seems to be quite unknown but there is a town bearing his name (see Judges 15:8; 1 Chronicles 4:32; 2 Chronicles 11:6). His descendants are listed in verses 3-4.

Next the descendants of Hur are listed. His descendants were the founders of the city Bethlehem (verse 4).

According to verse 5 Ashhur was the father or founder of the town of Tekoa. His family line is listed in verses 5-8.

Verses 9-10 mention a man by the name of Jabez. He is described as being more honourable than his brothers. His mother gave him the name Jabez because she had given birth to him in pain (verse 9). "Jabez" sounds like the Hebrew word for pain. While he had a rough beginning, Jabez proved to be more honourable than his brothers because of his prayer to the Lord. He prayed that God would bless him and enlarge his territory. He also asked that God's hand would be on him to keep him from harm so that he would be free from pain. God granted him this request.

These verses need to be examined in more detail. The fact that his name meant "pain" was an indication of the pain his mother felt in giving him birth. Obviously his birth was a difficult birth. The fact that Jabez asks God to be free from pain may also be significant. He may not have been a healthy person himself. He may have been sickly due to complications during the pregnancy and birth. If this is the case, he is crying out to God as a person who suffered. While he may have been physically unwell, he trusted in God. He had a keen desire to see God enlarge his territory despite these handicaps. Jabez did not trust his own strength (which may have been little). He trusted in the Lord God. God's hand was moved by the prayer of Jabez and He granted his request. God released him from pain

and expanded his territory. He may have been singled out here because of his disabilities. God accomplished more through him than through others who had not experienced his pain.

The descendants of Kelub, listed in verses 11-12, would become known as the men of Recah. We know very little of these men. Suffice it to say that they were known in that day.

The descendants of Kenaz in verses 13-14 were craftsmen. Also of note is the mention of the name Othniel, in this line, who was Israel's first judge (see Joshua 15:17).

Caleb (verse 15) lived in the days of Joshua. His family would become the founders of the Kenezites, descendants of Kenaz.

Jahallelel is next on the list. Four of his descendants are listed in verse 16.

Of note in Ezrah's descendants, in verses 17-18, is the fact that his son Mered married Bithiah, the daughter of the pharaoh of Egypt (verse 18). Mered's descendants through both his Judean wife and his Egyptian wife are listed in these verses. While it was not God's purpose that His children marry foreign wives, the names of these descendants are still noted here with the notable people of the nation.

Hodiah's descendants are traced down to the Garmites and the Maacathites in verse 19. Reference is made to the descendants of Shimon and Ishi in verses 20-21.



The descendants of Shelah, Judah's son, were known as linen workers (verse 21). Among them were rulers in the regions of Moab and Jashubi Lehem (verse 22). Shelah's descendants were also potters who lived in the region of Netaim and Gederah and worked for their king (verse 23).

In verses 1-23 the author made mention of notable descendants of Judah. In the remainder of the chapter he turns his attention to Simeon, another of Jacob sons.

In verse 24 he begins by listing five descendants of Simeon (Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, Shaul). He then traces the line of Shaul in verses 25-32. These descendants are tracked down to Shimei who had sixteen sons and six daughters (verse 27). Shimei's brothers did not have many children, so the clan of Simeon did not become as numerous as the clan of Judah (verse 27).

The descendants of Simeon lived in the towns of Beer-sheba, Moladah, Hazar Shual, Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad, Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag, Beth Marcaboth, Hazar Susim, Beth Biri and Shaaraim. These towns belonged to Simeon's descendants until the reign of David (verse 31).

Verses 32-33 list some surrounding villages where Simeon's descendants also lived. Some people believe that they had to move into the surrounding towns because of overpopulation. This is confirmed for us in verses 38 where the author tells us that the families of Simeon "increased greatly."

Verses 34-37 give us the names of clan leaders. Because of their rapid growth, various families had to leave their regions in search of pasture for their flocks (verse 39). They eventually found rich and good pasture and lived a quiet and peaceful existence (verse 40).

The Simeonites had to fight for more territory to live in. They attacked the Hamites and the Meunites (verse 41). God gave them victory and they completely destroyed them, settling in their land. Five hundred other Simeonites led by Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah and Uzziel invaded the hill country of Seir, killing off the Amalekites and settling in that region. God's hand was with them and gave them victory over their enemies.

#### For Consideration:

- Chapter 4 gives us a summary, from a genealogical point of view, of the notable men and women of Judah and Simeon. Many of these individuals were noted because of some contribution they made. Would your name be remembered for your contribution to the kingdom of God?
- Jabez, despite the obstacles in his way, was used of God, not because he was strong in himself, but because he prayed and trusted the Lord his God. He did what others with fewer handicaps could not do. What does this teach us about the source of our strength and blessing?
- Simeon's descendants are noted for conquering new territory. God gave them victory and they lived peacefully in the land they took from their enemies. What territory do you need to take from Satan?
- The people listed here in this chapter were at various places in their spiritual walk, but they all formed a part of God's purpose for the nation. Does God need perfect people to accomplish His purposes?

## For Prayer:

- Ask God to show you what your contribution to the kingdom of God needs to be. Ask Him to help you to make a difference for His glory in your generation.
- Ask God to expand your territory. Ask Him to open doors for you in your ministry and personal life.
- Ask the Lord to give you courage to stand up against the enemy and strip him of his territory.
- Thank the Lord that victory does not depend on us but on His blessing. Thank Him that He is a God who overcomes obstacles and gives victory to His people.

## 5

# THE TRIBES OF REUBEN, GAD AND MANASSEH

---

Read 1 Chronicles 5:1-26

Chapter 5 gives us some genealogical highlights from the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh. We begin with the tribe of Reuben.

### REUBEN

As the author begins to trace the line of Reuben, he reminds us of Reuben's sin. While he was the firstborn and should have had special privileges, Reuben had defiled his father's marriage bed. According to Genesis 35:22, Reuben slept with his father's concubine. Because he did this, his rights as firstborn were stripped from him and given to the sons of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh). Verse 2 makes it clear that while Judah was the strongest of the tribes, Joseph had the right of the firstborn. This was a right given to him because of Reuben's sin.

Four descendants of Reuben are listed in verse 3 (Hanoah, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi). Verse 4 mentions another descendant of Reuben by the name of Joel. Joel's

descendants are traced to a man by the name of Beerah in verse 6. Beerah was a leader among the Reubenites, who was sent into exile by the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser.

Verses 7-8 list further descendants of Reuben who settled in the region from Aroer to Nebo and Baal Meon. They occupied the land up to the edge of the desert that extended to the Euphrates River. These descendants had large quantities of livestock (verse 9). During Saul's reign, the Reubenites waged war against the Hagrites and defeated them. They occupied their territory east of Gilead (verse 10).

## GAD

In verses 11-22, the descendants of the tribe of Gad are listed. They lived next to the Reubenites in the region from Bashan to Salecah (verse 11). Joel was a leader among the tribe of Gad. He was assisted by Shapham, Janai and Shaphat (verse 12). Seven notable relatives are listed in verse 13.

Verse 14 lists another notable descendant of Gad by the name of Abihail. His line is traced to Ahi, a leader in the clan.

We discover from verse 16 that the Gadites lived in the region of Gilead and Bashan. They pastured flocks in this region and as far as Sharon. A record of their genealogy was recorded during the reign of Jotham king of Judah and Jeroboam king of Israel (verse 17).

From verse 18 we learn that the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh had a combined military force of 44,760 men who could handle the shield, sword

and bow. All these men were trained for battle. Together they waged war against the Hagrites, Jetur, Naphish and Nodab (verse 19).

It is interesting to note that while they had a good sized army, it was not their strength and training that gave them the victory. Verse 20 tells us that when they went out to war against the Hagrites and their allies, God gave them victory because they cried out to Him during the battle. Their victory was in the Lord and His strength. The forces of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh seized the livestock of the Hagrites. There were fifty thousand camels, two hundred fifty thousand sheep and two thousand donkeys. They also captured one hundred thousand people. Many others fell slain on the battle field because the Lord was with them and gave them victory (verse 22). They would occupy the land of the Hagrites and their allies until they were driven out at the time of their exile to Assyria.

## MANASSEH

Verses 23-26 make mention of the tribe of Manasseh. The author will further trace the line of Manasseh in 1 Chronicles 7. Mention seems to be made of Manasseh here because of their connection with Reuben and Gad.

Manasseh was blessed with numerous descendants. They had battled alongside Gad and Reuben and conquered the territory where they were would settle. Manasseh lived in the land from Bashan to Baal Hermon (verse 23). The heads of the families of Manasseh are listed in verse 24. They were known as brave warriors but unfaithful to God. They turned from God to the gods of the people of the land (verse 25). As a result, God stirred up the spirit of Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria. He waged war on the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, sending them into exile in

Assyria. They settled in the towns of Halah, Habor, Hara and by the river of Gozan in Assyria.

For Consideration:

- Because of Reuben's sin with his father's concubine, he sacrificed his right as firstborn. To what extent does our sin strip us of our rights? Does the forgiveness of God always restore that right or privilege?
- Notice that while the tribe of Reuben had sacrificed their right as firstborn, God still gave them victory over their enemies. What does this tell us about the grace and forgiveness of God?
- Verse 20 tells us that God gave the army of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh victory because they cried out to Him in their battle. What does this tell us about the source of our strength? How tempting is it to trust in our own human strength?
- While Joseph served the Lord with all his heart, his descendants in the tribe of Manasseh were known to have turned their back on God. Do we have any real guarantee that because we serve the Lord our children and their descendants will follow Him as well? How important is it that we pass down our faith to the next generation?

## For Prayer:

- Have your past sins kept you from serving in the capacity God has called you to serve? Take a moment to seek the Lord's forgiveness. Ask Him to restore you.
- Thank the Lord that He is willing to bless us even when we fall short of His standard.
- Ask the Lord to forgive you for trusting your own strength. Ask Him to be your guide and strength for each day.
- Take a moment to pray for your children. Ask God to help you to pass your faith on to them. Ask Him to help your children to make that faith their own.



## 6

### THE DESCENDANTS OF LEVI

---

Read 1 Chronicles 6:1-81

Chapter 6 traces the tribe of Levi. It should be remembered that the tribe of Levi was given the responsibility of being priests and temple servants. We will take a moment here to examine the general flow of this chapter and what it tells us about the descendants of this tribe.

Levi had three sons (Gershon, Kohath and Merari). The author mentions Kohath first. Of his four sons (Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel), Amram's line is followed from verse 3. Of significance here is that Amram's children were Aaron, Moses and Miriam (verse 3). These three individuals would play an important role in the spiritual purposes of God for the nation.

Aaron would become the High Priest of God's people. His priestly line is traced from verse 3. Four sons of Aaron are listed in verse 3. Of these four sons, Nadab and Abihu died because they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord (see Leviticus 10:1-2). Aaron's line, therefore, is traced through his third son Eleazar.

Eleazar's descendants are listed down to the days of Nebuchadnezzar who took God's people into exile (verses 4-

15). Of special note in verse 10 is Azariah who served as priest in the temple Solomon built in Jerusalem. Eleazar's descendant Jehozadak was deported into exile in the days of Nebuchadnezzar (verse 15).

From verses 16-19 the author give us a brief summary of the descendants of Levi. Verse 16 again lists the names of his three sons (Kohath, Gershon and Merari). Gershon's sons were Libni and Shimei (verse 17). The sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel (verse 18). Merari's sons were Mahli and Mushi (verse 19).

From this brief summary, in verses 16-19, the author moves on to a more detailed list of the Levite clans traced according to their fathers. In verses 20-21 he traces the clans of Gershon. The clans of Kohath are traced in verses 22-28. A list of the clans of Merari is found in verses 29-30.

Levi's sons each had different responsibilities in the work of the tabernacle. The Gershonites were responsible for the care of the coverings, curtains and ropes used on the exterior of the tent (see Numbers 3:25-26). The Kohathites were given the task of caring for the articles in the sanctuary, including the Ark of the Covenant, the lampstands and other articles used in ministering (see Numbers 3:27-31). Finally the Merarites took care of the frames, posts and crossbars used to hold up the tabernacle (see Numbers 3:35-37).

David put various individuals from each of these clans in charge of music (verses 31-32). Verses 33-48 appear to be a list of the men who served with their sons in the ministry of music in the tabernacle and later in the temple in the days of Solomon. It should be noted that the author traces the names of the musicians from the three clans

back to Levi. In verse 33-38 he traces the Kohathites from Heman the musician back to Levi. Verses 39-43 trace the Gershonites involved in the musical ministry of the tabernacle and temple from Asaph, associate of Heman the Kohathite, back to Levi. Finally the line of the Merarite musicians is traced from Ethan back to Levi in verses 44-47.

We understand from verse 49 that the duty of presenting the offerings before the Lord was assigned to Aaron and his descendants only. Aaron was a Kohathite. Verses 50-53 trace the descendants of Aaron.

Verses 54-81 give us a list of the cities and locations that were given to the descendants of Levi as their inheritance. It should be remembered that Levi was not given a plot of land like the other tribes. Instead, his descendants were spread throughout Israel so that they could offer their priestly services to each tribe.

Verses 54-60 give us the list of cities and locations that were allotted to Aaron's direct descendants. These cities were given to them from two tribes of Israel. Judah gave the descendants of Aaron the cities of Hebron, Libnah, Jattir, Eshtemoa, Hilen, Debir, Ashan, Juttah and Beth Shemesh with their pastureland (verse 57-59). The tribe of Benjamin gave the descendants of Aaron Gibeon, Geba, Alemeth and Anathoth with their pastureland. The descendants of Aaron received thirteen cities in all as their inheritance in Judah and Benjamin. The fields and villages around the city of Hebron were allotted to Caleb who lived in the days of Joshua (verse 55).

The rest of the Kohathite clan (those not direct descendants of Aaron) was allotted ten towns from the tribe of Manasseh (verse 61). The Gershonites received thirteen

towns from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and Manasseh (verse 62). The Merarites were allotted twelve towns from the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Zebulun (verse 63). Verses 64-81 give us a list of all the cities given to the tribe of Levi by the various tribes of Israel.

Each tribe was expected to provide land for the Levites. In return, these Levites would be their spiritual representatives before God.

#### For Consideration:

- We see here how each Levite clan had a different responsibility before God. God's purpose was not the same for every person. What role has God given you to play?
- Notice the role of music in the worship of the Lord. Various individuals were set aside to function as musicians in the worship of God. What role does music play in the worship of God today? Why do you suppose music is important in worship?
- We learn from this passage that the Levites had to sacrifice their privilege to have their own tribal territory to serve God's people. What sacrifices do servants of God have to make today?
- Notice that the various tribes of Israel had to be willing to sacrifice towns for the Levitical priests. What sacrifices do you make for God's servants today?

## For Prayer:

- Ask God to help you to know what He has called you to do. Ask Him to help you to be faithful to that call.
- Thank the Lord for the role music has played in your worship of God.
- If you are a minister of the Gospel today, ask the Lord to help you to be willing to make the sacrifices necessary for His kingdom.
- Ask the Lord to show you what sacrifices you can make for His servants in the gospel.

# 7

## **THE DESCENDANTS OF ISSACHAR, BENJAMIN, NAPHTALI, MANASSEH, EPHRAIM AND ASHER**

---

Read 1 Chronicles 7:1-8:40

In chapter 7 the author briefly examines the line of six tribes of Israel. Chapter 8 traces the descendants of Benjamin in greater detail.

### **ISSACHAR'S DESCENDANTS (7:1-5)**

The author begins in chapter 7 with the tribe of Issachar (7:1-5). Four sons of Issachar are listed in verse 1 (Tola, Puah, Jashub and Shimron). The line of Issachar's son Tola is traced in verse 2. During David's reign, Tola's descendants were listed as having a total of 22,600 fighting men.

Verse 3 traces the line of another important person in the line of Issachar by the name of Uzzi. Uzzi's son Izrahiah

had five sons who were chiefs. The descendants of Uzzi had 36,000 men ready for battle (verse 4).

The descendants of Tola and Uzzi were obviously the largest and most significant of all the families of Issachar. They were not the only families, however. While the combined total of fighting men from Tola and Uzzi's descendants was 58,600, verse five tells us that the tribe of Issachar listed 87,000 men ready to do battle.

### BENJAMIN'S DESCENDANTS (7:6-12)

Benjamin is next on the list of tribes. Three sons are listed in verse 6 for Benjamin (Bela, Beker and Jadiael). The author traces the line of each of these sons briefly in chapter 7 but will go into greater detail in chapter 8.

Bela's descendants are listed in verse 7. Their records indicated that they had 22,034 fighting men. Beker's descendants are listed in verse 8. They had a total of 20,200 men ready for battle. Jadiael's family line counted 17,200 men ready to go to war (verse 10).

Verse 12 tells us that from Benjamin also came the Shuppites and Huppites, descendants of Ir, and the Hushites, descendants of Aher. Genesis 46:21 makes reference to Huphim as being a descendant of Benjamin. Numbers 26:38-39 list Hupham and Shupham as his descendants.

### NAPHTALI'S DESCENDANTS (7:13)

Naphtali's descendants are listed next in verse 13. Only four of Naphtali's descendants are listed in this genealogy. Of special note is the fact they are said to be the descendants of Bilhah, Jacob's concubine (see Genesis 30:3-8).

## MANASSEH'S DESCENDANTS (7:14-19)

The descendants of Manasseh are recorded in verses 14-19. Two descendants are given for Manasseh. Both of them appear to be sons through his Aramean concubine. Their names were Asriel and Makir. Makir would become the father of Gilead. He had two sons, through his wife Maacah, by the names of Peresh and Sheresh (verse 16). This line is traced in verses 16-19.

## EPHRAIM'S DESCENDANTS (7:20-29)

Ephraim's line is recorded in verse 20-29. Ezer and Elead were killed by men of Gath when they went down to seize their livestock. Ephraim mourned many days for them. Verse 22 tells us that his relatives came to comfort him in his loss. His wife became pregnant and gave birth to a son they named Beriah, which sounds like the Hebrew word for "misfortune" (verse 23). This was an indication of how tragic this event was for Ephraim.

Verse 24 tells us that Ephraim's daughter Sheerah built Lower and Upper Beth Horon as well as Uzzan Sheerah. Note here that Ephraim's descendants are traced to Joshua (verse 27). A list of their settlements is recorded for us in verses 28-29.

## ASHER'S DESCENDANTS (7:30-40)

Finally, the line of Asher is traced in verses 30-40. Four sons of Asher are recorded in verse 30 (Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi and Beriah). We also have the name of his daughter Serah.



Some notable descendants are mentioned in the remainder of the chapter. We have a list of the descendants of Beriah in verse 31-34. Helem's descendants are noted in verse 35-36. Jether's line can be found in verse 38 and the line of Ulla in verse 39.

The descendants of Asher were noted as being brave warriors and outstanding leaders. They had 26,000 men ready to do battle (verse 40).

### MORE ABOUT BENJAMIN'S DESCENDANTS (8:1-40)

In chapter 8 the author further traces the line of Benjamin. 1 Chronicles 8:28 tells us that this list is of the family heads and chiefs of Benjamin.

Verse 1 lists five sons of Benjamin (Bela, Ashbel, Aharah, Nohah and Rapha). Bela's descendants are listed in verses 3-5.

The second family head was Ehud. His descendants lived in the region of Geba and were among those who were deported to Manahath. Manahath is a region in Judah. The details of this deportation are unclear. The descendants of Ehud, who were heads of families, are listed in verse 7.

The third family leader from the tribe of Benjamin is Shaharaim. Shaharaim divorced his wives Hushim and Baara. He moved to the country of Moab for a time and had sons through his wife Hodesh. The names of these sons are listed in verse 9-10. The sons Shaharaim had through his divorced wife Hushim were named Abitub and Elpaal (verse 11).

Elpaal's descendants are in verses 12-16. Three of his sons were credited with building the city of Ono, Lod and the surrounding villages (verse 12). Beriah and Shema lived in Aijalon and drove out the inhabitants of Gath (verse 13). Obviously these were powerful leaders and heads of families. Beriah's descendants are recorded in verses 14-16.

The next family leader to be recognized is Shimei (verse 21). His family line is found in verses 17-21. The family line of Shashak is recorded in verses 22-25. Jeroham's descendants are named in verse 26-27.

Jeiel, the father of Gibeon lived in the region of Gibeon (verse 29). His wife was Maacah. Ten of his sons are listed in verses 30-32.

In verses 33-38 the author takes time to trace the line of Ner because of its importance in the nation of Israel. Ner was the father of Kish who would become the father of Saul, the first king of Israel. Four of Saul's sons are listed in verse 33 (Jonathan, Malki-Shua, Abinadab and Esh-Baal). The line of Jonathan is traced in verses 34-38.

The final family leader mentioned in chapter 8 is Eshek (verse 39). His descendants were known as brave warriors who could handle the bow. Three sons are listed in verse 39. Altogether he had 150 sons and grandsons recorded in this family but not listed in this passage.

We catch a glimpse here of the incredible way in which God had been blessing His people. They were growing in number, establishing cities and conquering nations. They enjoyed seeing their children and grandchildren grow up. God was working in their midst.

For Consideration:

- Many of the tribes traced here have a record of the number of men ready to do battle. While the battle we have to do today is not necessarily a physical battle, we are called to a spiritual battle. How many people in your spiritual family are ready to do spiritual battle with the enemy? Do you have men and women you can call on in times of spiritual battle?
- The author notes the descendants of the concubines of various families. These children were not ignored even though they were not always considered to have the same standing as those born to wives. What does this tell us about the importance of every child?
- In the midst of all the lists of names in this chapter we read how Ephraim grieved deeply over the death of his two sons. What does the fact that this is noted here in this genealogy tell us about the personal nature of this list of names? The author has time to record the grief and pain of one man over his sons. How important are people to the author here?
- Note that Ephraim's daughter Sheerah built Lower and Upper Beth-Horon as well as Uzzan Sheerah. What does this tell us about the freedom given to women who had strong leadership skills in the Old Testament?

### For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to help you to be ready to do battle with the enemy. Ask Him to raise up men and women in our generation who can battle Satan and his demons.
- Thank the Lord that each person is important in His eyes. Ask Him to help you to see people as He sees them.
- Thank the Lord for the way His blessing is obvious on His people in these chapters. Take a moment to thank the Lord for His blessing on your family.

## 8

# THOSE WHO RESETTLED IN ISRAEL AFTER THE EXILE

---

Read 1 Chronicles 9:1-44

Chapter 9 gives us a list of those who resettled in the land of Israel after Israel's captivity in Babylon had come to an end. We understand this from the explanation in verses 1 and 2.

Notice in verse 1 that the people of Judah were taken captive into Babylon because of their unfaithfulness to the Lord. It was not because Babylon was more powerful than Israel that they went into captivity. It was because the Lord was teaching them a lesson. God's people had often conquered people more powerful than them. The cause of their exile was because they had turned from the Lord.

The list that follows is a list of the first people to resettle in the towns of Israel after they returned from their captivity. Notice that the first people to return were priests, Levites and the temple servants. This is significant. God was giving these religious leaders the opportunity to prepare the land for others who would return after them. These priests and Levites, being the first to return, could repair the

temple and restore worship in preparation for those who followed. God wanted to be first in the lives of the returning exiles.

Verses 4-6 give us a list of some key individuals who returned to the land of Israel from the tribe of Judah. Numbers 26:20 is helpful in our understanding of verses 4-6:

The descendants of Judah by their clans were:  
through Shelah, the Shelanite clan;  
through Perez, the Perezite clan;  
through Zerah, the Zerahite clan."

Representatives from each of these sons of Judah returned home from exile. Uthai, a descendant of Perez (verse 4), the Shilonites, descendants of Shelah (verse 5) and the Zarahites, descendants of Zerah were all among the first to return from exile. In total there were 690 people from Judah returned from exile.

The next list contains names of those who returned from exile from the tribe of Benjamin (verses 7-9). Four key families are listed here. Sallu (verse 7), Ibneiah, Elah and Meshullam (verse 8). These men were heads of families. The total number of people from the tribe of Benjamin who returned in this first group was 956 (verse 9).

Verses 10-13 give us the names of the priests who returned from exile. There are five names given in verses 10-13 (Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, Jakin, Azariah and Adaiah). Notice in the case of Azariah (verse 9) that the author traces his line to the priest Ahitub who was in charge of the house of God. Ahitub was the grandson of Eli the priest who served in the days of King Saul. Adaiah's line is traced back to Immer the priest who likely served in the days of King David. It would have been very important for the line of these

men to be traced back to Aaron because the role of priest was given only to his descendants. The priests listed were also heads of families in Israel. The total number from the priestly families who returned with this first group was 1,760 (verse 13).

Next is the list of Levites who were among the first to return from exile (verses 14-34). The Levites served in the temple, but because they were not descendants of Aaron, were unable to offer sacrifices to the Lord. This list takes special note of the Levites who served as gatekeepers and musicians. It is interesting that the gatekeepers and musicians were among the first to return from exile. Again it shows us that God was interested not only in the administration of the work at the temple but also in the music and worship that would take place there.

Verses 14-16 list seven Levitical heads of families. These names include Shemaiah (verse 14), Bakbakkar, Heresh, Galal, Mattaniah (verse 15), Obadiah and Berekiah (verse 16). A brief genealogy is included for some of these men.

Verses 17-32 gives the names of the Levitical gatekeepers and tells us something of their responsibilities. Verse 17 begins with the names of the principle gatekeepers (Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman and their brothers). Shallum was the chief of the gatekeepers. All of these men belonged to the tribe of Levi (verse 18).

Shallum was from the family of the Korahites. He and his family were responsible for guarding the thresholds of the Tabernacle. This responsibility had been passed on to them from their fathers (verse 19). This was an important position. In earlier times in Israel Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, had been in charge of the gatekeepers. In the

days of David, Zechariah, son of Meshelemiah, was also a gatekeeper (see 1 Chronicles 26:1).

The gatekeepers numbered 212. They had been assigned to their positions by David and Samuel the prophet (verse 22). They were to guard the gates of the house of the Lord, keeping out anything that would defile the temple. They would serve over a seven-day period (verse 25). Their responsibility was not an easy one as they would have to be constantly looking for anything that would defile the temple. This would mean turning people away or forbidding them to take certain objects into the temple.

We need "gatekeepers" in our day as well. These individuals will not look or function in the same way today but their role is still as important. The gatekeepers of our day are those with discernment and wisdom who warn the church about things that have entered to defile it. They warn us of worldly ways and philosophies that often creep into our churches. They draw our attention to sin and evil that clings to us and hinders the work of God. These individuals are not always well accepted, but play a vital role in keeping the church healthy.

Verse 26 tells us that the four principle gatekeepers were also entrusted with the responsibility for keeping the rooms and treasuries of the house of God. Notice in verse 27 that these individuals would spend the night stationed around the house of God. They would lock the doors at night and open them in the morning. Twenty-four hours a day the temple was guarded by these gatekeepers. They were always watching for anything that would defile God's house. The enemy was always seeking an opportunity to defile the temple. They were to be always on guard.



Other gatekeepers were in charge of various articles used in the temple service (verse 28). These individuals counted these articles every time they were brought in or taken out. They assured that nothing was missing. Still others were in charge of the furnishings of the temple and sanctuary as well as the flour, wine, oil, spices and incense used in the services of the temple (verse 29). They were not permitted to mix these spices. This was the responsibility of the priests alone (verse 30).

A Levite named Mattithiah was entrusted with the responsibility of baking the offering bread (verses 31). Some of his brothers were given the responsibility of setting the bread out on the table every Sabbath (verse 32).

All these responsibilities were taken very seriously. It was of utmost importance that the worship of God be guarded. Nothing impure was permitted to enter God's presence in the temple. Every article and piece of furniture used in the worship of God was kept pure and accounted for.

Verses 33-34 make mention of another responsibility given to the Levites. The musicians had a very important role to play in the worship of the Lord God. They stayed in the various rooms of the temple and were exempt from other duties (verse 33). This shows us the importance of the role of musician. They were to give all their time to focus on the ministry of music and were not to be distracted by other duties.

Chapter 9 concludes by tracing the line of Saul and Jonathan. The author begins with a man by the name of Jeiel. Jeiel's ten sons are listed in verses 35-37.

## JEIEL

Jeiel lived in Gibeon. His wife's name was Maacah, (9:36). He had ten sons, listed for us in 1 Chronicles 9:36-37. Of these ten sons the line of two are briefly traced in verses 38-43.

Jeiel's son Mikloth was the father of Shimeam. He is mentioned in verse 38. They lived near their relatives in Jerusalem.

Jeiel's son Ner is of particular interest to the writer. In verse 39 he traces Ner's descendants to Saul and Jonathan. Also in verse 39 he tells us the names of three of Jonathan's sons (Milki-Shua, Abinadab and Esh-Baal). It is believed that Esh-Baal was also known as Ish-Bosheth.

Verse 40 speaks about Jonathan's son Merib-Baal (also known as Mephibosheth) to whom David showed kindness for the sake of his father Jonathan (see 2 Samuel 9:6-7). The line of Merib-Baal (Mephibosheth) is then traced in verses 40-44.

### For Consideration:

- Why is it significant that the priests and Levites were the first to return from exile? How was God showing His people that He wanted to be first in their lives when they returned from their captivity? Is God first in our society or in your personal life? Are there any areas of your life where God is not first?

- What was the responsibility of the gatekeeper? Who are the "gatekeepers" of our day? From what does the church need to be protected today? What things creep into the church of our day?
- God gave to each of the Levites a particular responsibility. Some of those responsibilities may seem small in our day but they were nonetheless very important. What responsibility has God given you?
- The musicians were not given any other duties in the work of the Lord. What does this tell us about the importance of music in the worship of God?

For Prayer:

- Ask God to show you any area of your life where He is not first.
- Thank God for the "gatekeepers" of our day who have God-given discernment and wisdom to warn us of dangers or defilements in the church today. Ask God to help you to be more discerning.
- Ask the Lord to show you anything that has crept into your life that has defiled your relationship with Him.
- Ask God to show you what responsibility He has given you. Ask Him to give you grace to be faithful in that task.
- Thank the Lord for the role of music in worship. Ask God to bless those in your church who are involved in this important ministry.

## 9

### DEFEAT OR

### VICTORY IN DISGUISE?

---

Read 1 Chronicles 10:1-14

1 Chronicles is really the story of David and his reign. Chapter 10 introduces the reign of David by telling us about the death of Saul and the heirs to his throne. While Saul had been chosen king, his disobedience to the Lord brought his downfall. God rejected Saul and handed the leadership of the nation to David, whom Saul had been trying to kill.

In verse 1 we find Saul and his sons fighting against the Philistine army. The Philistines were pressing hard against the Israelites. Verse 12 tells us that many men of Israel died in the battle on Mount Gilboa. Many more fled from the battle. Israel suffered serious casualties.

Notice in verse 2 that the Philistines pressed hard after Saul and his sons. Saul's three sons (Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua) died in the battle. Verse 3 tells us that the battle grew fierce around Saul. He was the primary target of the Philistine army. The Philistine archers eventually overtook Saul and wounded him.

Saul knew that if the Philistines were to capture him, things would not go well for him. He believed that they would torture and abuse him. He preferred to die rather than to be humiliated and tortured at the hands of his enemies. In verse 4 he pleaded with his armour-bearer to draw his sword and kill him before he fell into the hands of the Philistines. Saul's armour-bearer was not willing to kill Saul, so Saul fell on his own sword. Seeing what had happened to his master, the armour-bearer fell on his sword and died. On that day Saul and his three sons all died (verse 6). This left Israel with no king or heir to the throne. God was making it clear that He had another king for His people.

When the people of Israel saw that Saul and his sons had died, they fled the battle leaving their towns to the Philistines who came and occupied them (verse 7). The next day, while the Philistines went through the region stripping the dead of any valuables they discovered Saul and his sons on Mount Gilboa. They stripped Saul of his valuables, and took his head and his armour. They sent messengers throughout the region to proclaim the news of Saul's death (verse 9). They put Saul's armour in their temple and hung his head in the temple of Dagon their god (verse 10).

That day, the Philistines rejoiced over their victory. They had defeated Israel and killed their king. In the presence of their idols and their god Dagon, they proclaimed victory over Israel and their God.

We need to take a moment to look at these events from the perspective of God. The picture before us is one of a defeated Israel who had lost their king, their towns and their pride. Their land was now occupied by Philistine warriors. These warriors were rejoicing in the presence of their idols and gods. They were celebrating their seeming

victory over the God of Israel and His people. This is how the picture looked from a human perspective.

From God's perspective, however, things were very different. Saul had turned his back on God, choosing to live in rebellion and disobedience. He had led the people of Israel into rebellion against God, stripping them of His blessings. For many years, Saul had been trying to kill David, the man God had chosen to be the next king over His people. David would restore God's people and lead them into a time of prosperity and blessing like they had never seen before. By allowing the Philistines to conquer His people and wipe out the family of Saul, God was preparing His people for something better. By this means, God humbled His people and prepared them to receive their new king who would lead them into a time of victory and prosperity under the blessing of God. Saul stood in the way of that blessing. While the enemies rejoiced over their victory, God saw beyond this to the accomplishing of His greater purposes for them as a nation.

Sometimes what appears to be defeat is really the beginning of tremendous victory. Sometimes God has to strip us before He can clothe us with richer blessing. Sometimes He has to kill our visions and pride in order to give us greater vision and purpose. What appeared to be defeat was great victory for God's people. Have you been experiencing "defeat" in your life? Remember that God is able to use this "defeat" to accomplish His great victory in you.

When the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard that Saul had been killed and that the enemy had beheaded him, they came with their valiant men and took Saul's body and the bodies of his sons and brought them back to Jabesh. There they gave them a proper burial (verses 11, 12). It should be noted that in 1 Samuel 11 one of Saul's first

activities as king was to come to the rescue of Jabesh Gilead when Nahash the Ammonite threatened to destroy them. Obviously, the people of Jabesh Gilead never forgot Saul's kindness to them.

As he concludes this chapter, the author makes it clear that Saul died because he had been unfaithful to the Lord and did not keep His Word. Instead of consulting the Lord God, Saul consulted mediums for guidance (verse 13). Because of these things, God put Saul to death and handed the kingdom over to David (verse 14). In all this the purposes of the Lord were being accomplished.

For Consideration:

- Saul was stripped of his position and died because he refused to seek the Lord and live in obedience. What does this teach us about the importance of seeking God in our personal lives and ministries? How tempting is it to do what is right in our own eyes instead of seeking God and His will?
- We see in this chapter how the enemy declared victory over the people of God. What appeared to be victory for the enemy, however, was in reality the beginning of something great for God's people. What "defeats" have you experienced in life? How has God used them to accomplish good?
- God sees things from a very different perspective. What does this teach us about how we need to seek Him and His purpose rather than trusting in our own wisdom and insight?

- God needed to strip Israel of her king and her pride before clothing them in His greater blessing. What does God need to strip from you to prepare you for His greater purpose?

For Prayer:

- Ask God to give you grace to trust Him more when things don't seem to be going as they should.
- Ask God to help you to seek Him and His purpose for your life. Ask Him to forgive you for not listening to Him or seeking His direction.
- Thank the Lord that He is able to take what appears to be defeat and accomplish His purpose through it.
- Ask the Lord to strip you of anything that would keep you from experiencing His deeper blessing in your life and ministry.
- Take some time this week to spend with the Lord asking Him to show you if you are where He wants you to be and doing what He wants you to do.



# 10

## DAVID'S REIGN

### ESTABLISHED

---

Read 1 Chronicles 11:1-47

In the previous chapter we saw how God stripped Saul of his kingship so that it could be handed over to David. This process of becoming king had taken quite a long time for David. He had been chased by Saul and lived in different places in an attempt to escape with his life. In God's time, David would become king. David waited patiently for the promise of God to be fulfilled. He did not force the door open but waited for God's timing. We would do well to learn this lesson.

When Saul was killed, all Israel came to David at Hebron. They reminded him and each other that during the time that Saul had been king, David led Israel on their military campaigns. He had proven to be a capable leader. They also reminded him that God had called him to be a shepherd of His people (verse 2). They knew David was qualified to be king, not only because of his ability, but also because of his calling from God. Both of these are required if we are to engage in any ministry. Ability is not enough. We also must be called of God. It is quite possible for us

to do things skilfully but do them outside of the will and calling of God for our lives.

That day the elders of Israel came to Hebron, made an agreement with David and crowned him as king over the whole land. This was in fulfilment of the promise God had given David through Samuel the prophet (verse 3).

Verses 4-9 tell us how David captured the city of Jerusalem and made it his place of residence. Jerusalem was, at that point, called Jebus, and its inhabitants were the Jebusites (verse 4). The city was well defended (it is described in verse 5 as a fortress).

David told his men that whoever led an attack on the Jebusites would become his commander-in-chief. Joab, son of Zeruiah, went up first and David gave him the position of commander-in-chief. David was successful in capturing the city (verse 5).

David lived in the fortress at Jerusalem, which would eventually become known as the City of David (verse 7). He built up the city and fortified it even more. Under the blessing of the Lord, David would become a powerful king (verse 9).

God blessed David with mighty men. Many of these men were extraordinary in bravery and skill. The remainder of chapter 11 speaks about the mighty men God gave to David as warriors. These men supported David in his kingship and were instrumental in expanding his territory and strengthening his reign. While these men, for the most part are relatively unknown, they were a vital part of David's army.

The fact of the matter is that we all need people to stand with us. Many of these individuals are unnamed and work behind the scenes, but they are all important. Personally, I could not do the ministry God has called me to do by myself. God has raised up a team of translators, proof readers, as well as financial and prayer supporters to stand with me as I work on these books. Like David, we need to be thankful for the people who stand with us and support our efforts. Maybe God is calling you to be a supporter of someone else's ministry.

Of David's mighty men there were some that stood above the others in bravery and strength. Three men in particular are mentioned in verses 11-21.

Jashobeam was the chief of the officers. He killed three hundred men in one encounter (verse 11).

Eleazar was another mighty warrior. He was with David at Pas Dammim when the Philistines gathered for battle. David's men fled from the Philistines but Eleazar and his friends stood their place in a field of barley, defending it against the Philistines. God blessed their efforts and gave them victory (verses 13-14).

In verses 15 we read of an encounter between David and the Philistines. The Philistines had camped in the Valley of Rephaim. A Philistine garrison was also in the city of Bethlehem (verse 16). David and his men were weary in battle. In verse 17 David longed for water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem. When the three mighty warriors heard of David's desire they broke through the enemy lines, drew water from the well at the Bethlehem gate and brought it back to David (verse 18). They willingly risked their lives for David.

When David realized what these men had done, he refused to drink the water saying:

God forbid that I should do this! Should I drink the blood of these men who went at the risk of their lives? (verse 19)

This water had cost too much. David's men had risked their lives for this water. David poured it out as a thanksgiving offering to the Lord.

Abishai was another mighty warrior. He was chief of David's three mighty warriors although he was not included in their number. He fought against three hundred men and killed them (verse 20). He was as famous for his exploits as the three mighty warriors.

Benaiah was also a valiant warrior of note. He struck down two of Moab's best men. He also demonstrated his bravery by going down into a pit on a snowy day to kill a lion (verse 22). In verse 23 we read how he struck down a seven and a half foot Egyptian (2.3 meters) who had a spear the size of a weaver's rod. All he had to fight this Egyptian was a club. Benaiah snatched the Philistine giant's spear, turned it against him and killed him (verse 23). Understandably, David put Benaiah in charge of his bodyguard (verse 25).

Notice in verse 25 the reference to the Thirty. It appears that while those men did not measure up to the same standard as the Three they were also famous for their brave deeds.

Verses 26-47 give us the names of David's mighty men. In these verses the names of over 46 warriors from various regions are listed. All of these men distinguished themselves in support of David and his kingship. God

surrounded David with mighty men so that through him, he could conquer the enemy on all sides.

#### For Consideration:

- Not only did David prove that he had the ability to be king but he also had a call from God. Is it possible to have ability but not be called of God to a particular ministry or task? Why is a calling important?
- David and his men conquered the city of Jerusalem and established it as their home base. This city was not easy to conquer but God gave them victory. What strongholds in your life need to be conquered? What encouragement do you take from what David and his men did here?
- David was successful not only because God was with him but also because God had given him mighty warriors to stand with him. Who has God given to stand with you in life and ministry?
- David's mighty men refused to give up. They stood their ground and fought against the enemy. Do you have the same courage today? What has God given you to defend? Have you been faithful?

#### For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to give you the assurance of your calling. Thank Him that He wants to use you in the work of His kingdom.

- Ask God to show you any strongholds in your life that need to be broken down. Ask Him for courage to stand against those strongholds.
- Ask God to give you courage to stand your ground and not give in, even when things become difficult. Thank the Lord that He is able to keep you in these times.
- Take a moment to thank the Lord for the friends and supporters He has given you, who stand with you in your time of need.

# 11

## DAVID'S ARMY

---

Read 1 Chronicles 12:1-40

God had been preparing David to be king. Part of the calling involved giving him favour and support. While David was called to be the leader, he needed a team with him if he was going to complete the task given to him by God. The same is true for us today. Personally, I could not do the work I have to do were it not for the team of financial supporters, prayer warriors, counsellors, editors and proof readers, to name just a few. God has not called us to work alone. He has designed things in such a way that we are dependent on each other for support, skills and encouragement. When God calls us to a work, He also calls men and women to stand with us in that work.

God began the process of building up a team before David was anointed king. While David was at Ziklag in Philistia, banished from the presence of Saul (see 1 Samuel 27), God brought mighty men to stand with him and help him in battle. Verse 2 tells us that these men were armed with bows and able to shoot arrows or sling stones either with their right hand or their left. Many of those who came to David at Ziklag were from the tribe of Benjamin. Verses 3-7 give us a list of these men. We can only imagine the encouragement that this would have been to David. Maybe

God has raised up a team of men and women to stand with you in your need.

During David's time in the desert running from Saul, men of Gad left Saul and came to support David. These men risked their lives for David. They left the comfort of their homes to live in the desert because they believed in David and his leadership. Again we must see the hand of God in this. We can only imagine how encouraged David would have been to see the dedication of these men to him in a time when he was running to save his life.

The men of Gad who defected to David in the desert were brave and swift warriors ready for battle (verse 8). Verses 9-13 give us the names of eleven of their commanders. Verse 14 tells us that the least of these commanders was a match for a hundred and the greatest was a match for a thousand. They proved their worth by crossing the Jordan when it was overflowing its banks and putting to flight those living in the valleys to the east and the west (verse 15). They were valiant and brave warriors and a welcome addition to the fighting men of David.

We have already seen from verses 1-7 that the men who joined David in Ziklag were mainly from the tribe of Benjamin. In verse 16 we read that more men from Benjamin came to David in his desert stronghold. They were accompanied by men from Judah. David came out to meet them, but was somewhat suspicious. He questioned whether they had come to join him or to infiltrate his men in order to defeat him (verse 17). He told them that if they were sincere he was more than willing to have them join his men but warned them that if they betrayed him, the Lord God would be their judge.



At that point the Spirit of God came on one of the men present. His name was Amasai, who was chief of the group of mighty men known as "The Thirty." He spoke from the Spirit and said:

We are yours, O David! We are with you, O son of Jesse! Success, success to you, and success to those who help you, for your God will help you (verse 18).

Obviously, the Lord used these words in a powerful way to confirm to David that the men of Benjamin and Judah were sincere. God confirmed to David that it was safe to allow these men into his camp. David received them and made them leaders of his raiding bands (verse 18).

Men from the tribe of Manasseh also defected from Saul and came to David. The men of Manasseh came to him when David was going to wage war against Saul with the Philistines (verse 19). God did not allow David to fight Saul. The story of this incident is recorded for us in 1 Samuel 29:1-11. Verse 20 gives us a list of seven leaders from Manasseh who came to David when he was living in Ziklag among the Philistines. These leaders helped David against raiding bands. They were all brave warriors (verse 21).

Day after day men came to help David (verse 22). God built his military force by this means until he had a very powerful army. His army is described in verse 22 as being like the "army of God." It was indeed an army from God for David. The hand of God was on David at this time preparing him for the day he would be Israel's king.

After the death of Saul, David was anointed king over Judah, in Hebron. The rest of Israel chose to be faithful to

Saul's line and put Ish-Bosheth, his son, on the throne. The kingdom was divided. God again met David at this time. He sent men to him at Hebron to strengthen his army (verse 23). A list of those who came to David at this time is recorded for us in the remaining verses of this chapter. Notice that men from every tribe in Israel stood behind David and his leadership. God was clearly giving him favour in the eyes of the entire nation.

In the verses that follow we have a list of men who turned to David at this time. Verses 24-37 can be summarized in the following chart:

TRIBE	Men who came to David	Verse
Judah	6,800 men	24
Simeon	7,100 men	25
Levi	4,600 men 3,770 descendants of Aaron 22 from family of Zadok	26-28
Benjamin	3,000 men	29
Ephraim	20,800 men	30
Manasseh	18,000 men	31
Issachar	200 wise chiefs	32
Zebulun	50,000 men	33
Naphtali	37,000 men 1,000 officers	34

Dan	28,600 men	35
Asher	40,000	36
Reuben Gad Manasseh (east)	120,000 men	37

Those listed here in these verses number over 300,000. God's blessing was beyond anything David could have imagined. God surrounded him with support and encouragement in this time of his life.

All these men who came to David before he was anointed king over all of Israel were powerful fighting men. Notice in verse 38 that these men volunteered to serve. David did not have to go looking for men to serve in his army—they came to him. They were of one mind to make David king. They believed in him and his leadership and stood firmly behind him. Again we must see the hand of God in this, preparing David for the work He had for him.

On the day they came to anoint David king, the families of these men supplied them with enough food and drink for three days. They celebrated and rejoiced together for those three days (verse 39). People came from far away tribes, bringing food on donkeys, camels, mules and oxen. They were amply supplied with food and there was great joy in Israel.

Notice that not only does God supply the men necessary for the battle, but he also provides for their material needs. When God calls, He also equips and provides. What an encouragement this is for us as we step out in obedience

to the call of the Lord on our lives. If we step out in obedience, God will supply all that is necessary to accomplish what He has called us to do.

#### For Consideration:

- What has God called you to do? Who has He raised up to stand with you in this vision?
- Has God brought people to you in your time of need to encourage and lift you up? Who are these people?
- Has God called you to be an encouragement and support to someone else? Who is it? How have you been supporting and encouraging them? What more could you do?
- Some of David's men had to make significant sacrifices to stand with him. What sacrifices have others made for you and your ministry? What sacrifices have you made for others?
- How did God provide for the material needs of the men who came to crown David king? Will God also supply us with all we need for the work to which He has called us?

#### For Prayer:

- Take a moment to thank the Lord for particular individuals who have stood behind you in your life and ministry.

- Ask the Lord to help you to see how you can be a greater encouragement to someone in ministry today.
- Ask the Lord to increase the number of people who stand with you in your life and ministry so that you can be more effective.
- Ask the Lord if there are any sacrifices you need to make for someone else.

# 12

## DAVID AND THE ARK OF GOD

---

Read 1 Chronicles 13:1-14

People from all Israel came to anoint David as king. This was a very joyous celebration. In verse 1 David asked his officers and commanders if they would join him in bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. Verse 3 tells us that the reason for this was that they had not consulted the ark at all during the reign of Saul.

It is important that we understand that in Old Testament times, God chose to speak to His people from the cover of the ark between the two cherubim (Exodus 25:21-22). Saul had been rejected as king because he did not listen to the Lord or obey His commands. He chose to trust his own wisdom. Saul had not consulted the Lord's presence over the Ark of the Covenant. David did not want to make this same mistake. He wanted his reign to be founded on the will and purpose of the Lord. He wanted to have the Ark of the Covenant near him so he could seek the will of the Lord in matters that pertained to his leadership. This desire of David shows us that his reign would be very different from Saul's. It would be founded on the Lord's will and purpose. David saw it as a priority to seek the will of the Lord in his decisions.

Notice from verse 2 that David wanted this event to be a big event. He wanted to invite all the people of Israel to join him as he brought the ark into Jerusalem. This was not a small thing for David. Because the Lord revealed Himself from the ark, David knew that by bringing the ark into Jerusalem, he was in reality bringing the presence of God into the city. This was something to be celebrated.

The leaders and commanders agreed with David to bring the ark back. The invitations went out and the Israelites gathered at Kiriath Jearim where the ark was located (verses 5-6).

Verse 7 tells us that the ark was located at the house of Abinadab. A new cart was brought and the ark placed on that cart to be transported. Abinadab's two sons, Uzzah and Ahio (2 Samuel 6:3), were chosen to guide the cart (verse 7). Israel left Kiriath Jearim with great celebration. They celebrated with songs, harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets (verse 8). The people were happy.

There is an important detail we need to see here. The Ark of the Covenant was made with poles that were to be used to carry it. According to Deuteronomy 10:8, the ark was to be carried by the Levites. This is not what is happening in this passage. Instead of God's chosen leaders carrying the ark, it was put on a cart and carried by oxen. This was in direct violation of the will of God.

It is interesting to note that the practice of putting the ark on a new cart was of Philistine origin. At one point in its history, the ark of God was captured by the Philistines and taken from Israel. The ark was a curse to them as long as they kept it and many people died wherever the ark stayed in Philistia. The Philistines decided, therefore, to send the ark back to Israel. They consulted their spiritual leaders

about how to send it back and were told to put it on a new cart drawn by two cows (see 1 Samuel 6:1-12). This is now how God's people transported the ark in this passage. It was not the will of God that it be carried this way. They had learned this from the pagan Philistines. How easy it is for us to incorporate worldly practices into our faith. This will only lead to problems.

As the ark of God was moving past the threshing floor of Kidon, the oxen stumbled. This put the ark of God at risk. Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark so that it would not fall (verse 9). Because he touched the ark, God struck him down so that he died (verse 10). It should be understood that this would not have happened if the ark had been carried by Levites as God had required. It is also a reminder to the people of that day of the holiness of God. He is not a God to be treated lightly. This was a powerful reminder to David and his people of the awesome holiness of God. Even to touch the ark was to perish.

The people that day celebrated a good God. They looked forward to His blessings. They rejoiced that God desired to bless them. God reminded them by this incident, however, that He was also a God of tremendous holiness who demanded obedience. If they wanted to continue to experience the blessing of God, they would have to live in obedience to His word and do things His way.

David's response to this situation is somewhat surprising. Verse 11 tells us that he became angry with God because He killed Uzzah. He called that place Perez Uzzah which literally means, "Outbreak against Uzzah." Because of what he saw that day, David was afraid to take the ark back to Jerusalem. The celebration ended at Perez Uzzah. Instead, he decided to take it to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite (verse 13).



It is one thing to follow a God who blesses. It is another thing to follow a God who demands obedience, honour and respect. David's fear was that the holy and glorious God he saw that day would consume them. He celebrated a God of blessing but feared the God of holiness. So great was his fear of this God revealed in the ark that he chose to abandon his mission to take it back to Jerusalem.

There are many people today who are in the same situation. They want a God who blesses but they are not sure they want a God who demands obedience and respect. God cannot be divided up in this way. Holiness and justice are as much part of His character as love and blessing. When we come to God, we must live in the tension between blessing and obedience, love and holiness. God introduced David to His holiness. David's understanding of God and His character was stretched that day. God showed David and all Israel that that they needed to live in the fear of God if they were to expect to enjoy His blessings. For some people, the cost of living in the fear of God is too great. They walk away from God and His blessings because they are not willing to pay the price of obedience. God allowed David and all Israel to walk away that day.

Notice, however, that the family of Obed-Edom, where the ark rested for three months, was richly blessed (verse 14). The blessings of God are available to us but God demands that we live in obedience and respect toward His name. We dare not take Him lightly. He is a God of wonderful love and blessing but He is also a God of holiness and justice whose will demands respect and honour. All who come to Him for blessings must be willing to respect and obey Him.

## For Consideration:

- This chapter reminds us of how Saul had not sought the Lord through the Ark of the Covenant. He was rejected because he did not obey the Lord. How important is it that we seek the will and purpose of the Lord in all we do?
- What does David's celebration of the return of the ark show us about his deep love for his God? How is your love for God demonstrated?
- How did David and Israel violate the will of God in the transportation of the ark to Jerusalem?
- What is the possible origin of the practice of carrying the ark on an ox cart? How does the world influence the church today? Are there worldly practices the church has adopted in our day? What are they?
- God is a God of loving blessing but He demands respect and honour. Can we truly worship Him if we do not accept Him as both loving and holy?

## For Prayer:

- Ask God to help you to seek His will and purpose each day. Ask Him to forgive you for the times you have failed to seek Him and His will.
- Ask God to show you if there is anywhere in your life or practice that you are not living in obedience to His will.

- Thank God that He is both holy and loving. Ask Him to help you to worship and honour Him for both these wonderful characteristics.
- Do you know someone who, like David and Israel, walked away from the blessing of the Lord because they had a hard time accepting His holiness and justice? Ask God to give them grace to accept Him as He is.

# 13

## PHILISTINE PROBLEMS

---

Read 1 Chronicles 14:1-17

After David was crowned king of all Israel, the king of Tyre sent messengers to him to congratulate him and offer his best wishes. The fact that Hiram, king of Tyre, sent his messengers to congratulate him showed David that he was not only recognized by his own people as king but also by the surrounding nations.

Notice in verse 1 that the king of Tyre also sent cedar logs, stonemasons and carpenters to David to build a palace for him. David had made Jerusalem his headquarters and there was no palace in that city at that time. By sending David these supplies King Hiram was establishing a good relationship with Israel and confirming him as king.

From verse 3 we understand that, while he lived in Jerusalem, David took more wives and had many more sons and daughters. Verses 4-7 give the names of 13 sons and daughters born to David while he was living in Jerusalem. These were apart from the other children born to him before he came to live in this city.

David's reign would not always be peaceful. Before he became king, he spent much of his life running from Saul.

Now as king, David would have many battles to fight. In verse 8 we read that when the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, they gathered their forces and attacked him. David gathered his army to meet them. The conflict between the two armies began when the Philistines raided the Valley of Rephaim (verse 9).

It is important to notice in verse 10 that before David responded to the attack of the Philistines, he asked God if he was to attack the Philistines and whether He would give them victory. It would have been easy for David to be logical about this matter. Consider the logic for a moment. God had called David to be king. As king it was his responsibility to care for and protect the nation. The enemies had attacked Israel and were a threat to them. Was it not his responsibility to protect his people? It was only logical that David defend his nation against the Philistine attack. What is interesting here is that David still inquired of the Lord. This is important.

God's ways are not always our ways (see Isaiah 55:8-9). While things may appear to be logical to us, we cannot be always governed by human logic. God does not see things the way we do. What appears to be totally logical to us may, in fact, be contrary to the will and purpose of God. How often have decisions been made in our church on the basis of human wisdom and logic? Human logic must never replace seeking the will and purpose of God.

The Lord answered David and told him that he was to fight the Philistines. He also told him that He would hand the Philistines over to him (verse 10). With this word from the Lord, David took his men to Baal Perazim and attacked. God gave him victory (verse 11). The victory God gave His people against the Philistines is compared in verse 11 to water breaking out. It was as if a great dam burst and the

water of David's army came in and swept away the Philistine army. It is of interest to know that the name Baal Perazim literally means "the lord who breaks out." This is exactly what happened that day. God broke out against His enemies and destroyed them.

Notice from verse 12 that the Philistines were a religious people. They carried their gods with them into battle. Those gods were no match for the God of Israel. When the Philistines fled before Israel they abandoned their gods. David gave orders to gather them up and burn them. In doing so, David declared the victory of the Lord over the Philistine gods. He also removed the temptation his people might have to bow down to these gods.

The Philistines did not take their defeat lightly. Once more they raided the valley (verse 13). Notice again how David inquired of the Lord. While he knew that the Lord had told him to attack previously, David sought the Lord again for this new situation. Each situation in life gives us cause to seek the Lord afresh. We cannot assume that because God led us in a certain way one time He will lead us in the same way the next time. David brought this new situation to the Lord again.

Notice in verse 14 that this time the Lord told David exactly how he was to go about defeating the Philistines. God told David that he was not to go straight up against them but to circle around behind them. He also told David where he was to attack the Philistines. In verse 14 God told him to attack them in front of the balsam trees. Notice further in verse 15 that God also told David the exact moment he was to attack the Philistines. He was to wait until he heard the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees. When he heard that sound, he was to move his army out

into battle because God had gone before him to strike down the Philistines.

We see that God led David in verse 14 in a very specific way. He showed him the method, the location and the timing of his battle. The method was to circle behind the army. The location was in front of the balsam trees. The timing was when he heard the sound of marching in the trees. It was of utmost importance that David follow God's instruction in these three things if he was to have the victory.

Verse 16 tells us that David did exactly as the Lord commanded and the Philistine army was struck down. This army was struck down, not because David's army was stronger, but because he was obedient to God. David's fame spread throughout the nations. He was feared because of his God who was powerful and mighty to save. Verse 17 tells us that the Lord made all the nations fear David.

Do you want to have victory over your enemies? Do you want to know the power of God working through you? Learn to seek the will of the Lord and surrendering to Him. This will require spending time with God seeking His will for each situation He brings our way. He has a very specific purpose. David learned to commit each problem to the Lord and wait for His leading. The secret to his victory was in his willingness to seek God and obey. This will be the secret to our victory as well.

## For Consideration:

- God gave David favour in the eyes of the nations. Has God given you favour in the eyes of your neighbours and friends? How important is the favour of the Lord?
- What is the role of human logic in the Christian life? How can human logic stand in the way of hearing from God and knowing His leading?
- Are you doing your ministry in the way God wants it to be done? What needs to change?
- Does God still lead His people today? How can we know His leading and direction?
- What is the difference between doing what is logical and doing what God calls us to do?

## For Prayer:

- Ask God to give you greater favour so that your ministry will not be hindered.
- Ask God to show you if you are ministering the way He wants you to minister, in the place He wants you to minister, and in His timing.
- Ask the Lord to teach you how to hear Him and know His direction in your daily routine.
- Ask the Lord to forgive you for times you have chosen to walk away from His leading to do things in



your own way. Ask Him to forgive you for the times you have failed to seek His will.

# 14

## A LESSON LEARNED

---

Read 1 Chronicles 15:1-29

In the last chapter we saw how the Lord showed David how he was to defeat the Philistines. God gave him victory because he obeyed His voice and followed His way. David did not always seek the Lord and His will. In chapter 13 we saw how he determined to bring the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem but he did not seek the Lord about how to transport it. Instead of having the Levites carry the ark as was required by law, David had it put on an ox cart to be transported. That proved to be fatal as Uzzah died trying to stabilize the ark when the ox stumbled.

After the death of Uzzah, David decided to leave the ark with the family of Obed-Edom. From 1 Chronicles 15:1 we learn that it was still the desire of David to bring the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem. This time, however, things were going to be done in God's way.

From verse 1 we see that after David had prepared buildings for himself and his families, he also prepared a tent for the ark of the Lord. We are not told anything about this tent but we know that throughout the time in the wilderness the ark of the Lord was always housed in a tent.

Verse 2 is very important. David recognized that no one but the Levites could carry the ark of God. In saying this, David was confessing that they had been wrong to attempt to transport the ark of the Lord on an ox cart. This was the reason for God's angry outburst against Uzzah and his sudden death.

Having learned his lesson and confessed his sin, David called together the descendants of Aaron and the Levites at Jerusalem (verse 4). About 862 Levites from six different families came to Jerusalem at David's request (verse 5-10).

When the Levites gathered in Jerusalem, David summoned two priests, Zadok and Abiathar and six Levites (Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab). When they presented themselves before him, David commanded them to consecrate themselves and their fellow Levites. He then ordered them to bring up the ark of the Lord to the place he had prepared for it (verse 12). The consecration of a priest or Levite is described in Exodus 29:1-37 and involved sacrifices and ceremonial washing. David wanted to be sure that the Levites were ceremonially pure before carrying the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem.

David reminded the Levites in verse 13 that they had sinned against God the first time because the Levites had not carried the ark. David makes it very clear from verse 13 that this was the reason the anger of the Lord had broken out against them so that Uzzah died.

Notice what David says in verse 13: "We did not inquire of Him about how to do it in the prescribed way." In his excitement to bring up the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem, David had failed to consult the Lord about how he should transport the ark. God has a way of doing things that is

often different from ours. It is quite possible for us to do the right thing in the wrong way. This is what happened to David when he first tried to transport the ark. This only led to problems. There is an important lesson for us in this. Not only do we need to seek God about what He wants us to do, we also need to seek Him about how He wants us to do it as well.

There may be those who say, "What difference does it make how the job is done as long as we get it done?" This passage challenges this view. God is interested in the method as well. If we do things in God's way we can be sure of His blessing. How often do we fail to take the time to seek the Lord about how He wants us to minister? We get so excited about advancing the kingdom that we run ahead of God and do things in our own way without ever consulting Him about how He wants us to do the job. Often we end up hindering the work because we are not in tune with God and His ways. All this requires a close relationship with God. If we want to be effective in our service, we must be in close communion with Him. We must be constantly seeking His will, His method and His timing. You can be very busy in ministry, but you cannot be truly effective if you are not constantly seeking God's heart. David had learned this lesson and he was making sure now that he did not fall into this error a second time.

At David's request, the Levites consecrated themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem (verse 14). Verse 15 tells us that they carried the ark of God with the poles on their shoulders as Moses had commanded them in the law.

David also commanded the Levites to appoint certain brothers to accompany the ark with music and singing

(verse 16). Verses 17-24 give us a general list of the men chosen, with the responsibilities given to each man.

Heman, Asaph and Ethan were given the responsibility of sounding the bronze cymbals (verse 19). Eight Levites were chosen in verse 20 to play the lyres. Notice that they were to play it according to "alamoth". It is uncertain what this term "alamoth" means. It is very likely a musical term that was understood by the musicians and told them how they were to play the lyre. The harps were assigned to six other Levites who were to play according to "sheminith." Again this is a musical term that told the musicians how they were to play their harps. Notice that the lyre was to be played different from the harp. Kenaniah was given the responsibility to direct the singing. Verse 22 tells us that he was gifted in directing singing. Seven Levites were also chosen to blow the trumpet (verse 24).

Two doorkeepers were chosen for the ark (verse 23). It is not specified what their responsibilities were. As doorkeepers they may have been given the responsibility to make sure that everything was being done in accordance with the law of God and that nothing impure would come to defile the ark or the priests who carried it.

The ark of God was brought to Jerusalem by the Levites in the prescribed way. It was accompanied with music from the cymbals, lyres, harps and trumpets. David and the elders of Israel along with commanders of units of a thousand went with the Levites to bring the ark to Jerusalem. There was great celebration and joy as they travelled to Jerusalem (verse 25).

While there was great celebration and rejoicing, this time, there was also tremendous fear of God. The Levites understood that God was a holy and awesome God. They

took their responsibility seriously, knowing that God could strike them if they did not honour Him. Verse 26 tells us that because God helped the Levites who were carrying the ark, seven bulls and seven rams were sacrificed as a thanksgiving offering to the Lord.

Notice in verse 27 that David was clothed in a robe of linen. David also wore a linen ephod. The ephod was worn by the priest. From this we are led to understand that David had a priestly function though he did not have the office of a priest according to the law. As king of Israel, David certainly did much to encourage the worship of God. As king before God, he also had a priestly function to fulfil. He was recognized for his spiritual role in Israel.

As the ark entered the city, David expressed his worship before God with great excitement. He held nothing back. He danced and celebrated before the Lord with all his heart. His wife Michal saw David celebrating that day. Verse 29 tells us that when she saw him celebrate in this way she despised David in her heart. It is important that we take a closer look at this verse.

The relationship between David and Michal his wife was a strained relationship. According to 1 Samuel 25:44, Saul, her father, had given her to another man despite the fact that she was married to David. In 2 Samuel 3:13-16, David demanded that she be taken from her second husband and returned to him. It may be that Michal was bitter about this matter and wondered how David could worship God in this way when he had taken her by force from her husband. It appears, however, from verse 29 that Michal was angry with David because of how he expressed himself in public worship. The words used here are very powerful. Verse 29 tells us that she "despised" David in her heart.

Michal obviously had a very different understanding of what worship should look like than David. She felt that David was making a fool of himself in his worship (see also 2 Samuel 6:20). Obviously, for Michal, the worship of God was to be more subdued and quiet with less physical expression. David and Michal clashed when it came to what they believed was acceptable worship. It is not our purpose to discuss what is appropriate in worship. Suffice it to say that there are significant differences between believers over this matter. These differences are not new. We have a clear example of this in this chapter.

What is important for us to notice is how Michal responded to her difference with David. Michal despised David in her heart. She allowed her difference to grow into bitterness and anger. The same thing happens in the church of our day. Maybe you have seen evidence of this in your own place of worship. Something as simple as how we express our worship to God can cause such a division in the church today that believers can no longer associate with each other. Michal's sin was to allow her difference to produce bitterness and anger.

This passage warns us about allowing differences such as worship style to come between us as believers. Admittedly, there are different personalities in the church today. Each personality seeks God in its own way. The passage does not condemn David for his enthusiastic worship style, nor does it condemn Michal for her more subdued style. It does warn us, however, about how differences between believers can be a means for Satan to cause division. It is not our responsibility to judge the preferences of another believer who acts in sincerity before God. It is our responsibility, however, to deal with any bitterness or anger that comes into our heart when we experience these differences.

For Consideration:

- What do we learn about David's humility and his willingness to confess that he had been wrong in not seeking the will of the Lord in how to bring the ark to Jerusalem? Are you able to admit when you are wrong?
- What do we learn in this passage about the importance of doing things in God's way? Have you developed the habit of seeking God for the things you do?
- What do we learn about David's style of worship? Are there people around you who have a different preference?
- How can a difference of opinion affect relationships between believers?
- While we cannot always change people, we can deal with our attitudes. Have you ever felt a bitter attitude toward a brother or sister who sees things differently from you? Explain.

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to give you grace to be willing to admit you are wrong. Ask Him for grace to make things right.



- Thank the Lord that He is not limited to our preferences. Thank Him for the variety of preferences in the body of Christ.
- Have you ever harboured bitterness in your heart toward a brother or sister because they did things differently from you? Ask the Lord to remove that bitterness. Ask Him to show you how to deal with these differences in a way that will honour Him.

# 15

## A PSALM OF THANKSGIVING

---

Read 1 Chronicles 16:1-43

We have seen in the previous chapter how David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. David had the ark placed in a special tent he had made for it. Throughout the wanderings of the people of God in the wilderness, the Ark of the Covenant had been housed in the tabernacle which was a portable sanctuary. When the temple was built in Jerusalem, the ark would have a more permanent structure but for now it would remain in this special tent.

When the ark was placed in the tent that David had made for it, the priests presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings in worship and thanksgiving to the Lord God for His worth and goodness toward them (verse 1).

Notice in verse 2 that when David had finished offering his sacrifices to the Lord, he blessed the people and gave them each a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins. We need to see this in the context of what had been happening as the people worshiped before the Lord. Worship in Scripture, while always directed to God, does not benefit Him alone. Listen to the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 25:40:

The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

When David reached out to his hungry people in the name of the Lord, this was part of his worship that day. By ministering to his people in their need, he was ministering to the Lord and honouring Him. When we reach out to others, we worship the Lord. David's worship that day consisted in part of burnt offerings, singing and praise, but it was completed in his act of service toward the people of God in need. A truly worshipping people are a people of praise *and* service.

In verse 4 David appointed Levites to minister before the ark of God. What is important for us to note is the three-fold responsibility that was given to these Levites who ministered before the ark.

The first responsibility was to make petition. To make petition had to do with seeking the Lord on behalf of His people. It involved seeking the favour of the Lord for the nation. This was their first responsibility.

The second responsibility of the Levites who ministered before the ark was to give thanks. When God did pour out His favour and blessing on His people, the Levites were to be sure that He was properly thanked. How often has God blessed us and not been thanked. For David it was so important that God receive thanks for His wonderful favour and kindness that he gave this responsibility to the Levites who ministered before the ark.

Finally, the Levites who ministered before the ark were to praise the Lord. This was their ministry and obligation before the people. They were to seek out reasons to praise

and worship the Lord. They were to remind the people of His worth and challenge them to lift up His name in praise and worship.

This three-fold ministry of petitioning God for His favour, thanking God and worshiping God was an important ministry. It would do us well in the church of our day to have men and women devoted to this task.

Those responsible for this ministry are named in verses 5 and 6. Asaph was the chief of this group. Many of his psalms are recorded in the book of Psalms. He was assisted by a number of other men whose names are recorded in verse 5-6. These men played the lyres and harps. Asaph played the cymbals. Benaiah and Jahaziel played trumpets. These instruments were to be used in the praise and worship of God.

David gave Asaph and his associates a psalm of thanksgiving that he likely wrote himself. While not clearly stated in the text, the context would indicate that these musicians were to sing this psalm to the people who had gathered that day in celebration of the ark coming to Jerusalem.

The psalm itself is a challenge to the people of God to celebrate, worship and honour the Lord God of Israel. We will break it down and examine its various parts.

As David begins the psalm he challenges all of God's people to give thanks to the Lord (verse 8). This is something we have often failed to do in our spiritual walk. David believed that giving thanks was of utmost importance for the believer. We have already seen how he commissioned Levites with the responsibility of giving thanks. David calls on all his people to remember to give thanks to the Lord for His deeds. The Lord has been showing me over the last

months how often I have forgotten to thank Him for the many things He has done. There is cause every day to give Him thanks. We would do well to open our eyes to the many blessings we receive and remember to give our Lord thanks.

The second challenge of verse 8 is for God's people to call on His name. To call on the name of the Lord has to do with recognizing His power and worth. We call out to a God who is able to help. He is a God who is worthy of our attention. To call out to God in this sense is to recognize Him as an all-powerful and worthy God. It is to put our trust in Him. It is to bring Him into our daily routine and the decisions we make on an ongoing basis. When we need to do a task we should call out to Him. When we need to make a decision we ought to reach out to Him. How things would change if we were to bring God into our decisions and activities.

Notice also in verse 8 that the psalmist challenges his readers to make known what the Lord has done among the nations. We are not to keep the goodness of God to ourselves. We are to proclaim to all we meet the worth and generosity of our wonderful God. We are to proclaim His goodness and kindness toward us. We are to share His blessings with all who will listen so that they will know the goodness of our great God. Notice that this goodness of God is to be shared among the nations. Even those who do not know our God are to hear of His wonderful kindness.

The challenge of verse 9 is for God's people to praise Him through song. They are to tell of all His wonderful acts through song. God enjoys the creative talents of His people, especially when they are done for Him and His honour.

Our song of praise and thanksgiving warms the heart of God.

Verse 10 begins with a call for God's people to glory in His holy name. To glory in something is to praise, boast about or celebrate. Notice particularly what God's people were to praise and celebrate in verse 10. They were to glory in the holy name of the Lord. God's holiness separates Him from sin and evil of all kinds. He can never be accused of wrongdoing. Everything He does is holy and honourable. His holiness means that He will judge sin and evil in this world. Our hope lies in the fact that God is a holy God who will always do what is right. In this we need to be truly thankful. We need to celebrate the fact that God is a holy God whose good and just purposes will triumph.

Verse 10 is a prayer that the hearts of those who seek God rejoice. This does not mean that those who seek God will never have to face difficulty or trial. Even in this difficulty and trial, however, there is cause for God's people to rejoice. Their God is holy and will not allow evil to triumph. Their God is righteous and will always do what is right. Their God is sovereign and will turn everything the enemy does against them to good. Notice, however, that it is only those who seek God who rejoice. To seek Him is to trust Him and His purposes. Those whose desire is to seek God and live in His purposes will have cause for rejoicing.

Verse 11 challenges God's people to look to the Lord's strength. This implies that we will need His strength. It also implies that our own strength is insufficient. God will supply all the strength we need to face whatever trial we face in life. His strength will be equal to and greater than any trial we are called to face.

We are also, according to verse 11, to seek God's face always. There are a number of things in this life that can distract us and turn our eyes from the Lord. He is worthy of our full attention. To seek implies an effort. To seek implies that there will be times when God's face seems hidden. Trials, worldly pleasures and other such distractions will come our way but God is calling us to keep our eyes fully on Him. Notice that the verse tells us to seek His face always. That means that we are not to let anything keep us from seeking God and His purposes. When trials and temptations come, turn your eyes even more to Him.

Verses 12-22 encourage the believer to remember the deeds of the Lord God. There are several things the psalmist calls his people to remember about God.

First, in verse 12, the believer is to remember the wonders and miracles God has done. These wonders and miracles are acts of God that demonstrate His power over nature and circumstances. Each of us has seen evidence of God's miraculous deeds. We are to remember those wonders and miracles. When Satan tempts us to doubt we are to remember that our God defies nature and circumstances and does the impossible.

Secondly, in verses 12-13 the psalmist tells us to remember the judgments the Lord has pronounced. To remember His judgments is to remember His law. It is to remember how He has disciplined and punished those who have turned from His law. It is to remember His warning against turning away. It is to fear God and honour His purposes. Notice from verse 14 that His judgments are in all the earth. There is no where we can go where God's judgments cannot find us. We cannot hide from God. We are to live every moment as in His presence, seeking to walk

in His ways and recognizing that we will give an account for our lives and actions.

The third thing God's people were to remember was His covenant. A covenant is like a marriage. By means of His covenant God commits Himself to and enters into a special and intimate relationship with His people. Verse 15 tells us that God remembers His covenant forever. That is to say, when God enters a relationship with us it is forever. He will not forget the promises He made to us or His commitment to us. The covenant God made with Abraham and swore to Isaac, He confirmed to Jacob his descendant (verse 16-17). God remembered His covenant from generation to generation. Verse 17 describes this covenant as an everlasting covenant. An everlasting covenant is a covenant that has no end. This is the promise of God to His people. He will be their God forever. He will not abandon them or forsake them. His blessing was on them in giving them the land of Canaan (verses 18-20). He protected them like a loving husband, not allowing the nations to harm them because they belonged to Him (verses 21-22). God's people were to remember the wonderful and intimate relationship they had with Him. They were to rejoice in the security they had in knowing His care and delight in them. They were to surrender to Him and walk with Him in faithfulness. Nothing was to take them from their God.

In verse 23, God again calls His people to sing. We have already seen the many reasons why God's people were to sing praise to God. His wonders, His judgments and His covenant were cause for rejoicing and singing. Notice, however, that it was not only God's people who were to sing praise to Him but "all the earth." God's goodness and blessing is not limited to His people, although they enjoy His special favour. All the earth experiences His life and blessing. For this reason, the whole earth is called to sing



praise to their Creator and Provider. This is the reason why we are to be involved in missions. A true missionary is one whose great desire is that all people will come to recognize the worth of their Creator and sing praise to His worthy name.

Notice also the call for God's salvation to be proclaimed "day after day." We should not see the word "salvation" here to be a reference to the salvation we understand in this New Testament period, although we certainly ought to proclaim this salvation as well. The salvation spoken of here is to be seen in a much broader sense. It is the ongoing deliverance of God from our enemies or the circumstances that come against us. Notice that God's deliverance, in this sense, is to be proclaimed day after day. Our experience of God's deliverance will be a daily experience. We are to look for evidence of God's protection and deliverance on a daily basis. We are to take time to give Him thanks for this deliverance. We are to recognize the deliverance of God every day and make sure to praise and thank Him for that deliverance. We are also to testify to what He has been doing. We do this so that He receives the glory and the whole world recognizes His goodness.

Notice in verse 24 that God's people are to declare His glory among the nations. God's glory refers to His splendour, His dignity, His beauty and His honour. There is no God like our God in character, nor is there a God like Him in deeds. Both His character and His deeds are to be proclaimed among the nations. It is the heart of God that the whole earth knows who He is and what He has done.

The gods of the other nations were idols made of wood or stone. They had no power or ability. The God of Israel, however, was a God who created the heavens and the

earth. He was a God of splendour and majesty. He was to be honoured above all the gods of the nations.

Notice from verse 27 that splendour and majesty were before the Lord. He is an awesome God whose presence inspires fear. To see His splendour and majesty was to fall before Him in terror. Notice, however, that strength and joy were His dwelling place. In other words, where God dwelt, there was strength and joy. While His splendour causes us to fall flat on our faces in worship and terror, His strength picks us up and gives us life. His joy refreshes us and gives us hope.

In verse 29 God's people were to ascribe glory and strength to Him. To ascribe is to recognize. God's people were to recognize God's glory, beauty and majesty. They were also to recognize and live in the reality of His strength and power. These two aspects of God's character have a direct impact on our lives. When we recognize that God is a glorious God we fall down in worship of His name. When we recognize Him as an all-powerful God, we rise up in His enabling to conquer, knowing that nothing can overcome us or defeat His purpose.

To ascribe glory and strength to the Lord is to refuse to take any credit for it ourselves. It is to recognize Him as the source of all things. It is to give Him all the glory and attribute all strength to Him.

God's people were to bring Him an offering and come before Him (verse 29). They were to worship in the midst of His splendour and holiness. Of particular importance here is the fact that God's people were to approach the splendour and holiness of God with an offering. That offering was an offering for sin. No one could approach a holy and glorious God without their sins first being forgiven and

cleansed. There is no fear for those whose sins are forgiven. They may enter freely and respectfully into the presence of this awesome and glorious God. The picture is not only of God's holiness but also one of His grace. It is His grace that allows us to enter His presence.

We do not approach God lightly. We come into the presence of His holiness with trembling (verse 30). While we come with trembling we still come. The whole earth is called, in verse 30, to tremble before the Lord. This is a God who established the earth so that it could not be moved. The Creator God of Israel is an awesome and majestic God to whom no other god could be compared. He is a God who inspires fear and trembling.

Verses 31-33 call the whole earth to respond to their Creator God. The heavens are called to rejoice and the earth is to be glad, proclaiming that the Lord reigns (verse 31). The sea was to resound with all that is in it and the fields were to be jubilant (verse 32). The trees are invited to sing for joy before the Lord because He came to judge the earth and deal with sin (verse 33).

In verse 34, the psalmist called his people to give thanks to the Lord for His goodness and love. Because the Lord was good and loving, they could call out to Him for salvation in their hour of need (verse 35). He challenges them to seek the salvation and deliverance of the Lord so that they would have cause to give thanks to His holy name. Every act of God on our behalf and every blessing from His hand is cause to honour Him and lift up His name.

When the psalm was shared with his people, David left Asaph and his associates to minister before the Ark of the Covenant (verse 37). Asaph ministered with Obed-Edom and sixty-eight associates (verse 38).

David also left Zadok the priest to minister in the tabernacle of the Lord which was in Gibeon (verse 39). We understand from this that the ark and the tabernacle were in two separate places. While Asaph was responsible for worship, praise and thanksgiving, Zadok and his associates were in charge of the offerings. These offerings they brought before the Lord day and night as prescribed by the Law of Moses (verse 40). Serving with Zadok were Heman and Jeduthun, who were to give thanks to the Lord and praise Him with the sounding of the trumpet, cymbals and other instruments (verses 41-42).

After the Ark of the Covenant had been placed in the tent made particularly for it and the worship was ended, David and all the people of God returned from Jerusalem to their homes to bless their families (verse 43).

#### For Consideration:

- What is the connection between worshipping God and practically serving His people? Can we truly worship God if we do not minister to the needs of those around us?
- Consider the three-fold ministry of the Levites in this chapter: to petition God, to thank God and to praise God. How does your life and ministry fall in line with this three-fold responsibility of the Levites? Where are you weak?
- The psalmist challenges his people to look to the Lord and seek His face always. Are you presently looking to the Lord's strength and seeking His face?

- What encouragement do you take from the fact that the Lord is a covenant-keeping God?
- We read here that where God dwells there is strength and joy. Has this been your experience?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to open your heart to the needs around you. Ask Him to show you how you can honour Him by reaching out to others in their need.
- Ask God to give you a heart of thanksgiving and praise. Take a moment now to thank the Lord for His deliverance and salvation. Thank Him also for the blessing this day has brought you from His hand.
- Thank the Lord that He is a covenant-keeping God. Thank Him particularly for the commitment He has made to you. Recommit yourself to Him today to honour and live for Him.
- Ask God give you a greater understanding of His holiness and majesty.
- Ask God to fill you with His strength and joy to face the difficulties this life brings.

# 16

## GOD'S PROMISE TO DAVID

---

Read 1 Chronicles 17:1-27

David had brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem where he placed it in a special tent. During this time David was living in the palace he had built for himself and his family. In the mind of David, there was a strange inconsistency in this. He was living in a wonderful palace while the ark was in a tent. He believed that God deserved much more than a tent.

In verse 1 David approached Nathan the prophet to speak to him about his desire to build a temple for the Ark of the Covenant. By approaching Nathan the prophet, David is seeking the Lord's approval on this project. While this is something that David wanted to do for the Lord, he still believed that he needed to hear from the Lord about it.

Nathan's initial response to David is found in verse 2. "Whatever you have in mind, do it, for God is with you." There is no record of Nathan seeking the will and purpose of the Lord in this matter. He knew David and believed him to be a man of God. He believed David's desire to be legitimate but that was his personal opinion and not necessarily the will and purpose of the Lord.

When Nathan went home that night the Lord spoke to him (verse 3). God told Nathan to return to David and tell him that he was not the one to build a temple. Obviously this came as a surprise to Nathan and he had to humble himself and go to David, telling him that he had been wrong to encourage him.

This would also have been a powerful lesson for Nathan. He had assumed that it would be acceptable for David to build a temple. His assumption, however, was wrong. He had jumped to a conclusion without going to the Lord and seeking His heart. How easy it is for us to do this. There are many good things we can do for the Lord that are not in His plan for us. How important it is for us to seek the will of the Lord in all things.

God told Nathan to remind David that He had not dwelt in a temple from the time He had brought His people up out of Egypt (verse 5). The Ark of the Covenant had moved from one place to another in the wilderness. Never once in all that time had God told the leaders of Israel to build Him a house of cedar (verse 6). David wanted to do something for God that God had not asked him to do.

We have a limited understanding of God and His purposes. God's ways are different from our ways. His purposes do not always make sense to us. As believers, we need to understand our limitations and make it our goal to seek the Lord in all things. It is easy for us to make decisions that seem perfectly sensible to us but are contrary to the purpose of God for our lives.

That night God reminded David of how He had taken him from the pasture where he cared for his sheep and called him to be a leader of His people (verse 7). Nathan was to remind David of how God had been with him wherever he

went, cutting off all his enemies and giving him victory. God now promised to make David one of the greatest men on the earth (verse 8).

Not only would God make David one of the greatest men on the earth but He would also provide a home for His people (verse 9). God promised to plant them in their land so that no one could disturb them or take their land from them. He would give His people peace as David ruled over them. All Israel's enemies would be subdued. The only house God wanted David to build was a house for His people Israel where they could live in peace and security. The house David was to build was the nation of Israel.

David had a desire to build a house of worship. God's desire for him was to build a nation. David was going to have to adjust his priorities and his ideas of what his ministry would look like. There are times when we need to do the same. Sometimes we come into a ministry with our own ideas of what we want to accomplish but this is not the will of God for us. Sometimes our life does not take the turns we would like it to take. In times like this we can begin to grumble and complain. Some even turn their back on God because He is not giving them the ministry or the life they wanted. God has a purpose for each of us. We need to seek Him about that purpose and surrender to it.

Nathan the prophet was to tell David that the day would come when a temple would be built for God in Jerusalem, but David was not to be the one to build it. God would raise up one of David's sons to build this temple (verses 11-12). God would be a father to this son and He would never take His love from him like He had taken it from Saul (verse 13). God would establish David's line on the throne of Israel forever (verse 14).



Notice David's response to the words of God through Nathan the prophet in verse 16-27. His response in these verses was first one of humility. Notice in verse 16 that David said, "Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?" David did not see himself as being greater than he really was. He remembered that he was a lowly shepherd that God had called. He was no better than anyone else in Israel. The blessing of God on him and his family was undeserved and unmerited. He was blessed because God had honoured him and his family. David marvelled at the fact that God had placed His hand on him and his future descendants but it perplexed him that God would treat him and his family in such a way (verse 17). David's response to God's blessing was one of humility.

In verses 18-19 we see that David's response was also one of acceptance.

What more can David say to you for honouring your servant? For you know your servant, O LORD (verse 18).

Notice that God knew His servant. That means that God knew David's humble beginnings. He knew him to be a mere shepherd. He also knew David's weaknesses and shortcomings. God had just promised, through Nathan, to use David to build the nation and bring it peace and security. This was not a task to be taken lightly nor would it be an easy task. David knew that the God who promised these things to him and his family was also able to enable him to do what He had called him to do. His only legitimate response was to agree with God and accept His purpose for his life and mission. Notice in verse 19 that David recognized that it was according to God's will that He had done this great thing and made these promises through

Nathan to him and his family. David accepts the words of God through His prophet as being the will and purpose of God. This meant that he had to willingly die to his idea of building a temple and set his heart instead on building the nation. David's response to the will of God was one of acceptance.

The third response of David to the word of God through Nathan the prophet was one of praise and thanksgiving. It is one thing to recognize God's call on our life and accept this call and quite another to learn to praise God for it when it is different from what we would have chosen.

In verse 20 David lifts up his voice in response to the words of Nathan and says:

"There is no one like you, O LORD, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears."

This is a response of praise. David does not complain that God does not accept his plan to build a temple. He does not grumble because God had another purpose for his life. Instead, he lifts up his voice and says, "There is no one like you, O Lord." Can you do this when your plans and goals for your life are shattered? Can you look up to God when things do not turn out the way you want them to turn out and say, "O God there is no one like you?" This is the response of a thankful and surrendered heart.

Notice also in verse 21 that David praised God not only for who He was but also for the people He had called him to serve. "Who is like your people Israel," he said. God had redeemed this people and set them aside. God had performed awesome wonders in the midst of this people by driving out the nations before them and delivering them from the power of Egypt (verse 21). God had made this

people His very own. It was a privilege to serve this nation. David's heart rejoiced and praised God not only for who He was but also for the ministry to which He had called him. He rejoiced in this call, and praised God for the people to whom He had been called.

There is no bitterness in David's heart because God had denied him his desire. His response is one of humility, acceptance and praise.

Before we conclude this meditation we need to see two more responses of David to the word of God through Nathan the prophet. In verses 23-24 David asked God to be faithful to His promise. In calling on God to be faithful to His promises, David is recognizing the source of his strength. He realized that God was his strength. If his reign was going to be established, it would not be by David's strength and natural ability but because of the promise of God (verse 24). David's response was a response of dependence. His confidence was in God and His promises. David knew that the words of Nathan would be fulfilled only because God was faithful to His promises.

How easy it would have been for David, the experienced man of war, to trust in his own ability to make things happen. How easy it would have been for him to trust in his own wisdom to make his nation great for God. In this passage, David cries out to God to do what He had promised. This was God's work, not his. He would be an instrument but it would be God who gave the victory. He depended entirely on God for the fulfilment of these promises and the establishment of the nation.

Finally in verses 25-27 we see that David also responded in faith. Verse 27 makes this particularly clear when David said, "Now you have been pleased to bless the house of

your servant ... it will be blessed forever." God had revealed to David, through Nathan, that He would build the nation (verse 25). This revelation gave David courage. His faith was stirred. God gave David greater boldness in prayer concerning this ministry. David had confidence now that what God had promised, He would do. He stepped out in confidence and faith that the God who had promised great things would be faithful.

#### For Consideration:

- What does this passage teach us about the difference between God's will and our will? Why is it important that we seek the will and purpose of the Lord in everything?
- Are you doing what God has called you to do? Have you accepted God's purpose for your life and ministry?
- David's response to God's purpose for his life was one of humility, acceptance, praise, dependence and faith. Take a look at your own life and the things that God has allowed in your life. Is your response the same as David's? What area do you need to work on?
- Is it possible to do good things that are not in tune with the will and purpose of God?

## For Prayer:

- Take a moment to ask the Lord about His purpose for your life and ministry. Ask Him to show you if you are where He wants you to be.
- Surrender your life and ministry to the Lord. Ask Him to give you grace to accept what He has brought into your life.
- Ask the Lord to give you the humility to see your need to seek Him in all that you do.

# 17

## DAVID'S MILITARY SUCCESS

---

Read 1 Chronicles 18:1-17

In the last chapter we saw how David wanted to build a temple for the Lord. Through Nathan the prophet, the Lord told David that this was not His will for him. Instead, David was to build a nation. God would bless him and make him a great leader of a great nation. David graciously accepted God's purpose and stepped out in faith and dependence on God.

Here in chapter 18 we see how God wonderfully blessed David's willingness to be His instrument to build the nation. We need to understand that accepting God's purpose meant that David had to die to his own idea of building a temple. His efforts were to be focused on the nation. God honoured David's decision to obey and blessed him abundantly in his battles. God will honour those who willingly surrender their own plans to be obedient to His desire for their lives and ministries.

The Philistines had always been a problem for Israel. In the course of time, however, David defeated the Philistines and brought them into submission. He took Gath, one of their principle cities. It is important for us to take note of the phrase "in the course of time" in verse 1. The phrase

"in the course of time" tells us that victory over the Philistines was not a quick victory. It took time for David to bring the Philistines into submission.

This did not mean that the blessing of God was any less in David's life. Some battles take time. Sometimes we will only fully experience the victory of the Lord through perseverance and hard work. You may not experience instant victory but that does not mean that you will not have victory. Don't lose heart. Keep persevering. Victory will come "in the course of time."

In verse 2 we read that David also defeated the Moabites. They were subject to him and brought him tribute. We read nothing in this verse about the nature of that battle with the Moabites. We read only of the victory.

Verses 3-8 tells us about the battle David had with Hadadezer of Zobah. David fought Hadadezer when he went to establish control along the Euphrates River (verse 3). Hadadezer's army was a large army but David was successful in capturing one thousand chariots, seven thousand charioteers and twenty thousand foot soldiers. In order to assure that there was no further threat from Hadadezer, David hamstringed all but one hundred of their chariot horses (verse 4).

When the Arameans heard of David's battle with Hadadezer, they sent their army to join him against David. God's blessing was evidently on David and He gave him victory over the Arameans as well. Verse 5 tells us that David struck down twenty-two thousand Aramean soldiers. He placed garrisons in the Aramean kingdom of Damascus and they were held in subjection to David (verse 6). This was typical of what was happening in those days.

God was giving David victory over his enemies everywhere he went.

This battle with Hadadezer and the Arameans obviously required a lot of effort on David's part. While the victory came from the Lord, it required a great deal of energy on the part of David and his men. We have seen from the example of David's battle with the Philistines that victory sometimes takes time. We see here that other battles require a great deal of work and effort on the part of God's people. It would be wonderful if all our battles came without the expense of hard work and effort but a great deal of victories will only come after much discipline on our part. This does not make them any less God's victories.

Notice from verses 7-8 that David's hard work was rewarded. God gave him much plunder. Verse 7 tells us that he carried off the gold shields used by Hadadezer's military officials. He brought those shields to Jerusalem. He also took great quantities of bronze from the cities of Hadadezer. This bronze would be used by Solomon.

In verse 9, when King Tou of Hamath heard that David had defeated the army of Hadadezer, he sent his son Hadoram to David to greet him and congratulate him on his victory (verse 10). Tou had been at war with Hadadezer but had not had victory over him.

Hadoram brought David articles of gold, silver and bronze as a gift. David dedicated these articles to the Lord as he had done with all the articles taken from the nations (verse 11).

Victory over Hamath came without a fight. Their king willingly surrendered. There are times when God gives us victories like this. Sometimes there is no fight. Deliverance



comes instantly and without struggle. While it would be wonderful if all our victories came this way this is not the case. Sometimes God allows struggle to strengthen us and give us greater perseverance.

In verse 12, Abishai, one of David's men, attacked the Edomites and struck down eighteen thousand in the Valley of Salt. He put garrisons in Edom and the Edomites became subject to David. This victory for David came for him through one of his men. God blessed David with men who shared the same vision as he did. They stood with him and fought on his behalf.

David served his people with justice and righteousness (verse 14). Joab and Zeruiah were over his army. Jehoshaphat was a recorder (verse 15). Zadok and Abiathar were priests. Shavsha was secretary (verse 16). Benaiah and David's sons served as officials by David's side (verse 17). All these men served David and were a vital part of the victories God was giving him. David's victories came as God provided him with a team of capable men who stood faithfully with him.

As we examine this chapter we see that God gave David wonderful victory over his enemies. What is particularly interesting is how God brought those victories. Sometimes the victories took time. Sometimes they required a significant expense of energy and effort. Sometimes they came without any effort. Sometimes they came through the team God raised up to support David. God's victories came to David in a number of ways. We should not expect that God will always give us victory in our spiritual life in the same way. He can use any method He chooses to bring us the victory we need. What is important is that we walk in obedience and faithfulness.

## For Consideration:

- Have you ever found yourself wrestling with a particular matter for a long time? Why do you suppose God does not always give us instant victory?
- Has God ever instantly given you victory over a particular sin or attitude? Has this always been the case for you?
- Some battles God calls us to face require significant effort and expense of energy. Are you facing one of those battles right now? What encouragement does this chapter bring you?
- How important are our brothers and sisters in the battle before us?

## For Prayer:

- Have you been wrestling with a particular sin or attitude for a long time? Ask the Lord for patience and faith as you persevere in this battle. Thank Him that He does give victory in His time.
- Ask God for strength and discipline as you face the battle before you.
- Ask the Lord to give you brothers and sisters who will stand with you in your spiritual walk. Thank Him for individuals who have supported and encouraged you in your spiritual walk.

# 18

## A MISUNDERSTOOD

## ACT OF KINDNESS

---

Read 1 Chronicles 19:1-19

God was blessing David by giving him victory over his enemies. This is not to say that David had no compassion on those of other nations. In chapter 19 we see that when Nahash king of Ammon died, David decided to send messengers to his son Hanun to express his sympathy. Verse 2 tells us that Nahash had enjoyed a good relationship with David and had been very kind to him.

When David's men came to Hanun to express their sympathy they were viewed with suspicion. The Ammonite nobles spoke to Hanun about the presence of David's men and told him that David was likely taking advantage of his father's death to send men into their country to spy out the land. David's honest intentions were misunderstood. In part this may have been because David had a reputation of being a mighty warrior.

Hanun listened to his nobles. He seized David's men and cut off their robes at the buttocks, shaved half their beards

and sent them away. The purpose of this was to humiliate them.

We need to consider Hanun's action for a moment. The nobles jumped to a faulty conclusion. They saw David's men in their country and assumed the worst. Hanun made a decision to humiliate David's men without checking into the accusations that were being made.

Hanun also acted without considering the implications of his actions. Hanun and his nobles likely had a good laugh at David's messengers leaving the palace with their buttocks exposed but they failed to realize that their actions would have serious consequences. This moment of laughter would bring the downfall of their kingdom.

Let me take a moment to underline what this passage is teaching us. These verses warn us about the danger of jumping to conclusions without verifying facts. How often have problems between believers occurred because we took the word of someone who jumped to a false conclusion? How many false stories have been spread by people who truly believed the falsehood they heard from another believer without verifying the facts? Hanun could have questioned the men about their intentions but we have no record of this taking place. He listened to his nobles and believed their conclusions.

This passage also warns us about making decisions without considering the results. Countless men and women have ruined their marriages, families and ministries because of foolish decisions. A moment of pleasure can lead to a lifetime of agony.

When David heard what had happened to his messengers, he had compassion on them because they had been

humiliated. In verse 5 he told them to stay in Jericho until their beards had grown in and then return to him. By giving them this time off, David is showing kindness to his men. David cared for and respected them. He did not want them to experience any more shame.

It is interesting to note in verse 6 that when Hanun realized what he had done and how he had become a stench in David's nostrils, he hired soldiers from Aram and Zobah (verse 6). In total he hired thirty-two thousand chariots and charioteers (verse 7). With this great army under his command Hanun moved out for battle.

What is most striking about this is that the initiative for the battle does not seem to come from David. Hanun assumes that David was going to attack him because of this insult. Notice that we have no record of Hanun consulting David or seeking his forgiveness for the insult. Could a battle have been avoided if Hanun had apologized to David and recognized his foolishness?

How often have we, too, prepared ourselves for battle when a simple apology would have solved all our problems? Instead of recognizing our fault we stand our ground and choose to consider the person we offended as our enemy. We do this because we are often too proud to admit our error. Here in this passage, one foolish decision led to another. War is declared and many lives would be lost. It all began when some Ammonite nobles looked with suspicion on David's men and jumped to a wrong conclusion. Satan, I am sure, was dancing with delight at how all this was working out. What began as a simple misunderstanding between two people now involved the nation of Ammon and thirty-two thousand hired soldiers from several other nations.

When David heard that Hanun had gathered such a large force against him, he sent his military commander Joab to face them (verse 8). As the two nations prepared for battle, the Ammonites set up their battle formation at the entrance to their city while the commanders of the other nations gathered in the open country (verse 9).

When Joab saw how the enemy had set up their battle lines, he selected his best troops and deployed them against the Arameans in the open country (verse 10). The rest of his men were put under the charge of Abishai, his brother. Abishai's division was sent against the Ammonites who had gathered at the entrance of the city (verse 11). The agreement was that if the Arameans in the open country were too strong for Joab's division then Abishai was to come to his rescue. If the Ammonites at the city entrance were too strong for Abishai's division, Joab would come to his rescue (verse 12). After encouraging the men and reminding them that the Lord would do what was right, Joab sent them into battle (verse 13).

Joab attacked the Arameans in the open country and God gave him victory. The hired soldiers fled before him (verse 14). When the Ammonites at the city entrance saw that the Arameans were fleeing, they lost courage and fled as well, allowing Abishai to enter and capture the city (verse 15).

The Arameans sent messengers to their brothers beyond the Euphrates River calling for support. Reinforcements came under the leadership of Shophach, a commander of the army of Hadadezer (verse 16).

David heard that the Arameans had called for reinforcements and gathered his army to face them (verse 17). Again the Arameans fled before Israel and David killed seven thousand charioteers and forty thousand foot

soldiers. He also killed their commander Shophach (verse 18). The Aramean defeat was very great.

When they saw that they had been defeated, the Arameans made peace with David and became subject to him (verse 19). Notice from verse 19 that there was a break in the relationship between the Arameans and the Ammonites. Verse 19 tells us that the Arameans were unwilling to help the Ammonites anymore.

What was intended to be an act of kindness was so misinterpreted that tens of thousands of men died. Whole nations were impacted and brought into subjection to David because the foolish nobles of Ammon jumped to a wrong conclusion. There is a very important lesson for us here.

For Consideration:

- Have you ever jumped to the wrong conclusion? Give an example of a time when you misinterpreted someone's intentions. How could you have avoided the problems that resulted from that faulty conclusion?
- Why is it important that we confirm facts before acting on them?
- What do we learn in this passage about considering the future implications of our decisions?
- How do you think things could have turned out in this passage had King Hanun chosen to approach David and apologize for his foolish actions? What does this teach us about the importance of

humbling ourselves and apologizing to those we have offended?

- Instead of apologizing and recognizing his fault, King Hanun decided to consider David as his enemy and hired soldiers to fight him. Rather than humble himself, he chose to defend his foolishness. Have you ever found yourself in this situation? How could you have acted differently?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to forgive you for the times when you have accepted what you heard and acted on it without confirming the facts.
- Ask the Lord to give you courage to admit when you are wrong and seek forgiveness and reconciliation.
- Are there people you have offended? Ask the Lord to give you courage to seek forgiveness. Take a moment to pray for a restored relationship.
- Ask God to give you greater wisdom in the decisions you make each day, especially those decisions that affect other people in your life.



# 19

## DAVID'S CENSUS

---

Read 1 Chronicles 20:1-21:30

Over the course of the last few chapters we have seen how God has been blessing David and giving him tremendous victories over his enemies. No nation was able to stand against David. Everywhere David went, God gave him victory. Chapter 20 gives us further examples of this wonderful blessing of God in David's life.

1 Chronicles 20:1 tells us that in the spring, when kings generally went to war, Joab, David's military commander, attacked the Ammonites. As usual, God gave him victory and he captured the city of Rabbah, leaving it in ruins. While David did not take part in this battle, God's hand was on his army to give them victory.

David obtained much plunder from his battles. The nation of Israel was enriched as the Lord gave one victory after another. On this particular occasion, David took the crown from the head of the king of Rabbah. This crown was made from a talent of gold (75 pounds or 34 kilograms) and was set with precious stones. The people of Rabbah were taken captive and placed into forced labour with saws, picks and axes. 1 Chronicles 20:3 tells us that Rabbah was not the only Ammonite town to be captured and treated in

this manner. David did this to all the Ammonite towns he captured.

The Philistines seemed to be a thorn in David's side. 1 Chronicles 20:4-8 shows us, however, that God consistently gave David victory over them. In verse 4 we read about a battle that broke out in Gezer. Sibbecai, one of David's mighty men (see 1 Chronicles 11:29) led Israel into victory and the Philistines were brought into submission.

In a second battle with the Philistines, another of David's warriors killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath. Lahmi's spear had a shaft the size of a weaver's rod (verse 5).

In yet another battle at Gath, Jonathan son of Shimea, killed a huge Philistine with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot.

What we see from this chapter is that David had some very powerful enemies. These enemies fell before David and his men because God was with them.

It is in this context that we come to 1 Chronicles 21. The context is one of God's blessing on David and his consistent victory over enemies who were humanly more powerful than him. Consistent victory can be a dangerous thing. It is very easy for one who has had consistent victory to become proud and careless. David would find out just how easy it was to fall.

In 1 Chronicles 21:1 Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census. This census was a military census designed to count the number of men available to fight battles. Notice that it was Satan who incited David to take this census. We need to understand what is going on here between Satan and David.

Satan was fully aware of the tremendous victories David was having over all his enemies. He knew that he could not rise up an army that could oppose David because the blessing of God was on him. Satan decided, therefore, to attack David in a different way. He chose to use David's victories as a weapon against him. He began to have David think about how powerful a force he and his army really were. He reminded him that there was no army on the earth who could defeat them. As David reflected on these things, Satan suggested that he count how many men he had available to him. There was a reason for this. Satan wanted David to turn his eyes from God to his army. He wanted David to believe that he was defeating his enemies because of the size and strength of his army. It was the desire of Satan to get David to turn his eyes from God for victory to himself and his military strength. Ultimately he wanted David to believe that he did not need God because his army could give him victory.

The temptation was for David to turn from God to trusting in his own strength and experience. This is a temptation for all of us. The more experience and education we have, the less we feel we need to trust God. Anything that keeps us from trusting in God alone for victory will be a hindrance to us. Satan does not fear our human strength, wisdom, education and experience. What he does fear, however, is the person whose trust is in the Lord alone and who walks in obedience to Him.

David fell for the temptation of Satan. He commanded Joab and his military commanders to count the Israelites and bring him back a report so he would know how many men he had at his disposal to fight his enemies (verse 2). In commanding this census, David turned his eyes from God as the source of his victories.

In verse 3 Joab warned David about his decision to take a census. He told David that by counting his men in this way, he would bring guilt on the entire nation. David overruled him and Joab was forced to take his men throughout all of Israel to do this census (verse 4).

Joab brought back a report to David of the number of fighting men at his disposal. In verse 5 Joab told David that he had one million one hundred thousand men in Israel who could handle the sword. He had another four hundred and seventy thousand men in Judah.

Notice from verse 6 that this census did not include a number from the tribe of Levi or Benjamin. Joab did not cooperate with David in this matter because he found it repulsive and believed it to be contrary to the purpose of God.

When David heard the result of the census, he was convicted in his heart. Maybe for the first time he saw what he was doing. He realized that he was trusting in his huge army for victory and not in the Lord. When he recognized what had done, David cried out to God:

I have sinned greatly by doing this. Now, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing (verse 8).

While David often fell into sin, he also confessed that sin and was restored in his relationship with God.

While God accepted the confession of David and forgave his sin, He demanded that this sin be punished. Forgiveness does not mean that we do not have to pay for our sin. Justice demands that sin be punished. There are those who believe that if we forgive someone they should

not have to suffer the consequences of their actions. This is not necessarily the case. God forgave David but also punished him.

In verse 9 God told the prophet Gad to offer David a choice of punishment. He gave David three options. The first option was three years of famine. The second option was three months of being defeated by his enemies. The final option was three days with the angel of the Lord ravaging the land (verse 12).

David was deeply distressed at the news Gad brought him. He chose the third option saying that it was better to fall into the hands of the Lord than into the hands of his enemies (verse 13). David knew that there was mercy and compassion in God but he did not trust his enemies.

God struck the land of Israel with a plague (verse 14). In the course of those three days, seventy thousand men died. As the angel of the Lord approached the city of Jerusalem, God's heart broke with compassion for His people. He saw the terrible devastation that had taken place and heard the cries of the people. "Enough! Withdraw your hand," the Lord told the angel. The angel of the LORD was standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite when God gave this command (verse 15).

Verse 16 tells us that David saw the angel of the Lord with a drawn sword. He was standing between heaven and the earth. David noticed that his sword was extended over Jerusalem. He knew what this meant and that Jerusalem would shortly be struck with this terrible plague. When he saw this angel, David and the elders, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces and pleaded with God for mercy (verse 16).

David told God that it was he who had ordered the fighting men be counted. He told God that he was the one who had sinned and not the people. "O LORD my God, let your hand fall upon me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people" David prayed in verse 17. David's heart was broken for his people. He compared them to innocent sheep. They had done nothing wrong but they were perishing because of his sin. David asked God to withdraw His hand from His people and let it fall entirely on him and his family. We see the shepherd heart of David and his deep concern for the people. We are left wondering if the prayer of David that day was what caused God to command the angel to withdraw his hand.

The angel of the Lord ordered Gad the prophet to tell David that he was to build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah (verse 18). David was then to offer a sacrifice to the Lord for his sin.

Araunah was threshing wheat with his four sons when he noticed the angel of the Lord with his drawn sword (verse 20). His sons were afraid and ran away but Araunah remained. Just at that time David approached the threshing floor to make his offering. When Araunah saw his king approaching, he bowed down before him with his face to the ground (verse 21).

David asked Araunah to let him have the site of his threshing floor so he could build an altar to stop the plague that had been ravaging the land (verse 22). David offered to pay full price for the land. Araunah told him he could have the floor as a gift (verse 23). He also offered his oxen for a sacrifice, his threshing sledges for wood and wheat and grain for a grain offering. Araunah offered these things freely to David.

David refused to take the land from Araunah for free. In verse 24 he insisted in paying full price for all that he gave him. "I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing," David told him. David gave him six hundred shekels of gold (15 pounds or 7 kilograms) for the site (verse 25). David knew that it was his sin that had caused the plague. He also knew that he was the one who would have to pay the price. He was not going to let someone else pay for his sin.

How tempting it is for us to offer sacrifices to the Lord that cost us nothing. We offer God what we have as extra. We offer Him what we no longer need. David wanted what he offered to God to cost him something. He wanted to make a sacrifice for God out of love for him. David also needed this offering to be personalized. This was not Araunah's offering, it was David's. Satan was offering David a way out but David refused to take it. David needed to pay the price personally. By paying full price for the offering, David was telling everyone present that he alone was responsible and needed to make the sacrifice.

In verse 26 David built an altar at the threshing floor of Araunah and offered burnt and fellowship offerings to God. He called on the Lord and the Lord answered him with fire from heaven. We are not told how that fire descended but it was clearly in answer to David's prayer. It confirmed to David and those present that God had heard and accepted David's offering.

The Lord spoke to the angel and he put his sword back in his sheath (verse 27). David knew then that God had answered his prayer (verse 28).

Verse 30 tells us that David could not go to Gibeon where the tabernacle was because he was afraid of the sword of

the angel of the Lord. The Lord commanded David to make his sacrifice at the threshing floor of Araunah rather than at the tabernacle of Gibeon. From 1 Chronicles 22:1 we understand that the temple that Solomon would build would be located on this very land. The Lord's blessing is seen in this. Unknown to David at the time, the Lord had just led him through this terrible ordeal to purchase the land where the temple would eventually be built.

David's sin of pride had terrible implications for the land. David was a man after God's own heart (see 1 Samuel 13:14) but his lessons sometimes came at terrible cost. God broke David's pride but it cost the whole nation plenty. This would be a lesson David would not soon forget.

#### For Consideration:

- How did David's ongoing victories cause him to become proud and lose his focus?
- What tempts you to take your eyes off the Lord? On what do you depend today for victory in your spiritual life and ministry? What does this chapter have to teach us?
- Does forgiveness mean that we never have to face the consequences of our sin? What does God's dealing with David teach us about the consequences of sin?
- How does David's paying full price for the threshing floor of Araunah show us that he accepted full blame for his actions?



- How is David's shepherd heart evident in this chapter?
- How does God use this incident to advance David's desire to see a temple for the Lord in Jerusalem?

For Prayer:

- Take a moment to thank the Lord for the ongoing victories He has given you.
- Ask the Lord to protect you from pride. Ask Him to help you to keep your eyes focused on Him, His strength and wisdom.
- Ask God to help you to accept full responsibility for your actions. Ask Him to forgive you for the times you failed to accept your responsibility.
- Thank the Lord that while we must pay the consequences for our sin, He is also able to use these consequences to advance His cause.
- Thank the Lord for His mercy even in punishing us for our sin.

## DAVID PREPARES FOR THE TEMPLE

---

Read 1 Chronicles 22:1-19

While it was not the will of the Lord that David build a temple, it was clearly one of David's greatest desires to see a temple built in Jerusalem for the glory of God. David was a mighty warrior but he was also a mighty worshiper of the Lord God. The book of Psalms is a clear indication of his heart for praise and worship. He did more for creative worship than anyone in the Old Testament period. It was David's desire that the Lord be praised in creative ways. He encouraged the writing of new psalms. He encouraged the creative expression of worship through music and dance. There seems to be a real contrast in the life of David. On the one hand, he was a mighty warrior and on the other a mighty man of praise.

In the last chapter we saw how David bought the threshing floor of Araunah and offered a sacrifice on behalf of his people to stop the plague that was devastating the land because of the census he had taken. Here in verse 1 David

determined that the land he had bought from Araunah would become the location of the temple of God. David could think of no better place for the temple than the place to which he had been called to offer a sacrifice for the forgiveness of his sin. He had seen the angel of the Lord with sword in hand in this place. He had seen the fire of God descend on his altar confirming that He had heard his prayer and was pleased with his sacrifice. This location was a location of sacrifice, forgiveness and deliverance. It was a holy place of intercession for God's people. Most of all, this was a place where David had met with God. There could be no better location for a temple.

In verses 2-4 we read how David gave orders to assemble the foreigners living in Israel and appoint them as stone-cutters to prepare dressed stones for the temple. It is easy to read this quickly and not see the immensity of this task. The task of preparing these stones would have been a large one. Moving the stones, carving them to size and storing them required a large number of men and expenditure of money. The land that David had purchased from Araunah would be transformed from a simple threshing floor to a large work site as stones and materials were cut and stored for the eventual construction of the temple.

David also provided great quantities of iron and bronze. The iron and bronze would be used for making nails for the doors of the gateways and other fittings. This too would have required a significant amount of work. Verse 3 tells us that David provided so much bronze that it could not be measured.

David also provided more cedar logs than could be counted (verse 4). These logs were purchased from the lands of Tyre and Sidon.

While David was not permitted to build the temple, he did a tremendous amount of work gathering materials and preparing for its construction. Verse 5 tells us that the reason for this was that he saw his son Solomon as being young and inexperienced. He wanted the house of God to be a magnificent structure. He did not want to leave the work to someone who was not experienced, lest the quality be inferior. In the mind of David, God deserved the very best. He wanted to personally assure that Solomon had the very best materials and workers available to him for its eventual construction.

David realized that a necessary part of preparing for the construction of the temple was to prepare his son Solomon. In verse 6-13 David charged Solomon with the responsibility of building the temple and being king in his place when he died. David's advice to Solomon at this time is advice that all who are in a ministry need to heed. David has a three-fold charge for his son Solomon in these verses. Let's examine this three-fold charge to Solomon.

### *Know Your Calling*

The first challenge David brought to Solomon was to know his God-given calling in life. In verses 7-10 David told Solomon that he had it on his heart to build this house for the Lord, but God would not permit him to do so because he had shed too much blood. David told his son Solomon that God had made it clear to him that he would build this temple and have rest from his enemies on all sides (verse 9).

Solomon had a call on his life. David wanted him to understand that calling and be faithful to it. In verse 11 David blessed Solomon by calling on God to be faithful to His promise and to give his son success in the construction of the temple. If Solomon was going to be successful in his

ministry, the first thing he needed to do was to be sure of that calling. It is possible to take on ministry that has not been given to us by God. The ministry that God will bless is the ministry He has called us to do. We cannot expect great blessing if we are not doing what God has called us to do. We are not to allow ourselves to be distracted from the calling of God on our lives. We should not be quick to take on anything that comes our way without first seeking to know if this is the purpose and call of God for us. If we want to be successful in our ministry, we need first to be sure that we are doing what God has called us to do.

### *Discretion and Understanding to Obey*

Notice, secondly, that David reminded his son that if he was going to succeed in his calling, he would need discretion and understanding to obey the law of the Lord (verse 12). David was reminding his son that there was nothing that would destroy his ministry quicker than disobedience to God's law. The success of his reign depended on his obedience to the laws of the Lord (verse 13).

Notice that Solomon would need discretion and understanding in order to be obedient. How do we gain understanding? Is it not by spending time in the Word of God? Discretion and understanding to obey the law of God would come as Solomon took the time to study and seek God for the application of the law of God to each new situation. If Solomon was going to be successful, he was going to have to do things God's way. He was not to trust his own understanding, but seek God's heart in everything he did. If he wanted the blessing of God on his life and ministry he would need to commit himself to absolute obedience to God's law and God's way.

*Courage and Strength*

Knowing and accepting God's call and living in obedience to His law were absolutely essential if Solomon was to be successful, but there was something else Solomon needed if his reign was to succeed. In verse 13, David told his son that he was going to have to be strong and courageous.

It would not always be easy to walk in obedience and follow the call of God on his life. God's calling will sometimes lead us through deep and lonely valleys. Sometimes it would mean making enemies. Solomon would be challenged and tried often in his reign as he sought to live out God's purpose for his life. In these difficult times, Solomon needed to be courageous and not give in to discouragement. Perseverance was of utmost importance. If Solomon's reign was to be a success he needed to keep going even when things got difficult. He was not to let the enemy discourage him. Instead, he was to draw from the Lord's strength, lift up his head and persevere. No ministry can succeed without perseverance. We will certainly have times when we feel discouraged. Discouragement must not stop us. The One who has called us is faithful and He will keep us.

David's advice to his son Solomon is good advice for all who serve the Lord. We would do well to apply this advice to our own spiritual walk and ministry.

In verse 14 David reminded Solomon that he had gone through great pains to provide him with all that he needed for the accomplishment of his calling. Notice what David set aside for the temple. David provided a hundred thousand talents of gold (3,750 tons) a million talents of silver (37,500 tons) and quantities of bronze and iron that could

not be numbered. The value of these articles was immense. Beyond this, David also provided workmen, stonecutters, masons, carpenters and men skilled in working with gold, silver, bronze and iron. Verse 16 tells us that the number of these skilled workmen was beyond number. All that was necessary for the temple was provided by David at tremendous cost to himself. Solomon would have the very best materials and workmen for the task ahead. He would lack nothing.

In verse 17-19 David called the leaders of Israel to himself and ordered them to help Solomon in this great task. He reminded them that God was with them and had promised rest on every side. Through David, God had subdued the nations and brought them into subjection so that the work of the temple would be unhindered (verse 18). David challenged the leaders to devote themselves heart and soul to seeking the Lord and building this sanctuary (verse 19). They were to stand with Solomon in this important work.

While David was not to build the temple, he played a vital role in preparing for this great task. He stirred up a vision in the lives of his people. He purchased the land, materials and hired the workers. God also used him to bring peace to the land so that this temple could be built without distraction. This was David's calling. Solomon was to build but David was to prepare everything for the construction. While he would never see this temple, he certainly deserved much credit.

## For Consideration:

- We see from this passage that David was not only a mighty warrior but a great man of praise and worship. Do you demonstrate these two qualities in your spiritual life?
- Why was Araunah's threshing floor an ideal place for the temple of God to be built?
- How important was the temple of God to David? How much did David invest in this temple according to this chapter?
- Do you know what God's calling is on your life? Have you been faithful to that calling?
- How important is obedience to the Word of God in ministry and the spiritual walk? How can a ministry be destroyed because of disobedience?
- How important is perseverance in ministry? Can a ministry succeed without perseverance?
- How important is it that we pursue a vision God has put on our heart even though we may never see it come to pass?

## For Prayer:

- Ask God to help you to be mighty in both battle and worship.
- Ask God to show you His calling on your life. Ask him to help you to be faithful to that calling.



- Ask God to give you time to study and wisdom to apply His truth to your life and ministry.
- Thank God that while troubles may come our way, His grace is sufficient. Ask Him to give you courage and strength to persevere.
- Take a moment to thank the Lord for the people He has brought into your life to support and help you accomplish the purposes of God.

## 21

# A RESTRUCTURING OF THE LEVITICAL MINISTRY

---

Read 1 Chronicles 23:1-24:31

David is nearing the end of his life. It was time for him to put his son Solomon on the throne as king over the nation. While David had been a mighty warrior and had brought great victory to his people, he was also a man with a deep concern for the worship and praise of the Lord God of Israel. We have seen in this book that David went to great lengths to prepare for the construction of the temple in Jerusalem. He had already amassed large quantities of supplies for this purpose. Here in 1 Chronicles 23-24 David's concern is to prepare the priests and Levites for the new responsibilities they would have in this temple his son would build.

To help us understand this passage let me begin with some historical background. Of the twelve tribes of Israel, the tribe of Levi was chosen to serve in the tabernacle (Numbers 1:47-53). Levi had three sons (Gershon, Kohath and Merari). In the early days, God's people were wandering through the wilderness. The tabernacle went with them wherever they went. God gave Levi's sons the responsibility of transporting the tabernacle and the various articles

used in worship. See Numbers 3:21-39 for a detailed description of the responsibilities of each son.

Levi's son Kohath had two very important descendants by the names of Moses and Aaron. Both of these men were powerfully used of God in the life of the nation of Israel. Of particular concern for us in this passage is Aaron. God chose Aaron and his direct descendants for a very special role in the tabernacle. Exodus 40:13-15 tell us that Aaron and his sons were to be priests. They were given the role of offering the sacrifices required by the law of God for the people of Israel. The remaining Levites were temple helpers. We will notice here a distinction made between the priests and the Levites.

One of the responsibilities of the Levites had to do with the transporting of the tabernacle from place to place as God's people wandered through the wilderness. With the building of a temple in Jerusalem there would no longer be any need for transporting the articles used in worship. These articles would remain in the temple in Jerusalem. It was David's concern that these Levites understood their new role in the temple his son Solomon would build.

David called the Levites together to clarify the new role they would have in the temple (23:2). David and his men counted thirty-eight thousand Levites thirty years old and over (23:3). David divided these 38,000 Levites into four ministry groups. Twenty-four thousand were to supervise the work of the temple (23:3). Six thousand were to be officials and judges (23:4). Four thousand were to be gatekeepers and the last four thousand were to play the musical instruments David had provided for worship.

In 1 Chronicles 23:6-24 we have the genealogical records of the three sons of Levi (Gershon, Kohath and Merari). The record of their descendants is recorded by family.

## GERSHON AND HIS DESCENDANTS

Verses 7-11 list the descendants of Levi's son Gershon. Gershon's two sons Ladan and Shimei are recorded in verse 7. Verses 8-9 trace the descendants of Ladan. The Shimei listed in verse 9 is not Ladan's brother but a descendant by the same name. This is clear from verse 9 where it specifically mentions that he was of the family of Ladan.

The line of Gershon's second son Shimei is traced in verses 10-11. Of special note is the fact that his sons Jeush and Beriah did not have many sons so they were counted as one family with one assignment in the work of the Lord (verse 11).

## KOHATH AND HIS DESCENDANTS

The line of Levi's second son Kohath is found in 1 Chronicles 23:12-20. Kohath had four sons (verse 12). Of special note here is his son Amram whose sons were the most famous of all the Levites. These sons were Aaron and Moses. Aaron and his descendants were set apart to offer sacrifices before the Lord God. They were also to pronounce blessings on the people of God (verse 13). Moses' line is traced for several generations in verse 14-20.

## MERARI AND HIS DESCENDANTS

The third son of Levi was Merari. His descendants are recorded in verses 21-23.

The heads of these families were counted and recorded individually. Notice in verse 25 that the reason David had the Levites counted was because they no longer had to carry the tabernacle or any of the articles for the service of the Lord. The list that David drew up would serve as a tool for dividing up the new responsibilities of the Levites in the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. The names of the Levites from twenty years of age and up were recorded for this purpose (verse 27).

In 1 Chronicles 23:28-32 we have a general description of the duties and responsibilities of the Levites. The Levites were to help Aaron and his descendants in their service. This was done in several ways.

First, they were in charge of the courtyards and side rooms in the temple (verse 28). While not specifically stated here, these responsibilities would include such things as cleaning and maintenance.

Second, the Levites helped in the purification of the sacred objects used for worship (verse 28). This was done in accordance with the Law of Moses.

Third, they were in charge of the bread that was set out every day on the table of the Lord, preparing the flour and grain offerings, unleavened wafers and baking, mixing and measuring quantities of ingredients as prescribed by God to Moses (verse 29).

Finally, the Levites were responsible to stand each morning and evening to thank and praise the Lord whenever an offering was made. They were also to do this at special festivals and feasts (verse 31). This would likely be done in music and song.

Chapter 24 focuses on the priestly descendants of Aaron. Verse 1 tells us that Aaron had four descendants. Two of his sons died when they offered strange incense to the Lord. This incense was not prepared as God had told Moses to prepare it. For this, God struck Nadab and Abihu (see Leviticus 10:1-3). Aaron's sons Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests (verse 2).

David set up ministry divisions with the help of Zadok (a descendant of Eleazar) and Ahimelech. Eleazar's descendants outnumbered the descendants of Ithamar. There were sixteen heads of families in Eleazar's line while there were only eight heads in Ithamar's (verse 4). Ministry divisions were divided up impartially by drawing lots.

It is important that we understand that in the mind of those who drew the lots, this decision was not being left to chance. The Israelite mind did not accept the concept of chance or luck. The Israelite believed in a sovereign God whose purposes were being worked out in all things. Proverbs 16:33 tells us, "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD."

When David, Eleazar and Ithamar drew lots, it was with the understanding that the Lord God was very much involved in that process. They accepted the decision of the lot as being God's decision. They took all human preference and involvement out of the process of selecting the ministry divisions.

As the lots were drawn, Shemaiah, a Levitical scribe recorded the names of those chosen by lot. Notice in 1 Chronicles 24:6 that this was done in the presence of the king, Zadok and Ahimelech the priests, and the Levites. Everything was done in order.

Verses 7-18 give us the names of the family heads chosen by lot. Notice that there were twenty-four ministry divisions. Each division would be responsible for about two weeks each year. The list also gave the order in which each of these divisions would serve (verse 19).

1 Chronicles 24:20-30 tells us that there were other Levites were not included in the list mentioned above. These Levites were also given a roll to play. Their ministry responsibilities were chosen for them by the casting of lots (verse 31).

We see from this that the work at the temple involved a large number of people. With this number of people involved in the ministry, it was important that there be some order and structure to what was happening to avoid confusion. Each person had a role to play. Their work schedule would be laid out for them.

For Consideration:

- What does David's concern to see the restructuring of the roles of the Levites in the temple tell us about his concern for the temple worship?
- Why was it necessary that the ministry of the Levites be restructured? What differences would a temple in Jerusalem bring to the ministry of the Levites?
- What was the difference between the roll of Aaron's direct descendants and the roll of the rest of the Levites?

- What do we learn here about how Israel saw the drawing of lots? Why did they use this as a means of making important decisions?
- How important is order in the established church of our day?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to show you your role and responsibility in the work of the Kingdom.
- Thank the Lord that He has called us all to minister on His behalf in this world. Ask Him to help you to be a faithful representative.
- Ask the Lord to forgive you for the times you did not take His will for your life into consideration.



## 22

# MUSICIANS, GATEKEEPERS, TREASURERS, JUDGES AND ADMINISTRATORS

---

Read 1 Chronicles 25:1-26:32

In chapters 23 and 24 we saw how David divided the Levites and priests into ministry divisions, giving them particular responsibilities and providing them with a work schedule. Here in the next two chapters we see a further division of labour among the Levitical musicians and gatekeepers. It is David's concern to see order in the worship of the Lord God.

In 1 Chronicles 25 David set apart the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying. Notice specifically that the prophesying was accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals. It is uncertain how this prophecy unfolded. Some believe that as the music played, the prophets were inspired to speak from the Lord and offer Him praise. We see various examples in Scripture of prophets calling for musicians to play while they sought the Lord on a particular matter (see 1 Samuel 10:5; 2 Kings 3:15-16).

Others see the use of music as a means of the Lord speaking to His people. If this was the case, psalms or hymns were composed with a message and sung in the presence of God and the listeners. It is quite possible that both of these suggestions were the case.

While we are not completely sure how all this took place, we see from this verse that both music and spoken word were interconnected and played an important role in the worship of the temple. Four of Asaph's sons prophesied under the supervision of the king (verse 2). Six sons of Jeduthun prophesied using the harp to thank and praise the Lord (verse 3). They were under the supervision of their father. Heman's sons played the harp, lyre and cymbal under the supervision of their father (verse 6). Verse 5 tells us that these sons had been given to Heman through a promise of God to exalt him.

What is important to note here is that each person responsible for the work of the temple was supervised or accountable to someone else. Asaph's sons were supervised or responsible to the king. Jeduthun's and Heman's sons were responsible to their fathers. Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman were responsible to the king (verse 6). There is an important principle for us to follow in this. We should all be accountable to someone in ministry. This keeps us from falling or wandering from the path God has given us to follow. We should beware of those who refuse to answer to anyone else.

1 Chronicles 25:7 tells us that there were 288 trained and skilled musicians who served in the temple. Again this shows us the importance of music in the worship of God.

Verse 8 shows us that the duties of the musicians and prophets were chosen by lot. This removed any human

involvement in the choice of who served. As the lots were cast the decision was seen to be the decision of the Lord and each person accepted this as God's will. The lot determined their order and ministry teams and God determined how the lot would fall. Verse 8 makes it clear that the young and old alike, teacher as well as student cast their lot. Everyone was treated the same. Experience, age or education were not involved in the decision. All that mattered was the will of God as revealed through the lot. Twenty-four lots were cast for the ministry teams who would serve throughout the year. With twenty-four teams each team could minister for about two weeks each year. The names of the ministry teams are listed in verses 9-31. It appears that there were twelve people on each team.

In 1 Chronicles 26:1-19 we read about the ministry divisions of the gatekeepers. The role of the gatekeeper was a practical role in the temple. They guarded and were involved in various practical duties in the maintenance and upkeep of the temple. Verses 1-11 give us the names of four key families involved in this ministry.

Verses 1-3 give us the names of seven sons of Meshelemiah the son of Kore who served as gatekeepers. The family of Obed-Edom is mentioned in verse 4-8. It should be mentioned here that Obed-Edom had taken care of the ark of the Lord for a time. 1 Chronicles 13:13-14 tells us that God richly blessed him. This is evident when verse 8 tells us that there were sixty-two descendants of Obed-Edom who served the Lord as gatekeepers. Obed-Edom's sons and grandsons are recorded for us in verses 4-8.

Another important family of gatekeepers was the family of Meshelemiah. He had eighteen sons and relatives serving in this capacity (verse 9).

Finally Hosah's family is noted in verse 10. He contributed thirteen sons and relatives to this work (verse 11).

As was the case for the musicians, the gatekeepers were divided into ministry teams. These teams were chosen by lots. Notice that no account was taken of the age and experience of these men. The decision was left with the Lord (verse 13).

Each ministry division was given responsibility for a certain gate. The lot fell on Shelemiah to watch and care for the East Gate (verse 14). Zechariah was given charge of the North Gate (verse 14). The South Gate was under the care of Obed-Edom and the storehouses fell to his sons (verse 15). This may have been the gate the king would use. Obed-Edom and his sons were again being blessed by God by receiving this important position. The West Gate fell and the Shalleketh Gate fell to Shuppim and Hosah (verse 16).

From verses 17-18 we see the number of men who were to work each day at these various gates. Six Levites were to be stationed on the East Gate. Four were to work at the North Gate. Four Levites were to guard the South Gate and another two were to work in the storehouses. Finally at the West Gate four Levites were to be stationed at the road and two were to remain in the court.

1 Chronicles 26:20-28 speaks about the treasurers who were responsible for receiving the offerings received from God's people as well as any plunder taken from enemies and dedicated to the Lord (verse 20). A number of families were involved as treasurers. The sons of Ladan serving as treasurers are listed in verses 21-22. Verses 23-25 give us the names of those from the families of the Amramites, the Izharites, the Hebronites and the Uzzielites. Of particular

note here is Shelomith who, along with his relatives, were in charge of the things dedicated by King David and his commanders (verse 26). This included the plunder they took from battles. Shelomith and his relatives were responsible for the care of everything dedicated by Samuel the prophet, Saul the former king, and those articles dedicated to the temple by the military commanders Abner and Joab (verse 28).

Finally in 1 Chronicles 26:29-32 David appointed judges and administrators. These men likely moved from place to place in Israel judging matters among the people according to the Law of God. Official judges were assigned in verse 29. They were from the family of the Izharites.

Traveling administrators were also assigned in verses 30-32. Seventeen hundred men were chosen from the family of the Hebronites to serve west of the Jordan (verse 30). Twenty-seven hundred others from the family of Jeriah the Hebronite were put in charge of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. They were responsible to carry out the affairs of the king in these various regions of Israel (verse 32).

The administration of the temple would take a large team of servants. Each person needed to know his responsibility. They needed to know when they were scheduled to work and what their task involved if the work of the temple was to be carried out. All this was done to the glory of God.

For Consideration:

- What is the connection between prophecy and music in this passage? Can music be prophetic in nature? In other words, can music express God's heart for His people?

- We see in this passage how God's servants were supervised or accountable to each other. How important is it that we be accountable to each other in the church today? What problems would this resolve?
- In the selection of musicians and gatekeepers, age, experience and education were not taken into account when they were put in their various ministry teams. How important is education and experience in ministry? Should God's leading take priority over experience and education?
- Notice the various roles in the temple. What particular role has the Lord given you to play in your local fellowship?

For Prayer:

- Take a moment to thank the Lord for the role of music in worship. Thank Him for the hymns and choruses that reflect the heart of God for His people. Ask Him to raise up more men and women to write music that will speak prophetically to your culture.
- Ask the Lord to help you to be willing to be accountable to others in the body of Christ.
- Thank the Lord that He is not limited to using only those who are educated and experienced.
- Ask the Lord to show you clearly what His role for you is in the body of Christ.

## 23

### DAVID'S OFFICERS

---

Read 1 Chronicles 27:1-34

David did not govern Israel alone. He worked with a larger number of capable men who helped him administer the land God had given him. Only rarely does God ever call us to work on our own. More often He calls us to work with others to accomplish His purposes. When God calls, He also provides us with team workers to work alongside us. Some people on that team provide the financial resources, other help in practical ways and still others encourage, counsel or pray. We should never underestimate the importance of this team.

What is significant in this chapter is that the names of those who were on David's team are mentioned. This chapter is dedicated to the faithful workers in David's administration who made his reign a success. It should be noted that space does not permit the writer to list all the names of those who were on David's team. Those mentioned here were leaders and family heads.

We begin with a list of the commanders of David's army by division. From the verses that follow we understand that David's army was divided into twelve divisions with one division on duty each month. Each of these divisions consisted of 24,000 men (verse 1). The divisions comprised groups of hundreds and thousands with their leaders. A list of the division heads and significant leaders in these divisions is found in verses 2-15.

Jashobeam was in charge of the first division. His division served the first month of the year (verses 2-3). Dodai was in charge of the division that served the second month. Mikoloth was a significant leader in Dodai's division (verse 4). Benaiah and his division worked the third month. His father was Jehoiada the priest. Benaiah was a valiant warrior and was part of an elite group of soldiers known as the "Thirty." His son Ammizabad was a leader in his division (verses 5-6). Asahel served with his division on the fourth month. He was succeeded by his son Zebadiah (verse 7). Shamhuth and his men were responsible for the fifth month (verse 8). Ira's division worked the sixth month (verse 9). Helez the Ephraimite served on the seventh month (verse 10). The eighth month was given to Shibbecai and his men (verse 11). Abiezer's division was responsible for the ninth month (verse 12). On the tenth month Maharai and his division were in charge (verse 13). Benaiah the Pirathonite of Ephraim and his division served the eleventh month (verse 14). Heldai was responsible for the twelfth and final month of the year (verse 15).

The next list is found in verses 16-22. Here in these verses we have the list of tribal chiefs. These were leaders in their various tribes. No mention is made of the tribes of Asher and Gad. There is no reason given for this in the text. These verses are summarized in the following chart:



<b>Tribe</b>	<b>Tribal Chief</b>	<b>Verse</b>
Reuben	Eliezer	Verse 16
Simeon	Shephataih	Verse 16
Levi	Hashabiah	Verse 17
Levi (from Aaron)	Zadok	Verse 17
Judah	Elihu	Verse 18
Issachar	Omri	Verse 18
Zebulun	Ishmaiah	Verse 19
Naphtali	Jerimoth	Verse 19
Ephraim	Hoshea	Verse 20
Manasseh	Joel and Iddo	Verse 21
Benjamin	Jaasiel	Verses 21-22
Dan	Azarel	Verse 22

It is interesting to note in verses 23-24 that David did not count the number of men in his service. He did not do this because God had promised to make Israel as numerous as the stars of the sky (verse 23). In 1 Chronicles 21 David took a census of the men in his army. In doing so David turned his eyes from the Lord to his own military strength. God convicted him of his sin and punished him by sending a severe plague on the land. David does not count the number of men in his land this time. Instead, he chose to

put his confidence in the Lord. It really did not matter now to him how many men he had in his army. God could deliver him and give him victory with a small number as well as a large number. What was important was not how many men he had but that the Lord was with him.

While David refused to count the number of men in his army, Joab his military commander began to count them but did not finish. According to verse 24 God's wrath fell on Israel because of Joab's action and the number was never recorded. The lesson for us is an important one. How often do we get caught up in numbers? We count the number of people who attend our church. We count how many people have come to the Lord through our ministries. My tendency is to count how many books I have written. What does all this have to do with the kingdom of God? Numbers do not advance the kingdom, only the Spirit of God can do this. Numbers are not an indication of a healthy church. You can have all kinds of people attending your church and your church can be far from God. We want to feel like we have done something great and we measure success in ministry by numbers. David learned that numbers were of no real significance in the kingdom of God. May God deliver us from the pride of statistics and numbers.

Verses 25-34 conclude this chapter with a list of officers in charge of various responsibilities in the kingdom. Azmaveth was in charge of the royal storehouses. Jonathan took care of the storehouses in the outlying districts, villages and watchtowers (verse 25). Ezra was head of the field workers who farmed the land (verse 26). Shimei was responsible for the vineyards. He was assisted by Zabdi who took care of the produce used for making wine (verse 27). Baal-Hanan was over the work of the olive trees and sycamore-fig trees in the western foothills. He was assisted

by Joah who was in charge of the supplies of olive oil produced from these trees (verse 28). Shitrai was over the herds grazing in Sharon while Shaphat was responsible for the herds that grazed in the valleys (verse 29). Obil was over the camels and Jehdeiah was in charge of the donkeys (verse 30). Jaziz cared for the flocks (verse 31).

David also had counsellors to advise him in matters of the court. Jonathan, David's uncle, was not only his counsellor but also a scribe. Jehiel took care of the king's sons (verse 32). Ahithophel was a counsellor to the king and Hushai was a close friend whose advice David also sought (verse 33). Ahithophel was succeeded by Jehoiada. Joab was David's military commander who advised David in matters of battle (verse 34).

What we need to understand here is that David did not work alone. In this team that God provided him were men who were very capable. David depended on them and sought their advice. While David's confidence and trust was in the Lord his God, he knew that God would use each of the members of his team to advance his kingdom. Who has God given to comfort, advise, encourage or support in the work He has called you to do?

For Consideration:

- God places us in teams and gives us others to help in our walk and ministry. Take a moment to consider those God has given to help you accomplish His purposes for your life.
- How important is it that we learn how to work with others to advance the kingdom of God?

- Have you ever gotten caught up in numbers and statistics? While there are times when numbers and statistics can be helpful, what is our temptation? Why did David refuse to number his men?
- David's team consisted of men in various roles and capacities. What role do you play in the kingdom of God?
- David listened to the advice of different counselors. Do you have people you can go to for advice? How easy is it for you to listen to advice of a brother or sister in Christ? How important is it that we listen to advice?

For Prayer:

- Take a moment to thank the Lord for the people He has given you to help accomplish His purpose for your life.
- Ask God to help you to work more willingly with those He has given you. Ask Him to help you to have a deeper appreciation for those He had called to stand with you.
- Ask God to help you not to get caught up in numbers and statistics. Ask Him instead to help you to put your trust fully in Him.
- Ask God to give you greater willingness to listen to the advice of your brothers and sisters in Christ.

## DAVID PREPARES SOLOMON AND HIS OFFICIALS

---

Read 1 Chronicles 28:1-21

David was getting old. His time to reign over Israel was coming to an end. His final effort was to prepare his people for his death and the reign of his son Solomon. David's great desire was that his people continue to serve and worship the Lord with their whole heart.

As chapter 28 begins, David summons the officials of Israel. We examined these officials in chapter 27. When the officials came to David, he shared with them his heart for the construction of a temple in Jerusalem. In verse 2 he reminded them how he had a desire in his heart to build this temple but God had a different plan because he had shed too much blood (verse 3). David told his leaders, however, that while God would not permit him to build this temple, He had given this task to his son Solomon (verses 4-5).

God also promised David that He would be with Solomon. God would be a father to him and Solomon would be his dearly loved son (verse 6). God would establish his

kingdom forever as long as he obeyed Him and followed His laws and decrees (verse 7).

With this assurance from God concerning his son and the future of the nation, David challenged his officials in the sight of the people and in the presence of God to be careful to follow all the commands of the Lord. As long as they followed the commands of the Lord and honoured Him, they would possess the land and pass on a rich inheritance to their children (verse 8). Obedience and faithfulness to God would bring great blessing on their land and families. They would prosper as they obeyed and faithfully served the Lord.

Having challenged his officials to obey and serve the Lord faithfully, David turned to his son Solomon. In verses 9-10 David speaks directly to him. His challenge to Solomon is two-fold. David's first challenge to Solomon was to wholehearted devotion to the Lord. Notice what this wholehearted devotion included.

In verse 9 David told his son that he was to acknowledge God. To acknowledge God in this sense is to take Him into all our plans. We cannot serve with wholehearted devotion if we do not take God into our plans. Sometimes we take God into some areas of our life and not into others. We consult Him in serious matters but not in the little things. The challenge of David to Solomon was to acknowledge God in all things. If we are to be wholehearted in our devotion we must seek God's heart, not just for some things but for everything. Wholehearted devotion involves bringing God into every decision, attitude and action.

The second ingredient in wholehearted devotion, according to David, is a willing heart. If we are to be wholehearted, we cannot be divided in our heart. You can give

on the outside but have a heart that is unwilling or resentful on the inside. You can serve with a wrong attitude. Wholehearted devotion involves the mind. If we are to serve with wholehearted devotion we must have a willing and sincere attitude. We must desire to serve God and not just make a pretence of it. God sees the attitude of our heart. He knows whether we are sincere in our hearts and minds. If you want to serve with wholehearted devotion you must have a willing mind to go with your actions. Your motives and thoughts must also be right before God.

Finally, wholehearted devotion also involves seeking. David reminded his son Solomon that if he sought God, he would find Him, but if he forsook Him, he would be rejected. If we want to serve God with wholehearted devotion, we must actively seek Him. He must become a passion in life. There is no room for laziness in wholehearted devotion. Those who have wholehearted devotion for God are actively seeking Him and His purpose. Their love and devotion for God creates a hunger and thirst in their lives for His presence and His purposes. They are driven and passionate in their pursuit of God. They must know Him. They will risk everything to find Him and His purpose for their lives. There can be no wholehearted devotion without actively seeking God. David's first challenge to Solomon was to actively seek God with a whole hearted and sincere hunger to know Him and His will in all things. We can only imagine what impact that attitude would have on Solomon's reign as king.

David also challenged Solomon to be strong and do the work (verse 10). Solomon had a lot of work to do if he was to accomplish the purpose of God for his life and ministry. David challenged his son to work hard. There can be no success in ministry if we are not willing to work hard and persevere in the tough times. Serving the Lord will not be

easy. Serving the Lord will require discipline and effort. It would be easy for Solomon to sit back and let everyone serve him. David challenged him to work hard and be strong in the face of the difficulties and obstacles that would come his way.

In verse 11 David handed over the plans for the construction of the temple to his son Solomon. Those plans included the details for the construction of the temple porch, building, storerooms and inner rooms. It is important to note verse 12 which tells us that these plans were not of David's design. In verse 12 we see that these plans were the plans the "Spirit had put in his mind." What David handed over to Solomon that day were God's plans for the construction of the temple.

David also gave his son the instruction for the divisions of the priests and Levites in the work of the temple. We examined these divisions in 1 Chronicles 23-26.

In verse 14 David designated the gold and silver to be used in the articles crafted for the temple worship. David gave Solomon the weight in gold and silver for the lampstands, lamps (verse 15), tables (verse 16), forks, sprinkling bowls, pitchers, dishes (verse 17), as well as the weight in gold of the altar of incense and the crafted cherubim that spread their wings over the ark of the covenant (verse 18).

All the details of the construction of the temple were meticulously laid out for Solomon, down to the weight of each fork and bowl used in worship. Notice that these plans and their details were not from David's own mind:



"All this, I have in writing from the hand of the LORD upon me, and He gave me understanding in all the details of the plan" (verse 19).

It is quite clear from this that David was directed by the Spirit of God in the details he received for the construction of this temple. He is trying to impress on his son that the task he was about to undertake was given to him by God and not just David's idea.

Having given Solomon the detailed plans for the temple, David again challenged him in the task. In verse 20 he told him to be strong and courageous. He was not to be afraid or discouraged because the Lord would be with him. God would not fail or forsake him until he had completed the work He had called him to do. There would be difficulties. There would be times when Solomon would be discouraged. Solomon was to be courageous and remember that God would be with him all the way. It is important that we understand that even when God is with us, we will still have to face difficulties and struggles.

What a comfort it is to know that the God who calls us will go with us. He will never leave us until we have completed the task He has called us to do. We can step out with confidence. We can face the opposition of the enemy because God is with us and will never forsake us.

Not only would Solomon know the presence of God and His blessing on his ministry but God would provide him with a team of helpers to complete the task. David reminds Solomon in verse 21 that the priests and Levites were ready for all the work in the temple. God had also provided him with willing men skilled in many different crafts. The officials and all the people would help him and obey his every command.

What a comfort these words would have been to Solomon. Not only was God going to be with him but He had also provided him with all that was necessary to accomplish the task. The gold and silver were in place, the craftsmen, priests, Levites and officials were standing with him in support. There was nothing missing. All Solomon had to do was to be faithful to the Lord and do the work. The same is true for us today. God has provided all that is necessary for us to accomplish the work. Nothing is missing but our wholehearted devotion to Him and to the work he has called us to do.

#### For Consideration:

- What is the connection between obedience and blessing in this passage? To what extent would obedience insure God's blessing in Solomon's reign?
- What does David tell us are the ingredients in wholehearted devotion to God?
- David challenges his son Solomon to be strong and do the work. Has this been your experience in ministry? Have you been strong? Have you been doing what God has called you to do?
- What comfort does David give to his son Solomon in light of the difficulties he would encounter in his work?
- David shows Solomon that everything was in place for the success of his mission. All that was required was that he be faithful to the call of God and to live

in obedience and wholehearted devotion to Him. Is this true for you and your calling today?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to help you to live more fully in absolute obedience to Him. Ask Him to show you if there is anything standing between you and your relationship with Him.
- Ask the Lord to show you any way in which you have fallen short of wholehearted devotion to Him.
- Ask God to give you strength and diligence to work hard to accomplish His purpose for your life. Ask Him to give you greater courage in following His will.
- Thank the Lord that He has provided all that we need for the accomplishing of His purposes for our lives and ministries. Thank Him that all that is now required is faithfulness and obedience.

## 25

# ISRAEL COMMITS TO BUILDING THE TEMPLE

---

Read 1 Chronicles 29:1-30

In the last chapter, David, preparing for his death, challenged Solomon to wholehearted devotion to the Lord and to building a temple in Jerusalem for His worship and praise.

As we begin chapter 29, David speaks to the whole assembly of Israel. His desire was to challenge them to devote themselves to the work of the temple.

In verse 1, David reminded the people that his son Solomon was young and inexperienced in the work God had called him to do. The task of building the temple was a huge one that would require tremendous skill and expense. He reminded them that this temple was not for man but for God, so it was important that they give their best. In the mind of David, the Lord deserved the very best. He challenged the people to give sacrificially because they were serving the Lord in this endeavour.

David reminded the people that he had given of his own resources to see this temple completed. He had given gold, silver, iron, wood, bronze, and precious stones in large quantities (verse 2). Besides all these things David was now giving three thousand talents of gold (110 tons) and seven thousand talents of silver (260 tons) from his personal treasures for the work of the temple (verses 3-5).

In verse 5 David issued a challenge to the people. "Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the LORD?" he asked. David could ask this of his people because he himself had first set an example. He was not asking them to do anything that he would not do. David gave sacrificially to the work of the Lord. He was now asking the people to join him in this.

In verse 6, the leaders of families and the officers in David's administration took on David's challenge and gave willingly to the work of the temple. Together they gave five thousand talents (190 tons) and ten thousand darics (185 pounds or 84 kilograms) of gold, ten thousand talents of silver (185 tons), eighteen thousand talents of bronze (675 tons) and a hundred thousand talents (3,750 tons) of iron along with precious stones (verses 7-8).

When the people saw how willingly their leaders gave, they rejoiced and gave freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord for the work of the temple. When David saw this he was very happy (verse 9).

Notice in verse 10 the response of David to the moving of God among His people. David praised the Lord in the presence of the people. We have a record of David's prayer on that occasion in verses 10-19. Let us take a brief look at this prayer.

David begins his prayer with praise and thanksgiving. Notice in verse 10 that he addressed the Lord and God of his father Israel. As Lord and God, He was over the nation. It was to Him that all praise and worship were due. David recognized God to be "from everlasting to everlasting." That is to say, His God had no beginning and no end. He was an eternal God.

In verse 11 David confesses that greatness, power, glory, majesty and splendour all belong to the Lord. They served an awesome and powerful God. Everything on the earth belonged to God. There was nothing that was not to be in submission to Him. He was king and Lord over the kingdoms of this world. He reigned as an exalted head over all. All kings and all authorities were under Him and His sovereign rule.

All wealth and honour came from God. There is nothing we have that does not come from him. We are dependent on Him for everything (verse 12). In the hands of this God were strength and power. He gives strength to all. Without His enabling we would be powerless. It is interesting that David, who was the most powerful king on the earth at the time, recognized his need of God and His enabling. David praised the Lord for the offerings that His people were able to make toward the temple but recognized that everything they had given that day was already the Lord's. Everything they gave had come from His hands and rightfully belonged to Him anyway. They had no cause to be proud. They only gave back to God what was already His (verses 13-16).

How easy it is for us to think we have done a great service to God by giving Him back what is already rightfully His. God does not look so much at the amount we give but at the attitude of our heart in giving. In verse 17 David

reminds God that they were giving to Him out of a willing heart. There were no false motives or intentions in their offerings. They gave to the Lord with a joyful heart that sought His glory alone (verse 17). David was pleased to see an honest and wholehearted devotion in the lives of the people that day. In verse 18 he prayed that the Lord would keep this desire in their hearts.

In verse 19 David prays that God would also keep his son Solomon and give him wholehearted devotion to keep His commandments and to carry out his responsibility for the work of the temple. A devoted heart is not of human origin, it is from God. While God will give us this kind of heart, it is up to us to receive it and live in obedience to Him. In the history of the church, we have met individuals who believed that they could have a pure and holy heart by human effort. No amount of sacrifice or discipline will create a holy and contrite heart. You can pluck out your eyes and still find lust in your heart. You can plug your ears and still find evil thoughts entering your mind. God alone can cleanse our heart and make it pure. Our responsibility is to let Him do His work in us and walk in obedience.

As David finished offering his praise to the Lord he invited the people to offer up their own praise to Him. In verse 20 the people bowed to the ground and worshipped the Lord for His goodness. The next day they offered sacrifices to the Lord. One thousand bulls, one thousand rams and a thousand male lambs were sacrificed to the Lord along with numerous drink offerings and other sacrifices (verse 21). God's people celebrated His goodness not only by falling down on their faces and offering Him sacrifices but also by eating and drinking with great joy in His presence (verse 22).

I would like to take a moment here to consider verse 22 in greater detail. Worshiping God is both a sombre and joyous thing. There is a seriousness to worship. This is found in how the people bowed to the ground or in how they offered their sacrifices to Him. Verse 22 reminds us, however, that worship is also a joyous experience. As they worshipped God, they ate and drank with joy in their hearts. Israel enjoyed the blessing of God as they ate and drank in His presence. They blessed the heart of God as they rejoiced and enjoyed His blessings.

In verse 22 the people anointed Solomon as king. Solomon would sit on the throne of Israel in the place of his father David (verse 23). As God promised David, His blessing was on Solomon. David's officers pledged their submission to Solomon (verse 24). God exalted Solomon in the sight of the people and blessed him as he had never blessed any other king (verse 25).

As for David, he died at a "good old age" after forty years of ruling as king in Israel and Judah (verse 26-28). The events of David's reign are recorded from beginning to end in the records of Samuel as well as the records of Gad the prophet (verses 29-30).

#### For Consideration:

- David believed that the Lord deserved the best he had. Have you given the Lord the best you have?
- As a leader, David was willing to make great sacrifices for the work of the Lord. He did not ask his people to give anything he himself would not give.



Have you demonstrated by your life what you expect from others?

- What does David's prayer teach us about God?
- We cannot give God what He does not already own. How does this statement keep us from pride in what we give?
- Can human effort create a pure heart? Who alone can give us a pure heart?
- How is enjoying the blessings of God an act of thanksgiving and praise?

For Prayer:

- Ask God to give you grace to be an example to those around you.
- Ask God to give you a heart of wholehearted devotion to Him. Thank Him that He is willing to give this kind of heart to all who will obey and surrender to Him.
- Take a moment to thank the Lord for the specific blessings He has given you.
- Ask God to keep you from pride in your service or worship. Thank Him that all you do or give comes from Him.

## 26

### SOLOMON

### BEGINS THE WORK

---

Read 2 Chronicles 1:1-2:18

Solomon was now king in Israel. God's blessing was on Solomon just as He had promised David. Verse 1 tells us that God made Solomon "exceedingly great."

One of Solomon's first acts was to call his commanders, judges and leaders of Israel to go with him to Gibeon where the tabernacle of the Lord was located (verse 3). While David had brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, the tabernacle was located in Gibeon. Solomon and his leaders went to the tabernacle to seek the Lord (verse 5). While Solomon could have inquired of the Lord in Jerusalem before the Ark of the Covenant, it is likely that he went to the altar at Gibeon because he wanted to make a number of sacrifices to the Lord. Verse 6 tells us that he offered a thousand burnt offerings on the bronze altar in Gibeon.

That night the Lord God appeared to Solomon and asked him what He could give him. God told him that He would give him whatever he asked (verse 7). Solomon praised

God for the fact that He had made him king over a people who were as numerous as the dust of the earth (verses 8-9). While this was a tremendous honour, Solomon also felt unprepared to deal with such a task. In verse 10 Solomon asked God for wisdom and knowledge that he might lead His people. His desire was to do the work God had called him to do well. He was aware of his need of God's wisdom to do the work he had been called to do.

Solomon makes a distinction here between his calling and his empowering. Solomon knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that he had been called of God to the task of leading His people. He also knew, however, that if he was to do this task well he needed to be empowered by God. Not everyone understands this distinction. Calling and empowering are two separate things. You can be called of God to a particular ministry and serve in that ministry in human strength. There are many servants of God who are trying to minister in their own strength. They are doing the right thing but they are not doing it in the power of God or by His leading. Solomon was aware that a calling was not enough. He understood that he also needed to be empowered by God in a special way if he was going to accomplish what God wanted him to accomplish. We would do well to recognize our own need of God's special enabling in our ministry.

God was pleased with Solomon's request. Solomon could have asked for wealth, honour, riches, long life or for the death of his enemies but he didn't. His concern was not for himself but for God and His honour. That day God promised to grant Solomon's request for wisdom and knowledge. God also promised to bless him with wealth, riches and honour as no king before or after him would ever experience (verse 12). Because Solomon put God first in his life, God blessed him abundantly.

Evidence of that blessing was clear. Solomon accumulated chariots and horses in great number. Verse 14 tells us that he had one thousand four hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses which he kept with him in Jerusalem. He also made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stones. Cedar was as plentiful as the common sycamore-fig tree (verse 15). Solomon imported his horses from Egypt (verse 16). He imported a chariot from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver (15 pounds or 7 kilograms) and a horse for one hundred and fifty shekels of silver (3 3/4 pounds or 1.7 kilograms). He also exported horses and chariots to the Hittites and the Arameans (verse 17).

In 2 Chronicles 2:1 Solomon gave orders to build the temple and a royal palace for himself. He conscripted seventy thousand men as carriers to transport supplies. He also had eighty thousand stonecutters with three thousand six hundred foremen over them (verse 2).

Solomon sent a message to Hiram, king of Tyre, requesting supplies. He required cedar logs to help in the construction of his palace (verse 3). He also told Hiram that he was going to build a great temple for the Lord his God (verse 4-5). Because there was no other God like the God of Israel, Solomon would spare no expense on the construction of this temple (verse 5). Solomon knew that the God of Israel could not be contained in an earthly temple. He was bigger than the world itself. This temple was not built as a house for God but as a place where offerings and sacrifices could be made to Him (verse 6).

Solomon asked Hiram to send him skilled men who could work in gold, silver, bronze, and purple, crimson and blue yarn. He also requested those who were experienced in engraving. These men would work with his skilled craftsmen (verse 7).

Solomon also asked Hiram to send him cedar, pine and algum logs from Lebanon. He knew that Hiram's men were very skilled in cutting timber (verse 8). Solomon needed plenty of timber because the temple he was going to build was going to be large and magnificent (verse 9). In verse 10 Solomon promised Hiram that he would provide his servants with twenty thousand cors of ground wheat (125,000 bushels or 4,400 kilolitres), twenty thousand cors of barley (125,000 bushels or 4,400 kilolitres), twenty thousand baths of wine (115,000 gallons or 440 kilolitres) and twenty thousand baths of olive oil (115,000 gallons or 440 kilolitres).

Hiram received Solomon's request and responded in verse 11, "Because the LORD loves His people, He has made you their king." Hiram praised Solomon for his wisdom and discernment (verse 12) and promised to send a servant by the name of Hiram-Abi, who was a man of great skill in working with gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone and wood (verses 13-14). He was also trained in working with purple, blue and crimson yarn as well as fine linen. He also had experience in engraving and Hiram had every confidence that Hiram-Abi could engrave any design given to him.

Hiram asked Solomon to send him the wheat, barley, wine and olive oil he had promised and he would cut all the logs he wanted in Lebanon and float them to Jerusalem in rafts (verses 15-16).

The task of constructing the temple was much bigger than Israel could handle. Solomon used 153,600 foreigners to help in the construction project. He assigned 70,000 to be carriers of supplies, 80,000 to be stonecutters in the hills and 3,600 as foremen to oversee the workers (verse 18).

David's dream of a temple in Jerusalem was about to realized. Everything was now in place and the work was about to begin.

#### For Consideration:

- What is significant about the fact that one of Solomon's first acts was to make an offering to the Lord and inquire of Him? What does this tell us about Solomon's heart?
- What is the difference between a calling and being empowered? Is it possible for us to exercise our calling without trusting in God's empowering?
- When God asked Solomon what He could give him, Solomon's first thoughts were for the glory of God. He wanted to serve Him well and so he asked for the tools necessary to do so. What does this tell us about Solomon's priority in life? What do you need from God to serve Him well?
- Solomon wanted the best for the Lord. Is this your heart?

#### For Prayer:

- Ask God to help you to see your need for His empowering in your ministry. Ask Him to help you to walk in His empowering and not in your own strength.

- Ask God to give you His priorities. Ask Him to give you a greater passion to serve Him well.
- Ask God to forgive you for the times you have not given Him your best.
- Take a moment to seek the Lord for the things you need to serve Him well.

## 27

# THE TEMPLE AND ITS FURNISHINGS

---

Read 2 Chronicles 3:1-4:22

It was on the second day of the second month of the fourth year of Solomon's reign that he began the construction of the temple (3:2). We have already seen that David had made great preparations for the construction of the temple. Solomon also was preparing the material and the men to begin the construction. It took well over four years to prepare everything for the construction of the temple. This ought to give us a better idea of the size of this project.

The temple was built on Mount Moriah at the threshing floor of Araunah (3:1). It was here also that Abraham was asked to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice to the Lord God. This is where David had met the Lord after a great plague threatened to wipe out much of his nation when he took a census of his military men (see 1 Chronicles 21:18-30).

Verse 3 tells us that the foundation Solomon laid for the temple was sixty cubits long (90 feet or 27 meters) and twenty cubits wide (30 feet or 9 meters). There was a porch on the front of the temple. The porch extended the full



width of the temple and was built 20 cubits (30 feet or 9 meters) high. It was overlaid on the inside with pure gold (3:4).

The main hall of the temple was made with pine and covered with fine gold. It was decorated with carvings of palm trees and chains (3:5). The inside of the temple was adorned with precious stones and gold (3:6). The ceiling beams, doorframes, walls and the doors were covered with gold. Solomon had cherubim carved on the walls (3:7).

The Most Holy Place, where the Ark of the Covenant would remain, extended the entire width of the temple and was twenty cubits wide (30 feet or 9 meters). Solomon overlaid the Most Holy Place with six hundred talents of fine gold (23 tons or 21 metric tons). Gold nails weighing 1 1/4 pounds or .6 kilograms were used in the construction of the Most Holy Place. No expense was spared in this part of the temple. This was where the presence of the Lord would be manifested. Solomon wanted it to be a very special place.

A pair of sculptured angels were overlaid with gold and placed inside the Most Holy Place. Their wings were five cubits long (7 1/2 feet or 2.3 meters). One wing of the cherubim touched the temple wall while the other touched the wing of the other cherub. The cherubim stood on their feet facing the main hall. Their wings reached out the full width of the temple (3:13). Curtains separated the Most Holy Place from the rest of the temple. These curtains were made of blue, purple and crimson yarn and fine linen. Cherubim were embroidered into these curtains (3:14).

There were two pillars in the front of the temple. These pillars were thirty-five cubits high (52 feet or 16 meters).

On top of each pillar was a decorative piece measuring five cubits (7 feet or 2.13 meters). Solomon had interwoven chains made and placed on top of the pillars. These chains had one hundred carved pomegranates attached to them (3:16). One pillar was erected on the north and the second on the south. The pillar to the south was called Jakin meaning "he establishes." The pillar to the north was called Boaz meaning "he strengthens." They served as a reminder to the people of God of their need for God to establish and strengthen them on an ongoing basis.

In chapter 4 we read how Solomon had a bronze altar twenty cubits long (30 feet or 9 meters), twenty cubits wide and ten cubits high (15 feet or 4.5 meters) placed in the temple. Sacrifices would be offered on this altar.

A circular metal sea or basin was also placed inside the temple. It was ten cubits from rim to rim (15 feet or 4.5 meters) and five cubits high (7.5 feet or 2.25 meters). It was thirty cubits (45 feet or 12.5 meters) around the outside edge. All around the basin were carved bulls in two rows attached to the basin itself (4:3). There were twelve bulls in total, three facing in each direction (4:4). This basin could hold three thousand baths (17,500 gallons of 66 kilolitres) of water (4:5).

Solomon had ten small washing basins made. He put five on the south side of the temple and the other five he placed on the north side of the temple. These basins were used by the priests to wash the objects used for the offerings (4:6).

Ten lamp stands were placed in the temple, five in the north and five in the south (4:7). He also placed ten tables and a hundred sprinkling bowls placed in the temple for the priest's use (4:8).

In the courtyard there was a large door overlaid with bronze. The big basin was located in the southeast corner of the courtyard of the priests (4:9). He also made pots, shovels and sprinkling bowls for the priests to use in their regular worship (4:11).

Much of the fine work done in the temple was done by Hiram whom the king of Tyre sent to Solomon for this purpose (see 2 Chronicles 2:13). Verses 12-16 give us a list of all the articles Hiram prepared for Solomon. All these articles were of polished bronze. The weight of the bronze used was not determined as it was too much to count (4:18).

Beyond the bronze articles made by Hiram were many articles of gold that Solomon had placed in the temple. A list of these articles is found in verses 19-22.

Our purpose here is not to understand the layout of the temple but to understand the amount of work and expense that went into it. Solomon spared no expense in the construction of the temple and its furnishings. This temple was to be worthy of the Lord his God. As God had promised to David, Solomon would complete the work of the temple. God was faithful to His promise.

For Consideration:

- What does the amount of time required to prepare for the construction of the temple tell us about the size of this project?

- What kind of investment was required for the work of the temple? What kind of investment is required for the work of the kingdom of God today? What investment have you made for the sake of the kingdom of God?
- What were the names of the pillars that Solomon placed at the front of the temple? What did those names mean? What was the significance of these names for the ministry of the temple?
- Notice that even the shovels and bowls were made of fine gold. Solomon gave his very best even in the small things. What does this teach us about the importance of doing our best in small things?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to show you what kind of investment He wants you to make for the sake of the kingdom.
- Take a moment to thank the Lord that He establishes and strengthens those who honour Him.
- Ask the Lord to help you to serve Him faithfully even in the small things. Ask Him to forgive you for the times you failed to do your best in these small things.

## THE ARK IS BROUGHT TO THE TEMPLE

---

Read 2 Chronicles 5:1-6:42

The work on the temple was completed. During the construction of the temple, the Ark of the Covenant was in a tent in Jerusalem. After the dedication of the temple furnishings, Solomon called for the Ark of the Covenant to be brought into the temple where it would be placed in the Most Holy Place. God's presence would be revealed above the Ark of the Covenant between the wings of the cherubim (see Exodus 25:22).

Bringing the Ark of the Covenant to the temple was not a small thing. With the ark came the presence of God. Solomon summoned the elders and the heads of the tribes to bring up the ark to the temple. The day the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem was a festival day (5:3). In the seventh month of the year, the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated. This celebration commemorated the time the Israelites wandered in the desert.

When the elders of Israel arrived, the Levites took the ark and the tent with all its furnishings and brought it to

Solomon. That day, they celebrated by offering sacrifices of sheep and cattle. 2 Chronicles 5:6 tells us that they sacrificed so many sheep and cattle that they could not be recorded.

When the sacrifices were complete the priests placed the ark in the Most Holy Place. The temple consisted of an outer court, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. Only the priests could enter the Holy Place. The Most Holy Place was where the Ark of the Covenant was located and from where God revealed His presence. The poles used to carry the ark were so long that their ends could be seen from the Holy Place but not from courtyard (5:9). These poles reminded the priests of the presence of God over the ark. The priests needed to be reminded of this presence for two reasons. First, so that they would remember that they were accountable to God and live lives that were worthy of His name. Second, so that they would be encouraged in their calling, knowing that God had chosen them to minister on His behalf.

2 Chronicles 5:10 tells us that the ark contained the two tablets containing the Ten Commandments God had given to Moses. It is interesting to note that the ark had at one time contained a jar of manna (Exodus 16:32-34) and Aaron's rod that budded (Numbers 17:10-11). No mention is made of these articles in this passage.

It is significant that the commandments of God were contained in the ark. God would reveal His presence over the ark that contained His commandments. God still delights to reveal Himself to those who walk in obedience to His commands.

When the Ark of the Covenant was put in place, the priests withdrew from the Holy Place (5:11). The Levitical

musicians stood by the altar dressed in fine linen and played the cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests playing trumpets (5:12). Singers joined in unison to praise and thank the Lord God. Together they sang: "He is good; his love endures forever" (5:13). It was this singing that brought the presence of the Lord to the temple. God filled the temple with a cloud. The presence of God was so overwhelming that the priests could no longer perform their service. People stood in awe of God.

Solomon stood in the midst of the people and reminded them that the Lord had told them that He would dwell in a dark cloud (6:1). We see this from Exodus 19:9 where God hid His glory in a dark cloud so as not to consume those who saw His glory. Solomon reminded the people that the cloud they saw was a revelation of the awesome presence of their God.

As Solomon stood before the people that day, he blessed them (6:3). When he had finished blessing the people he turned to God and cried out to Him. The remainder of chapter 6 is the prayer of Solomon for the temple.

Solomon begins his prayer with a word of thanksgiving and praise to God for His faithfulness. In verses 4-11 he thanked the Lord that He had been faithful in fulfilling His promise to his father David in building a temple in Jerusalem (verse 4). He also thanked the Lord that He had been faithful to His people from the time He had brought them out of Egypt. He thanked God that He had chosen Jerusalem to be a city from which His name would be glorified. This was a tremendous honour for the city of Jerusalem. In this place, God would reveal His presence and glory.

In verse 6, Solomon praised the Lord for choosing his father to be king and ruler over this great city. He reminded

God that his father David had a heart to build a temple. He gave that task to Solomon, promising to bless his efforts. God was faithful to His word. Solomon praised and thanked the Lord for this faithfulness.

Solomon had a bronze platform made for this occasion. He had it placed in the centre of the outer court. Standing on the platform, before the altar, Solomon stretched out his hands and cried out to God in prayer.

In verses 14-15 Solomon thanked God for being faithful in keeping His covenant with Israel. Notice, however, that God kept His covenant with those who continued wholeheartedly in His way. There were many who had perished and were destroyed because of their disobedience to God. God was faithful to His word but we need to remember that part of the word He had given was a word of judgment and condemnation to all who would turn from Him. God requires obedience and will not hesitate to punish those who turn from Him.

In verses 16-17 Solomon pleaded with God to continue to be faithful to His covenant promises. God promised that as long as David's sons were faithful and walked in obedience to their God, then they would never lack a descendant on the throne (verse 16). Solomon prayed that this promise would be true. In praying this, Solomon is not only praying that God would provide a king on the throne, but also that his descendants would be sure to follow the Lord and walk in His ways.

In verse 18, Solomon's attention turns to the temple. He realized that God was far bigger than this temple he had built. He reminded those present that the heavens in all their vastness could not contain God. Solomon believed, however, that God would reveal His presence in this



temple in a very powerful way. He asked God to open His eyes to this temple and put His Name in it. He asked him to hear the prayers of His people who cried out to Him there (verse 20).

Verses 21-42 are Solomon's prayer for the temple. It is also a tremendous prayer for the church of our day.

In verse 21 Solomon prayed that the temple would be a place of supplication. He asked that God would hear the prayers of His people who turned toward the temple where God's presence was revealed. God's people are to be a praying people. The kingdom of God is expanded not by human effort but in answer to the prayers of God's people. God hears the prayers of His people and brings forgiveness, reconciliation and power.

Solomon prays in verse 22-23 that the temple would also be a place of justice. He prayed that when a man wronged his neighbour and came to the temple, God would judge between His servants by punishing the guilty party and declaring the innocence of the other (verse 23). The church is to be a place where justice prevails. It is a place where sin is exposed and truth triumphs.

Notice also in verses 24-25 that the temple was also to be a place of restoration. Justice is important but punishment of evil and sin was not an end in itself. Solomon prayed that God would restore those who confess their sin in the temple. Notice that the sins of God's people had banished them from their land. Solomon prayed in verse 25 that God would restore them to the land when they confessed their sin. The church is to be a place that welcomes the sinner who has confessed his sin. Sometimes we hold the sins of those who have offended us against them. God calls us, however, to open our arms to receive those who confess

their sin and restore them to fellowship. The temple was to be a place of restoration.

Solomon continued in verses 26-27 to pray that the temple would be a place of instruction. Here in these verses he prayed God would teach His people the right way to live (verse 27). Solomon knew that there would be times when God's people would fall into sin and rebellion. In response, God would close up the heavens and afflict them (verse 26). The solution was first to confess sin and second, listen to the instruction of the Lord in how to live. The church of our day is to be a place of instruction. This instruction has, as its goal, to show God's people how He expects them to live. As God's people live in obedience to His instructions, the windows of heaven open and shower down their blessing.

Solomon prayed in verses 28-31 that the temple would be a place where the name of God was feared and revered. There would be times when famine, plague, blight, mildew, locusts, grasshoppers, enemies and disease afflicted the land. There would be times when the enemy took over their cities. There would be problems, struggles and difficulties ahead for the people of God. Solomon prayed, however, that when God's people prayed from the temple, He would hear from heaven and bring healing. He asked that those who prayed would learn to fear God and walk in His ways. To fear God is to respect and reverence His name. In the fear of God there is recognition of His justice and holiness. The person who fears God realizes that God sees what is going on and will "deal with each man according to all he does." Solomon prayed that those who looked to the temple would fear the Lord and live in the reality of His watchful eye. Those who belong to the body of Christ are to live with reverent fear of God on a daily basis. We are to live in the knowledge that God will

deal with us all according to our ways. We are to live in such a way that God is honoured through our actions, words and attitudes. We will one day have to give an account to Him. What a different place our churches would be if each person lived in this healthy fear of God.

Solomon prayed in verses 32-33 that the temple would also be a place of missionary acceptance. He prayed that if the foreigner from a distant land who did not belong to the Lord came to the temple to pray, God would hear and do whatever he asked. This temple was not for a select few to enjoy. The doors were to be opened to all who would come to worship. The foreigner was to be welcomed. The sinner on the street who confessed his sin was not to be turned away. All who came to God were to be welcomed into the temple. Their nationality, social standing or past history was not to be considered. The doors of the temple were open to all who would come. The Lord is calling for the church of our day to open their doors as well. All too many churches are not willing to open their doors to the stranger. Remember that in the days of Solomon, the Gentile was considered to be unclean, but Solomon prayed that God would open the hearts of His people so that they would welcome them as fellow worshippers.

In verses 34-35 Solomon asked God to make the temple a place of victory. He prayed that when God's people went to war and prayed in this temple, God would "uphold their cause" (verse 35). In other words, that God would give them the victory they needed. The church of our day is to be a place of victory. It is to be a place where the power of God is being revealed to the world. Satan should fear the church. There have been times when the church has not walked in this victory. Solomon prayed that God would uphold the cause of His people and give them the victory they needed. The cause of God's people is nothing short of the

glory of God. When the church is victorious the Lord God is glorified.

Closely connected to the request of Solomon for victory is the request of verses 36-39 for release from captivity. Solomon realized that the day was coming when God's people would be taken captive by their enemies. They would lose the territory God had given them. It is quite possible to lose the victories God has given. Israel would be taken captive by the enemy because they were not careful to follow the Lord and His ways. Solomon prayed that if these captives recognized their sin and turned to the Lord in prayer, that God would hear them and release them from their captivity. God is quite happy to restore to us the land the enemy has taken. The church of our day has lost much territory to the enemy. Maybe as you read this chapter you realize that the enemy has taken much from you personally. Maybe your walk with God is not where it should be. Maybe you have fallen into a sin that you cannot seem to overcome. Maybe you are battling with a relationship or a sinful attitude that is holding you captive. God is willing to release you from that captivity and restore you to fellowship. The church of our day ought to be a place where the captives are released and restored to fellowship.

In verses 40-42 Solomon concludes his prayer by asking the Lord God to open His eyes to the temple and His ears to his prayer concerning that temple. He asked Him to come to the temple and to His place above the ark (verse 41). He prayed that the priests would be clothed with salvation and rejoice in His goodness.

Solomon concluded his prayer by asking God to remember His anointed one (likely referring to himself as the king) and not to forget His promise to David to have a man on the throne forever. In praying that God would not forget

him, Solomon is praying for enabling and wisdom to lead his people in the way God required.

#### For Consideration:

- Why was the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant into the temple such an important matter? What did the ark represent? What would the temple have been like without the Ark of the Covenant and the presence of God? What does this teach the church today? Is the presence of God evident in your church?
- While the priests who entered the Holy Place could not see the ark they did see the poles that were used to carry the ark. This was a reminder of the presence of the Lord. How has God reminded you of His presence?
- The glory of the Lord was revealed over the ark which contained the commandments of God. What does this teach us about the importance of obedience in the Christian life?
- How has God proven His faithfulness to you personally?
- What does 2 Chronicles 6:26-27 teach us about the importance of instruction? What is the principle goal of instruction according to these verses?
- What is the fear of the Lord? Why is it important for every believer?

- Are the doors of your church open to the "foreigner" or stranger? Who are these foreigners in your community?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He delights to reveal His presence in our lives and in the life of His church. Ask Him to make His presence more real.
- Thank the Lord for some specific reminders of His presence in your life and ministry.
- Ask God to help your church to be less dependent on human effort and more on God's answering the prayers of His people.
- Ask God to expose hypocrisy and restore relationships in your church.
- Are there areas of your life where you are not experiencing the victory of the Lord? Ask God to show you those areas and to give you victory.

## 29

### GOD ANSWERS

### SOLOMON'S PRAYER

---

2 Chronicles 7:1-22

The work on the temple was completed. Solomon was now dedicating this temple to the honour of the Lord. He had just prayed that the Lord God would come to the temple and bless it. His prayer was a powerful prayer and there was an immediate answer. Verse 1 tells us that as soon as Solomon finished praying fire came from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and sacrifices on the altar. The glory of God filled the temple in answer to the request of Solomon. If the temple was glorious in structure, what took place that day when the Lord God descended was even more awesome. The temple was filled with gold, silver and bronze. Carving and beautiful tapestries filled the rooms. While it was a wonderful building to behold, the priests had no problems entering the temple to serve the Lord. When the glory of the Lord fell that day, however, the priests could not even enter the temple.

Verse 3 tells us that when the Israelites saw the fire of God descending and the glory of God above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground and worshipped God saying: "He is good; His love endures

forever." What is particularly striking in this passage is that the Israelites worshipped God not for His holiness and glory but for His goodness and love. They knew that the glory and holiness of God would consume them but His love and goodness preserved them. They were grateful to God that He was loving and good. This was their security and comfort in the midst of such holiness and glory. Along with the awesome presence of God came an equally overwhelming sense of His love and goodness.

That day the king and all the people offered sacrifices to the Lord God. Twenty-two thousand head of cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep and goats were sacrificed to the Lord. We can only imagine how much time it would have taken to offer this quantity of sacrifices. These sacrifices were all part of the dedication of the temple to the Lord.

On this occasion the priests and Levites took their musical instruments and praised the Lord. As they did, they cried out, "His love endures forever" (verse 6). The priests blew their trumpets, offering up praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. Solomon consecrated the temple courtyard. The bronze altar could not hold the quantity of burnt offerings being offered (verse 7). From verse 9 we understand that this dedication service took place over a seven day period.

During this time, the people of God observed the Festival of Tabernacles. This commemorated the protection and provision of God during the time Israel wandered in the wilderness. The festival took place for seven days and on the eighth day a great assembly was held. God's people had now been celebrating for fourteen days (seven days for the dedication of the temple and seven days for the Feast of Tabernacles). After this great assembly, on the eighth day of the festival, the people of God returned to



their homes with great joy and gladness of heart (verse 10). They were overwhelmed with the goodness of God. Their celebrations had been a rich blessing.

After Solomon completed the work of the temple, the Lord appeared to him at night. The Lord told him that He had heard his prayer for the temple and had chosen it as a place for Himself. God would accept the sacrifices offered in the temple and reveal His presence there. What a blessing this would have been for Solomon. The temple was nothing if the presence of God did not come to it.

God also had a word for Solomon regarding His people. He told Solomon that there would be times when He would shut up the heavens so that there was no rain. There would also be times when He would command the locusts to devour the land or send a plague among His people. This would happen because of sin (verse 13). When it happened, however, if God's people humbled themselves, prayed, sought His face and turned from their wicked ways He would heal the land and forgive their sin (verse 14). God would not abandon His people if they returned to Him. While they would experience His discipline, and His blessing would be stripped from them, He would always be willing to restore them if they repented. What a wonderful blessing it is for us to know that even when we fall, God is willing to restore us to fellowship.

Verse 14 is a very important verse that needs further consideration. It comes in the context of sin and rebellion. God's people do not always serve Him as they should. Sometimes we fall away and get distracted by sin and the world. In these times, the blessing of God is stripped from us. The land groans under this withdrawal of God's blessing. Our hearts become as dry as the desert and God seems far removed.

While God's blessing is stripped from us, He does not abandon us. His heart is still open to us if we will return to Him. Verse 14 tells us what we need to do when we find ourselves in sin.

First, we are to humble ourselves. To humble ourselves means to recognize our error. It is not always easy to realize that we have fallen short of God's standard. It is humbling to come to the realization that we have not been what we should be. It is humbling to recognize that we have hurt God and grieved His heart. Before any reconciliation can be made between ourselves and God we must first recognize that we have sinned against Him. We cannot find a solution to a problem we refuse to admit we have. The first step to being restored is to recognize that we need to be restored. This requires that we see things as God sees them.

The second step to reconciliation with God is prayer. The prayer spoken of here comes in the context of humbling oneself. This is prayer of confession and repentance. It is a prayer for mercy and pardon. Humbling ourselves to accept and see things as God sees them is not enough. You can know that you are wrong and do nothing about it. Part of humbling oneself has to do with approaching the one we have offended. This is the type of prayer that God is referring to here. By prayer we approach the God we have offended, seeking His pardon and forgiveness. By prayer we confess our sin and failures and seek His grace and mercy. This prayer is a prayer for reconciliation with God. It is the prayer of a humble heart to be restored to a right relationship with God.

We need to recognize our sins and come to God with them seeking His forgiveness. This requires that we personally speak to God about our sin. He delights to forgive but we

must come to Him for that forgiveness. Maybe you have had the experience of offending a brother or sister in Christ. Your relationship with them will always be strained if you avoid speaking to them about the offense. Only when you have spoken to your brother or sister and confessed your offense can the relationship be restored. This is the same with God. All too many people assume that God will forgive their sins automatically. Confession is a vital part of reconciliation. God expects us to confess our sins. He expects us to admit our wrongdoings. He expects us to come to Him and speak to Him directly about our offenses. He is willing to forgive but we must be willing to confess.

The third step in reconciliation, according to verse 14, is seeking God's face. Sin has to do with turning our faces from God to the world and sin. God tells us that the next step to reconciliation with Him has to do with taking our eyes away from sin and getting them back on God. This requires a change in attitude and heart. It means that we will have to make a conscious and heartfelt decision to be finished with our sin. It requires that we turn our faces and hearts from our evil ways and the sinful attractions of this world. When a man marries a woman, he promises to resist all other women and keep himself faithful to her alone. His eyes will be for her alone. This is what God requires. He requires a heartfelt commitment on our part to seek Him and His face alone. It means that we must make a conscious decision to resist the world and its attractions. It means that we must offer ourselves to God alone.

The final step to reconciliation with God has to do with turning from our wicked ways. This is a natural outflow of our commitment to seek His face. Those who set their hearts to seek God's face must now demonstrate that commitment by deeds. This means that we will need to take

practical steps to break the power of evil in our lives. It means that we will have to throw out our gods. It means that we will have to stop going to the places where we are tempted to sin. It means that we will have to replace those sinful activities with godly activities. The sincerity of our commitment is measured in terms of practical actions. If we are serious about our commitments this will be clear in how we act and speak.

We have the promise that when we humble ourselves, pray, seek God's face and turn from our wicked ways, God will respond favourably toward us. Verse 14 tells us that He will not only forgive us but also heal our land. It is one thing to be forgiven but quite another to be healed. The land is healed of its curse. The hurt is mended. We are restored to wholeness.

In verse 15 God promised Solomon that He would listen to the prayers offered from the temple. He told him that His eyes and His heart would always be there (verse 16). If Solomon walked with God as his father David did and observed His laws and decrees, then God would establish his throne so that there would always be a descendent of David's family ruling over Israel (verse 18). If Solomon turned from God, however, He would uproot Israel from their land (verse 20). He would, also, reject the temple and make it an object of ridicule among the nations (verse 20-21). Nations would ask why the Lord had done such a thing to His people. The answer would be given:

Because they have forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshiping and serving them—that is why he brought all this disaster on them (verse 22).

We see from this chapter that the Lord God is a glorious and awesome God, filled with love and goodness. He is also a holy God whose presence inspires awe. He delights to forgive and bless His people but He will not hesitate to strip away blessing if His people turn from Him. He is a jealous God who expects that we will seek Him alone. When we do, He delights to shower His abundant blessing on us.

#### For Consideration:

- God revealed His presence in the temple by fire. What does this tell us about the character of God?
- What was the temple apart from the presence of God? What evidence is there in your church of the presence of God?
- What are the four steps to reconciliation with God according to verse 14?
- What does this chapter teach us about the justice of God? To what extent are God's blessings withheld from us because of sin?

#### For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He will always deal with sin and rebellion. Thank Him for His justice.
- Thank the Lord that He delights in revealing His presence in us. Ask Him to make His presence

more evident in your life and in the life of your church.

- Is there an area in your life that needs healing? Take a moment to ask God to bring healing to that part of your life.
- Ask God to show you any areas of your life where you are not walking in obedience to Him and His purposes. Pray that He would give you grace to walk in obedience.

## SOLOMON'S WEALTH AND PROSPERITY

---

Read 2 Chronicles 8:1-9:31

Chapters 8 and 9 of 2 Chronicles tell us about the incredible wealth of Solomon and the blessing of God on him and the nation during his reign. This was in fulfillment of the promise God made to his father David.

Chapter 8 begins with the construction projects of Solomon. Verse 1 tells us that the construction of the temple and Solomon's palace took twenty years. This was a significant investment of time and effort. 2 Chronicles 9:30 tells us that Solomon reigned for forty years in Israel. For half of that reign Solomon was building the temple and his palace. During this time as well, Solomon was involved in building up the nation through other construction projects. We read in verse 2 that he built up the villages that Hiram king of Tyre had given him and settled Israelites in them. He captured the city of Hamath Zobah (verse 3) and built up the cities of Tadmor, the store cities of Hamath (verse 4), Upper and Lower Beth Horon (verse 5), and Baalath as well as other store cities of that region (verse 6). Solomon built whatever he wanted throughout all his territory. Money was no obstacle to him.

Solomon used slaves from a variety of nations to work on his various projects. Among his slaves were Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (verses 7-8). While Solomon did not make slaves of the Israelites, they did serve him as fighting men, commanders and captains of his chariots and charioteers (verse 9). He had two hundred and fifty chief officials in charge of supervising his men (verse 10).

It is interesting to note that Solomon married the Pharaoh of Egypt's daughter. This was not in accordance with the Law of God which forbade the intermarrying of Israelites with foreign wives. Solomon understood this and decided to build a separate palace for his Egyptian wife. He did this because he did not feel it was appropriate for her to live in the palace of David because the places where the ark had entered were holy (verse 11). Solomon did not want his Egyptian wife, who did not follow the ways of the Lord, to be near the ark of God. While he was not living in obedience in marrying this wife, he at least had enough fear of God to keep her from the holy things.

Maybe as you read this you find yourself in the same situation as Solomon. There are things in your life that you know do not honour the Lord God and you feel the need to hide them. This is a challenge for us to deal quickly with these matters. Solomon's foreign wives would eventually be his downfall. He built a palace for this wife and separated her from the holy things of his life. He wanted to honour his wife and his God at the same time, but ultimately he could not do both. May God give us grace to deal with those areas of our life that do not honour His name. May God keep us from building them palaces like Solomon did. May He give us grace instead, to get rid of all hindrances to His glory in our lives.



Solomon provided for the sacrifices that were made to the Lord on a daily basis as well as for the special feasts and festivals each year (verses 12-13). He appointed divisions of priests to lead in worship and to assist the priests in their daily responsibilities. These priests faithfully carried out their duties as the king commanded (verse 14-15).

Solomon sent his men to Ezion Geber and Elath on the coast of Edom. King Hiram sent Solomon ships and skilled officers who knew the sea to command those ships. Along with Solomon's men, they sailed to Ophir and brought back four hundred and fifty talents (17 tons or 16 metric tons) of gold which they delivered to Solomon. Again this was an indication of the blessing of God on Solomon and Israel at that time.

The news of the blessing of God on Solomon and his people spread from nation to nation. All the surrounding nations understood that God was with Israel. News of Solomon's wisdom also spread. In 2 Chronicles 9:1 the Queen of Sheba came to Jerusalem to see for herself if what she had been hearing about the nation was true. She came to test Solomon with hard questions to see if he was as wise as reports indicated.

When the Queen of Sheba arrived, she brought with her a great caravan with camels carrying spices, gold and precious stones (9:1). When she met Solomon she talked with him about all that was on her mind. Solomon answered all of her questions. Verse 2 tells us that nothing she asked him was too hard for him to answer.

When the Queen of Sheba saw Solomon's palace, the food he ate, how his servants were dressed and the quantity of burnt offerings he made, she was overwhelmed

(verses 3-4). She had never seen such luxury and wealth. In verses 5-6 she told Solomon:

The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. But I did not believe what they said until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half the greatness of your wisdom was told me; you have far exceeded the report I heard.

As the Queen of Sheba looked around her at the blessing of God in Israel, she was moved to praise and thank the Lord God of Israel. She saw that the Lord God delighted in His people. She did not attribute this wealth and blessing to Solomon but to his God. In verse 8 she told Solomon that it was because the Lord God loved Israel that He had made him king over them to lead them into such blessing and prosperity.

The Queen of Sheba gave Solomon 120 talents of gold (4 1/2 tons or 4 metric tons). We can only imagine the number of camels it would have taken to carry this amount of gold to Solomon. She also gave him large quantities of spices. In return, Solomon gave the Queen of Sheba all she wanted. Solomon gave her more than she had given him (verse 12).

The Queen of Sheba was moved deeply by the relationship Solomon had with his God. She saw clear evidence of His blessing in the lives of His people. We are left to wonder what unbelievers see in our relationship with God. Do they see clear evidence of His hand on us? Does our relationship with God leave them in awe?

2 Chronicles 9:10 tells us that not only did Solomon bring back gold from Ophir but he also brought back albugumwood

and precious stones. Solomon used this algumwood to make the steps for the temple and the royal palace. It was also used to make harps and lyres for the musicians (verse 11).

Each year Solomon received 666 talents of gold (25 tons or 23 metric tons). This did not include what was received from merchants and traders. The kings of Arabia brought gold and silver to Solomon on a regular basis (verse 14)

From the gold he received, Solomon constructed two hundred large shields. Verse 15 tells us that six hundred bekas of gold were used for each shield (7 1/2 pounds or 3.5 kilograms). He also made three hundred small shields with three hundred bekas of gold in each shield (3 3/4 pounds or 1.7 kilograms). The shields were stored in his palace in the Forest of Lebanon.

Solomon's throne was inlaid with ivory and overlaid with pure gold (verse 17). A foot stool was attached to it. It had six steps leading to the throne. A carved lion stood beside each armrest of the seat. Twelve more carved lions stood on the six steps that led to the seat (two on each step). Nothing like this throne had ever been made.

Solomon's goblets for drinking were made of gold as were all the household articles in his palace (verse 20). Nothing was made from silver because it was considered to be of little value in Solomon's day.

Solomon also had a fleet of trading ships manned by sailors from Tyre. Every three years it returned carrying gold, silver, ivory, apes and baboons (verse 21).

There was no one on earth richer than Solomon (verse 22). He was so well respected for his wisdom that the kings

of the earth wanted to speak to him just to hear the wisdom God had put on his heart (verse 23). Year after year people would come to Israel and bring gifts of silver, gold, robes, weapons, spices, horses and mules. God gave Solomon tremendous favour with the surrounding nations. He ruled peacefully over the kings from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines and as far away as Egypt (verse 26). During his reign, silver was as common as stones and cedar was as plentiful as the common sycamore-fig trees of the foothills (verse 27). He also imported great quantities of horses from Egypt (verse 28).

King Solomon reigned for forty years. The events of his reign were recorded in the records of Nathan the prophet, in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite and the visions of Iddo the seer (verse 29). We also have this Biblical record of his reign.

The day came, however, when Solomon died. He was buried with his fathers and his son Rehoboam became king in his place. All his wealth could not extend his life. He would have to face his Creator like everyone else in his kingdom. His life, however, was a testimony to the goodness of God and His rich blessing.

For Consideration:

- What evidence is there of the blessing of God in your life? Are all God's blessings financial? What other blessings does God give?
- Why did Solomon not want his wife to live in his palace? Are there things in your life you feel you need to hide? What are they?

- Solomon's life was a powerful testimony of the grace and goodness of God. To what extent is your life a similar testimony to God's goodness?
- What does this chapter teach us about the desire of God to bless His people? Why are we not experiencing the fullness of God's blessing?

For Prayer:

- Take a moment to thank the Lord for some specific blessings in your life.
- Ask God to search your heart to see if there are things that you have tried to hide from Him. Ask Him to give you grace to deal with these things.
- Ask God to let your life be a shining testimony of His blessings and goodness.
- Thank the Lord that He delights to shower His blessings on us as His children. Ask Him to show you anything that hinders the fullness of His blessing in your life today.

# 31

## ISRAEL IS DIVIDED

---

Read 2 Chronicles 10:1-11:23

After the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam became king over Israel. Rehoboam was not gifted in wisdom and discernment as was his father. His reign would be very different.

In 2 Chronicles 10:1 we read that when Jeroboam heard that Rehoboam had become king, he returned from Egypt to Jerusalem to speak with him. 1 Kings 11:26-40 tell us that Jeroboam had rebelled against Solomon. During the time of his rebellion Ahijah the prophet approached him with a word from the Lord. Ahijah told Jeroboam that God would take ten tribes from David's family and give them to him to rule as king. It may have been as a result of this prophetic word that Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam. Jeroboam escaped to Egypt to save his life. Now that Solomon was dead, he returned to see what the Lord had in store for him in Jerusalem.

When Jeroboam returned from Egypt, he called for a meeting with Rehoboam (verse 3). Jeroboam reminded Rehoboam how his father Solomon had imposed a heavy burden on his people, forcing them to serve in his many

projects (verse 4). Jeroboam requested that Rehoboam lighten this load to make their lives easier.

Rehoboam decided to consult the elders of the land who had served his father before giving his response to Jeroboam. When he asked for their advice, they responded by telling Rehoboam that if he was kind to his people, they would always be his servants (verse 7). They suggested that he lighten the load his father Solomon had put on the people.

Rehoboam listened to the advice of his father's elders but was not happy with it. He decided to seek the advice of his friends who had grown up with him (verse 8). The advice of his friends was very different. They advised him to make the people's burden even greater than his father had done. They advised him to tell the people, "My little finger is thicker than my father's waist." In other words, their burden would be even greater under Rehoboam. The idea of Rehoboam's friends was that he was to take control of the people lest they rebel against him.

The advice of his friends pleased Rehoboam so three days later he gave his answer to Jeroboam and the people. He told them that he would make their load heavier than his father. His father had scourged them with whips but he would scourge them with scorpions (verse 14). Rehoboam did not know that when he gave that answer to his people this would be the very thing God would use to fulfil His prophecy to give Jeroboam ten tribes of Israel (verse 15).

The response of Israel to Rehoboam that day was not what he expected. The people rebelled against him saying, "What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse's son?" (verse 16). In other words, they wanted nothing to do with his reign over them. They refused to acknowledge

him as king. Only the tribe of Judah remained faithful to Rehoboam and acknowledged him as king (verse 17). The remainder of the tribes would side with Jeroboam and make him king. The nation would be divided.

Rehoboam sent out his officer in charge of forced labour to try to settle this dispute but the Israelites stoned him to death. Rehoboam, who was obviously with him at the time, managed to get into his chariot and escaped to the safety of Jerusalem (verse 18).

When Rehoboam returned to Jerusalem after this incident, he called for his army comprised of men from Judah and Benjamin, a hundred and eighty thousand in total. It was his intention to make war with the rest of the tribes of Israel to force them into submission to his reign (11:1). While he was making these plans, however, Shemaiah the man of God came to him with a word from the Lord. Shemaiah told Rehoboam that it was not God's will that he fight his brothers (verse 4). Rehoboam listened to the word of the Lord and returned home.

It now fell on Rehoboam to build up the defences of the towns of Judah. Their enemies were their own brothers and sisters. Rehoboam possibly feared an attack. Verses 6-10 give us a list of some of the towns that Rehoboam built up. In building up these towns he strengthened their defences, put military commanders in them, provided them with supplies of food, oil and wine, and armed them with shields and spears (verses 11-12). This shows us his fear of an attack. The peaceful land his father Solomon had ruled was no longer. Rehoboam ruled over a fearful and weakened nation.

In 2 Chronicles 11:13 we read that the priests and Levites from the various regions of Israel sided with Rehoboam.



Some of them abandoned their pasturelands and properties in order to move to Judah to be with Rehoboam (verse 14). This was a significant sacrifice for many of these Levites. Verse 14 explains why these Levites were so willing to make this sacrifice. Jeroboam had rejected the priests of the Lord and appointed his own priests. He abandoned the worship of the Lord God and chose to worship two calf idols he had made and set up in the land. Jeroboam no longer had any need for the Levitical priests, for he had abandoned the Lord God.

Jeroboam's decision to abandon the Lord God was not accepted by everyone. People from various tribes whose hearts were set on following the Lord God and worshipping Him followed the Levites back to Judah (verse 16). This served to strengthen the kingdom of Judah. What is important for us to note is that Rehoboam had made an unwise decision. He had determined to follow the advice of his friends rather than the wise counsel of his father's elders. He paid the price for that decision. God had not abandoned him however. This incident served to purify Judah. Those whose hearts were not set on the Lord God left and only those who were serious about the Lord God and His honour remained or joined him. God can use even our failures and weaknesses to accomplish His greater purposes. In this we should be thankful.

God's further blessing was evident on Rehoboam's life in that He blessed him with many children. Verse 21 tells us that Rehoboam had twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters. He also had eighteen wives and sixty concubines.

Of all these sons, Rehoboam appointed his son Abijah, the son of his wife Maacah, to be chief prince who would inherit the throne at his death (verse 22). Overall, Rehoboam proved to be a good king in Judah. Verse 23 tells us that

he acted wisely. It is quite likely that his first unwise decision taught him a powerful lesson. Here again is evidence that God can use the circumstances we face in life for our good. While he made a very unwise decision at the beginning of his reign, Rehoboam proved to be a wise king in the end. If we are willing to learn from our mistakes, God can use them to equip us for greater service. This appears to be what happened in the life of Rehoboam.

Rehoboam dispersed some of his sons as rulers throughout the various districts of Judah. He provided them with provisions and wives (verse 23).

God was not finished with Judah. His blessing on Rehoboam's life was quite clear. God was willing to forgive Rehoboam and used his unwise decision to accomplish greater good for the nation of Judah.

#### For Consideration:

- What does this section teach us about the importance of kindness? What can be accomplished through kindness that cannot be accomplished through harshness?
- How does God use the unwise decision of Rehoboam to fulfil the prophecy he made to Jeroboam?
- How does God use what appears to be tragedy to accomplish His greater purposes for the nation of Judah? What tragedies have you faced? How has God used them for good in your life?

- What does this passage teach us about listening to the counsel of those who have more experience in life?
- The priests and those who wanted to be faithful to God in this section had to leave their lands and properties to return to Judah. Would you be willing to leave everything to be faithful to the Lord God?
- Rehoboam's reign is characterized as being a wise reign. It did not start out this way but God taught him through his mistakes. Have you learned from your mistakes in life? What lessons has God taught you in the last while?

For Prayer:

- Ask God to help you to demonstrate greater kindness in your dealings with people around you.
- Thank the Lord that He can use our weaknesses and failures to accomplish His greater good in our lives.
- Ask the Lord to give you courage to be willing to leave everything to be faithful to Him. Thank Him for the example of the priests in this section.
- Ask God to give you greater humility so that you are able to learn from your mistakes like Rehoboam.

## 32

# REHOBAM'S REIGN IN JERUSALEM

---

Read 2 Chronicles 12:1-16

In chapters 10-11 we saw how Rehoboam's foolish decision to ignore the counsel of the elders led to the division of the nations of Israel and Judah. While Rehoboam saw the consequences of his bad decision he did not completely learn his lesson. Here in chapter 12 we see that Rehoboam's heart was not like the heart of David and Solomon. His was a wandering heart that was prone to turn from his God.

In verse 1 we see how that when Rehoboam was established as king and became strong he abandoned the law of the Lord. This leads us to believe that it was his strength and power that made him turn his back on the Lord God. What we need to understand is that this strength and power were blessings from the Lord. God had been blessing Rehoboam by giving him favour. It was this very favour that ultimately caused him to turn his back on God. He began to love the favour of God more than he loved God. His heart enjoyed the riches and the power. Slowly his eyes turned from God to His blessings. This transfer of allegiance is very subtle but a temptation for all of us. God may

bless us with spiritual gifts and fruitful ministry. Soon we begin to enjoy the fruit and glory in our gifts. Before we know it, we have forgotten God and raised up our ministries to take His place. We no longer live for God but for our ministry. We no longer seek to glorify God but ourselves though the gifts He has given. Prosperity is a wonderful blessing from the Lord. We need to be careful, however, lest it take the place of God in our lives.

While speaking in Cuba some years ago, I had the opportunity to sit down with a Cuban pastor. He said, Wayne, people come from North America and say: "We see how much you struggle and are amazed at the fact that you still love the Lord." As I listened to this pastor, he went on to say: "I don't see it like this. In fact, I look at North Americans who come to my country and I say, "I see how much you have and I am amazed that you still love the Lord." Here was a pastor who understood the pull of materialism and its powerful influence to draw us away from God.

Rehoboam forgot God in the midst of his blessings. The more he was blessed the more he loved the blessings and forgot God.

God has a way of showing us our sin. Here in verse 2 He brought an enemy against Rehoboam that threatened to strip him of all his blessings. In the fifth year of Rehoboam, Shishak, king of Egypt, attacked Jerusalem. He came with twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand horsemen. Accompanying him was an innumerable force of Libyan, Sukkite and Cushite soldiers (verse 3). This was a force Rehoboam could not overcome. Shishak captured the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem with his army. It was clear to Rehoboam that he was in danger of losing everything he had. In an instant, all his power and possessions could be stripped from him. It was no

coincidence that God allowed this great army to come up against Rehoboam. It was not because God did not love Rehoboam that He allowed Shishak to attack; it was because He loved him too much to lose him to his fascination with power and possessions.

The leaders of the nation realized the seriousness of the situation. They gathered in Jerusalem. They were terrified of Shishak and knew what he could do to them. God called a prophet by the name of Shemaiah to go to Jerusalem to speak to these leaders. Shemaiah reminded the leaders of how they had abandoned the Lord God. He told them that because they had abandoned the Lord, He would now abandon them to Shishak (verse 5).

When the leaders heard what the prophet Shemaiah said, they humbled themselves before the Lord (verse 6). Notice in particular in verse 6 that they said: "The LORD is just." They realized that God was fair in His dealings with them. They were receiving a just punishment for their sin of rebellion against God.

Obviously, the repentance of the leaders was sincere. God heard their cry and saw how they had humbled themselves. When the Lord saw their repentance, He sent Shemaiah back to them with another word (verse 7). God told the leaders that because they had humbled themselves, He would spare their lives and deliver them from their enemy. The city of Jerusalem would also be spared.

Notice that while God would spare them from the wrath of Shishak, He would require that they be subject to him so that they would understand the difference between serving God and serving the kings of other lands (verse 8). God was willing to forgive but these leaders had sinned against

Him and needed to learn a lesson. Their sin of rebellion against God and His law was going to be punished.

We need to realize that our sins have consequences. Forgiveness does not mean that we will never have to face the consequences of our sinful ways. Because of their rebellion against God, Rehoboam and his leaders would have to live in subjection to Shishak. While things would change for them, they could still walk in the forgiveness of God. This principle is both an encouragement and warning to us.

Our sins have consequences. Sometimes we will have to live with those consequences. Foolish decisions can follow us for the rest of our lives and radically change the course of our lives. A young girl that gets pregnant outside of marriage finds her life radically changed. Things will never be the same for her. A drunk driver who hits and kills a child will always have to live with the consequences of his foolish decision. While these lives will be forever changed, they can still walk in the awareness of the forgiveness of their God. Forgiveness will not erase the effects of sin. By forgiving us, however, God removes the penalty of our guilt. We can walk in the assurance that we are in a right relationship with Him.

In verse 9 we see that Shishak attacked Jerusalem and carried off the treasures of the temple of the LORD and the royal palace. We are told that he took everything, including the gold shields Solomon had made. Rehoboam replaced the gold shields with bronze shields (verse 10). Whenever King Rehoboam went to the temple, guards would go with him bearing these bronze shields. When he left, they would return them to the guardroom. The bronze shields were not as glorious as the gold shields. They were a constant reminder to the people of their diminished glory

because of sin. This was part of the consequences of their rebellion against God.

While Rehoboam had to live with the consequences of his rebellion against the Lord God, he also knew God's gracious hand on his life. Verse 12 tells us that because Rehoboam humbled himself, God turned His anger from him so that he was not totally destroyed.

Beyond this however, King Rehoboam was able to establish himself firmly in Jerusalem and continued to be king. He served for seventeen years in Jerusalem. Verse 14 characterized Rehoboam as an evil king who did not completely set his heart of seeking the Lord his God. The events of his reign were recorded from beginning to end in the records of Shemaiah the prophet and Iddo the seer (verse 15). During the reign of Rehoboam there was constant warfare with King Jeroboam of Israel. At his death, his son Abijah became king in his place (verse 16).

Rehoboam's story is a story of a king who did not follow completely the ways of his fathers, David and Solomon. While he made some wise decisions and seemed to allow God to humble him, he also suffered the consequences of his sin. Constant warfare and the loss of God's full blessing were evident consequences of his sinfulness. His life is a reminder to us that while forgiveness is possible we do have to bear the consequences of our actions in our lives.

For Consideration:

- What was the consequence of Rehoboam's decision to ignore the counsel of the elders of the land?



- How did his prosperity and blessing affect Rehoboam's relationship with God?
- Have your blessings ever come between you and your God? Explain.
- Has God ever had to strip you of your blessings? How did this help you to refocus your spiritual life? What did this stripping away of your blessings teach you?
- What is the difference between forgiveness and suffering the consequences for our sin? Can we be forgiven and still suffer the consequences of our sinful ways?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He is willing to forgive you when you come to Him in repentance.
- Ask God to protect you from the snare of wealth and prosperity. Ask Him to help you to keep your heart focused on Him.
- Take a moment to thank the Lord for a time when He stripped you of blessing. Thank Him for the lessons He taught you at that time.
- What are the consequences of sin in your life? Do you know God's forgiveness in these areas of your life? Ask God to help you to know complete forgiveness.

- Ask the Lord to help you to live in the fullness of His blessing. Ask Him to give you a holy discontent with sin.

## ABIJAH, KING OF JUDAH

---

Read 2 Chronicles 13:1-22

After the death of Rehoboam, his son Abijah became king in Judah. Jeroboam, king of Israel, was in his eighteenth year when Abijah became king in Judah (verse 1). Abijah would reign for three years in Judah (verse 2). During the reign of Abijah, Israel and Judah were at war with each other. We have, in this chapter, an example of one of the battles that took place between Israel and Judah during the reign of Abijah.

From verse 3 we learn that Abijah went into battle against King Jeroboam of Israel. Abijah had a force of four hundred thousand fighting men. While this was a considerable amount of fighting men, the forces of Jeroboam were twice as large. He drew up a battle line against Abijah with eight hundred thousand men. Abijah was seriously outnumbered. To all appearances, he had no chance against the much superior force of Jeroboam.

While Abijah was seriously outnumbered, he did not lose courage. He was not counting on his fighting men to give him the victory. Notice in verse 4 that he stood on Mount Zemaraim in the hill country of Ephraim and called out to Jeroboam. In verses 5-12 Abijah spoke boldly to

Jeroboam. Let's examine briefly what King Abijah of Judah had to say to King Jeroboam that day.

In verse 5 Abijah reminded Jeroboam that the Lord God had chosen to give the kingship of His people to David and his descendants forever by a covenant of salt. According to Leviticus 2:13 offerings made to the Lord God were seasoned with salt. While the significance of salt is somewhat obscure, we do understand that salt preserves and purifies. This may be its significance here. In Leviticus 18:19 we read how a "covenant of salt" was an everlasting covenant. Just as salt preserves food for an indefinite period of time, so a covenant of salt was an eternal covenant that would last forever. This is what Abijah seems to be telling Jeroboam. He was telling him that when God chose David to be the king over His people, it was by means of an eternal covenant seasoned with salt. God had not changed His mind. He had a purpose for His people under the leadership of a descendant of David. As a descendant of David, Abijah believed God had chosen him to be king over His people.

On the other hand, Jeroboam had been an official of Solomon who rebelled against his master (verse 6). He and his team of worthless scoundrels opposed Rehoboam the son of Solomon when he was young and inexperienced. They succeeded in dividing the nation (verse 7). In contrast to Abijah's glorious heritage, Jeroboam was a rebel who turned against God's purposes for the family of David.

Abijah went on in verse 8 to remind Jeroboam that not only did he rebel against the leadership God had established over His people but he also rebelled against God. Abijah recognized that the army of Jeroboam was vastly superior to his own (verse 8) but he reminded Jeroboam that the size of the army was not what was important.

Jeroboam had made other gods for the people of Israel. He had set up golden calves for them to worship. He drove out the priests of God from the land and established his own priesthood. In doing this, he turned his back on the Lord God of Israel and the faith He had given them.

Abijah reminded Jeroboam that the nation of Judah had not forsaken the priesthood God had established nor had they abandoned the laws of their God. Every morning the descendants of Aaron and the Levites presented their offerings and incense to the Lord God. They ceremonially set out bread on the table and lit the lamps as was commanded by the Law of Moses (verse 11). The nation of Judah had not abandoned the faith passed down to them. They observed all that God required.

Abijah had every reason to expect that because they had been faithful to the Lord God, He would be with them in battle. In verse 12 he even pleaded with the men of Israel not to fight against the Lord by siding with Jeroboam. He told them that there could be no success for them if they followed the ways of Jeroboam who was leading them from the paths God had set out for them.

It is important for us to take a moment to consider the message of Abijah. He was outnumbered by the forces of Jeroboam but his confidence was not in the number of men in his army. From what we can understand, his confidence was in the Lord his God whom he had faithfully served. Obedience to the Lord God is vital if we want to know victory in our spiritual lives. It is hard for us to have confidence in the Lord God when we are not walking in obedience.

In this context it may be important for us to understand that there are two levels of obedience to God. The first level is obedience in our actions. The problem with this level of

obedience is that we can do the right things but still not be right with God. Speaking to the people of his day, Isaiah the prophet said in Isaiah 29:13:

The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men."

True obedience must come from the heart. This is the second level of obedience. We can go through the motions but if our hearts are not in tune with God and in love with Him, we have not truly obeyed. God delights to bless those who love His ways and obey Him from the heart. Abijah seems to understand something of this principle. It is something we would do well to learn afresh in our day.

The way of Jeroboam was the way of the flesh. In order to have greater victory, he amassed more troops. He trusted in human strength to give him victory. Abijah's way was the way of faith. His focus was on the Lord God and living in obedience to Him. How easy it is to focus on programs and large churches. How easy it is for us to look to experience and education. The greatest qualification of a servant of God is one of loving obedience. God can do more through a simple believer who walks in loving obedience than through hundreds of educated servants who depend only on their experience and education.

While Abijah was speaking, Jeroboam sent troops secretly around the rear of Abijah's army (verse 13). Unknown to Abijah and his forces, they were being surrounded by a much superior army. By the time Judah discovered what had happened, they were being attacked from the front and the back. This placed them in a serious situation. They

were surrounded by an armed force that was twice their size.

In verse 14 Judah called out to the Lord. The priests blew the trumpets, calling Judah's men to war. Verse 15 tells us that at the sound of the battle cry God routed Jeroboam and gave Abijah victory. Jeroboam and the superior Israelite army fled before Judah (verse 16). Abijah inflicted heavy losses on Israel. According to verse 17, there were five hundred thousand casualties among Israel's men that day. Verse 18 makes it quite clear why Judah defeated the superior Israelite army:

The men of Israel were subdued on that occasion, and the men of Judah were victorious because they relied on the LORD, the God of their fathers.

Abijah's strength was not in his forces but in his reliance on God.

Abijah pursued Jeroboam and took the towns of Bethel, Jeshanah and Ephron from him (verse 19). Jeroboam would not regain his power during the reign of Abijah. God would eventually strike Jeroboam down so that he died. He was humbled by the God of Abijah.

As for Abijah, he continued to grow in strength. He married fourteen wives and had twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters (verse 21). This was evidence of the favour of the Lord on his reign. The events of his reign were recorded in the annotations of the prophet Iddo.

Abijah's life is an example of victory through confidence in God and obedience to His Word. We would do well to learn this lesson.

### For Consideration:

- Have you ever looked at the size of the problems you faced and felt overwhelmed? Why is size not important?
- What is a covenant of salt? What encouragement do you receive from the fact that God's covenant promises are eternal? What are some of those promises?
- What role does obedience have in victory?
- What good things can become our confidence? How can these things take the place of God as our confidence?
- What is the difference between obedience in action and obedience from the heart?

### For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He is bigger than any problem the enemy can bring against us.
- Ask the Lord to help you to put your confidence in Him alone for victory.
- Ask the Lord to show you anything that you might be putting your trust in apart from Him.
- Thank the Lord that His promises to us are forever. Take a moment to consider how the Lord brought



you victory over an enemy that was bigger than you. Thank Him for that victory.

- Ask the Lord to show you anywhere in your life that you may not be living in absolute obedience. Ask Him to give you strength to turn from sin to walk in victory.

## 34

### KING ASA OF JUDAH

---

Read 2 Chronicles 14:1-15:19

After the death of Abijah, his son Asa became king in his place in Judah. 2 Chronicles 14:1 tells us that there was peace during the reign of Asa for a period of ten years. This peace was, in part, due to the fact that Asa served the Lord and walked in obedience to His law.

2 Chronicles 14:2-6 describes some of the reforms Asa brought to the land. Verse 3 tells us that he removed the foreign altars and the high places used for pagan worship. He also smashed the sacred stones and the Asherah poles dedicated to foreign gods. He commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers and to obey His laws (verse 4). In every town where there were high places and incense altars used for the worship of false gods, Asa had them removed (verse 5). His heart was that the nation seek the God of his fathers.

The Lord honoured his heart by blessing him with peace in his land (verse 6). No nation was at war with Judah during those years. This was a rich blessing from the Lord and the direct result of Asa turning the nation to God and His ways.

God also blessed Judah with prosperity. In 2 Chronicles 14:7 Asa built up towns and put walls around them for defence. Again this was the direct result of the nation turning to God and walking in His ways. Victory for the nation of Judah was not found in their army or in their prosperity but in obedience to the Lord God.

This is not to say that Asa did not have an army or any trouble during those days. 2 Chronicles 14:8 tells us that Asa had an army of three hundred thousand men from Judah and two hundred and eighty thousand from Benjamin.

On one occasion Zerah the Cushite marched against Asa with his army and three hundred chariots. Asa met him in the Valley of Zephathah (verse 10). Notice in verse 11 that Asa called out to the Lord God. His dependence was not on his army. He knew that victory was in the Lord God. Asa pleaded with the Lord God to come to his aid. He told God that his reliance was in Him alone. He asked God not to let this vast army of Cushite's prevail against him (verse 11).

God answered Asa's prayer and struck down the Cushites. They fled before Judah (verse 12). Verse 13 tells us that such a great number of Cushites fell that day that they could not recover. Judah carried off a large amount of plunder. Verse 14 tells us that the Cushites feared the Lord God of Judah.

Notice that the nations were not afraid of Asa as much as they were afraid of the Lord. It was very clear that Asa's strength did not come from his army but from his God.

It is important that we take a moment to reflect on what is happening here. Asa fought against the Cushites. To the outward appearance this looked like any other battle. What is not seen, however, was what is happening on a spiritual

level. Unlike other military commanders, Asa is not putting his trust in his men. He is looking to God. There is an important lesson for us here. God has given us all spiritual gifts and talents. He expects us to use those gifts and talents for His glory. There are many people, however, who begin to put their confidence in those gifts and talents and not in the Lord. It is easy to trust in our education, or experience of spiritual gifts. Asa's army was a blessing from the Lord but he did not trust in his blessing. His confidence was in the Lord God. You can have wonderful gifts from God but fail in your ministry because you are not trusting God in the use of those gifts. Ultimately the question we need to ask ourselves is this: "Where is my confidence?" If you find yourself trusting your education, experience and gifting, you need to repent. Even the most gifted people need to rely fully on God. Gifts, experience and education alone will never bring the victory we need. Only God can bring that victory. Asa realized that while his army was a wonderful gift from God, it was not a substitute for God.

Asa's heart was clearly for the Lord God. His confidence was in Him alone. God saw his heart and rejoiced in him. In 2 Chronicles 15:1 the Lord God sent a prophet by the name of Azariah to Asa with a word.

Azariah told Asa that the Lord was with him when he was with the Lord. If Asa sought God he would find Him. If he turned from God, then God would forsake him. These were powerful words. In verse 3 the prophet reminded Asa that in Israel's history the nation had gone for a period of time without the true God and without a priest to teach the law. There was a time when the prophets and priests of the land were not proclaiming the truth of God. God's people no longer sought after God or followed His ways. God's blessings were removed from the land. The hearts of His people were empty and barren. The land was filled with

ungodliness and crime (see verses 5-6). Its inhabitants cried out in anguish under the weight of sin and rebellion.

Verse 4 reminds us, however, that when they turned to the Lord and sought Him again, God was more than willing to reveal Himself to His people again. God will not force Himself on us. He wants us to seek Him and love Him from our heart. He delights to be found but we must seek Him. God challenged Asa to seek Him with all his heart. As long as he continued to seek God, God would reveal Himself to him. The prophet told Asa to be strong and never give up seeking God. If he did this, his work would be rewarded (verse 7).

The prophecy of Azariah was a real blessing to Asa and stirred his heart to seek after God in a deeper way. While Asa had already brought many reforms to the land, this prophecy challenged him to seek God for even greater reforms. He removed idols from the land of Judah and Benjamin as well as from the towns he captured (verse 8). He also repaired the altar of the Lord in the front porch of the Lord's temple.

In verse 9 Asa called for an assembly of God's people in Jerusalem. Large numbers of people responded to this call. They assembled in Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign and sacrificed seven hundred head of cattle and seven thousand sheep and goats (verses 10-11).

From verse 12 we understand that Asa called his people to enter "with all their heart and soul" into a covenant with the Lord God of their fathers. Those who refused to seek after the Lord God and chose to serve other gods would be put to death (verse 13). This revealed the seriousness of Asa's reforms.

God's people took an oath that day to serve and honour the Lord. They did this with loud shouting, trumpets and horns (verse 14). The nation swore an oath of faithfulness to God with wholeheartedness. They sought God and God revealed Himself to them (verse 15). Evidence of this was found in how the Lord gave them rest from their enemies on all sides.

Asa's seriousness in seeking God was also seen in his willingness to remove his grandmother from her position as queen mother because she had made an Asherah pole for the pagan gods. Asa cut down that pole, broke it up and burned it in the Kidron Valley. While he did not remove all the pagan high places from the land, Asa's heart was committed to the Lord all his life. As much as he had done, there was still more he could have done. God, however, was pleased with him and his efforts.

In verse 18 Asa refurnished the temple. He restored the temple articles of silver and gold that his father Abijah had dedicated to the Lord. Notice again the reference to the fact that God gave Asa peace with his enemies on all sides. There was no war in Judah until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign (verse 19).

What we see here from these two chapters is how God extended an open invitation to Asa and his nation to seek Him. He promised that He would reveal Himself to those who sought Him with all their heart. It is of particular interest to see that Asa, who had already brought many reforms in chapter 14, is challenged by God to go even deeper in chapter 15. As he does, the blessing of God is increased in the land. What a challenge this brings us in our day as well. Maybe you have been seeking God, but He is calling you to go deeper. Today He is extending His invitation to draw deeper from His powerful resources. He

is calling you to trust Him for even more. The invitation is there for us all. If we seek Him and persevere in seeking Him, He will reveal Himself to us.

#### For Consideration:

- What evidence do we see in these two chapters of God's blessing on the land of Judah?
- Chapter 14 describes the reforms that Asa brought to the land but God called him to deeper reforms in chapter 15. How is God calling you to go deeper in Him today?
- Asa's confidence was not in his army but in the Lord his God. In what do we put our confidence today?
- How much have you been seeking God today? What is the connection between knowing God and seeking Him with all your heart? What keeps you from seeking Him more?

#### For Prayer:

- Ask God to help you to seek Him more.
- Thank the Lord for His promise that He will let us find Him if we seek Him with all our heart.
- Ask God to show you anything that distracts you in your pursuit of Him.

- Ask God to help you to put your confidence in Him alone. Ask Him to forgive you for putting your confidence in other things.
- Ask God to give you grace to see how you can seek Him for even greater thing in your personal life and ministry.
- Ask the Lord to forgive you for not being as passionate as you should be in seeking Him and His purposes. Ask Him to forgive you for being content with too little.



## 35

### ASA'S LATER YEARS

---

Read 2 Chronicles 16:1-14

In the last chapter, we saw how Asa was responsible for many reforms in the land of Judah. For thirty some years he led the people of God into peace and prosperity. He was faithful to the Lord and walked in His ways. Those who start well, however, do not always finish well. There are countless examples of men and women of faith who fell in their walk with God. Asa is one of these people.

It was in the thirty-sixth year of Asa that Baasha, king of Israel, attacked Judah. He fortified the city of Ramah and prevented anyone from leaving or entering Judah (verse 1). This would have been a serious hardship for Asa and the inhabitants of Judah.

In times past, Asa would have turned to the Lord for help and direction. Verse 2 tells us, however, that instead of seeking the Lord, Asa turned to Ben-Hadad, king of Aram who was ruling in Damascus at the time (verse 2). In order to buy his support, Asa took gold and silver from the temple treasury. With this gold and silver Asa purchased the support of Ben-Hadad and make a treaty with him. In order to make a treaty with Asa, verse 3 tells us that Ben-Hadad needed to break his treaty with King Baasha of Israel. Asa

was hoping that this large sum of money would entice Ben-Hadad to break his treaty with Baasha and force Israel to withdraw from his land.

What is obvious from this is that Asa is not putting his trust in the Lord God. He is trusting that the greed of Ben-Hadad would be strong enough to cause him to break his agreement with Baasha. We are left wondering what it was that brought King Asa to this point of trusting wealth and greed rather than in the Lord his God.

This trust in the sinfulness of the human heart is not new. From the very beginning of time people have used the sinful nature of their fellow human beings to their advantage. Even in our day business is done on this basis. Greed, lust, power, glory are powerful tools in the hands of the enemy to influence us to do his bidding. Who among us has not been tempted by our sinful flesh to wander from the path set out for us in the Word of God? Asa successfully manipulated Ben-Hadad by appealing to his greed.

From verse 4 we understand that Ben-Hadad agreed to accept Asa's bribe and sent his forces against Baasha and the towns of Israel. He conquered several Israelite towns. When Baasha, king of Israel heard what had happened, he abandoned the fortifying of Ramah and left the region. Asa and his men carried off the stones and timber that Baasha had been using and built up his own towns of Geba and Mizpah.

What we need to see is that Asa was successful in what he was attempting to do in human strength and manipulation. Much can be accomplished through manipulation and human strength. Asa was successful in avoiding an attack by Baasha. It is quite possible to build up a ministry through human wisdom and manipulation also. How many

businesses have been built up and become very successful through human strength and wisdom? It is possible to accomplish our goals as Asa did. Success in human terms, however, does not mean that we are walking in God's way. By trusting in the sinful greed of Ben-Hadad, Asa was not honouring God. You can have a successful business or ministry and be living in disobedience to God. Size and success are not a measure of obedience.

Asa was finding a certain measure of success in walking away from God and His purposes. How careful we need to be here. It is easy to fall into the trap of numbers and statistics. We can easily believe that if our church or our business is growing then we must be doing something right. The story of Asa makes it quite clear that this is not always the case. True success for the believer is found in obedience to God. This requires seeking Him and His purpose for each situation we encounter. Asa failed to do this in his encounter with Baasha.

It was not long before God sent a prophet to Asa to rebuke him for not seeking Him in this matter. Hanani the prophet came to see King Asa and told him that because he had relied on Aram and not on the Lord, the army of the king of Aram had escaped from his hands. We are left wondering what would have happened if Asa had trusted the Lord. Obviously, from this, God was saying that He was willing not only to give Asa victory over Baasha but also over Ben-Hadad of Aram! God's purposes were even greater than anything Asa could have imagined. He was content to see Baasha retreat and felt he had been victorious. God would have been willing, however, to give him a much greater victory. God wanted to give him total victory but Asa was content with avoiding a conflict.

Hannai the prophet reminded Asa of how God had given him victory over the Cushites and Libyans even though they were greater in number than his own army (verse 8). Asa knew this victory when he relied on the Lord and trusted in His strength. Hannai told Asa that the eyes of the Lord search throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him. What an incredible promise this is for us today. Verse 9 tells us clearly that the Lord is looking for those whose hearts are fully committed to Him. When He finds this type of people He is more than willing to strengthen them. If we will trust God, He will strengthen us. He is looking for a man or a woman He can strengthen. He wants to strengthen. He wants to empower. All He requires is that we look to Him for that strength and trust in His ways.

When Asa turned to human strength and manipulation, he forfeited the strength of the Lord. God had a great purpose for him but Asa walked away from that purpose by not putting his confidence in the Lord. God had allowed this situation to come into Asa's life because He wanted to use it to give him complete victory over Israel and Aram. Asa walked away from that victory and contented himself with something smaller. What he did was very foolish. From that point on, Asa and the nation of Judah would be at war. Their years of peace had ended. Now there would be turmoil in the land (verse 9).

Asa's response to Hannai the prophet is surprising. Instead of listening to the words of the prophet and repenting of his sin, Asa responded in pride. He became so enraged at the prophet that he had him cast into prison (verse 10). Not only did he have the prophet cast into prison but Asa also began to oppress people in his nation. Notice that verse 10 tells us that this oppression was "brutal." This tells us something about the condition of his spiritual life. He

was not only failing to listen to the Lord, he was now fighting God and His purposes.

By the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Verse 12 tells us that this disease was severe but Asa did not consult the Lord God or seek help from Him for this illness. He would only seek help from the doctors. We are left with the impression that something could have been done about his illness had he come to the Lord, repented of his pride and sought His healing. Asa refused to do this, however. His heart was hardened to the things of God and he would not seek God for his healing.

This passage is not telling us that we should not consult doctors for our illness. What it is telling us is that we should trust in the Lord for our healing. Doctors are often the instruments of God's healing but they are not healers in themselves. We need to commit our illness to the Lord. How easy it is for us to trust in science and medicine to heal us. God alone can heal us. Science and medicine have no power in themselves. Without God, science and medicine are powerless. Asa chose to trust his doctors but he refused to recognize that his life and health ultimately lay in God's hands.

Asa died from his disease. Because he refused to seek the Lord, his disease ultimately took his life (verse 13). He was buried in the City of David and the people gave him a royal funeral but inside the grave clothes was a man eaten by a serious illness that could likely have been healed had he sought the Lord his God. Inside the grave clothes was a man who had turned his back on the Lord God in the latter part of his life. He ended his life defeated because he took his eyes from the Lord his God.

## For Consideration:

- Asa started his reign well but ended in rebellion against God. Will you finish well?
- Have you ever been guilty of trying to manipulate people into doing what you want them to do? How does this demonstrate a lack of trust in God?
- Is it possible for us to make our places of worship or our business grow in size through human wisdom and strength? Is size and prosperity an indication of doing things God's way? Explain.
- How did Asa settle for something far less than the purpose of God? Have you ever settled for something less than God's purpose for your life?
- This passage tells us that God is looking to strengthen people who will trust in Him. Are you one of those people?

## For Prayer:

- Ask God to help you to finish your Christian life well. Ask Him to show you how you can protect yourself from the trap that Asa fell into.
- Ask God to forgive you for the times you resorted to manipulating people to get your own way. Ask Him to help you to trust in Him alone.
- Ask God to help you to live in obedience to Him in everything. Thank Him that He has a wonderful purpose for all who will place their confident trust in Him.

- Ask God to give you strength to do what He has called you to do. Thank Him that He delights to strengthen all who trust in Him.
- Ask God to show you if you are putting your trust in anything but Him. Ask Him to forgive you.

## 36

### JEHOSHAPHAT'S

### SECRET OF SUCCESS

---

Read 2 Chronicles 17:1-19

After the death of Asa, his son Jehoshaphat became king in his place. One of Jehoshaphat's first responsibilities was to strengthen Judah against the threat of Israel (verse 1). Asa had avoided a conflict with Israel by buying the support of Aram but he was not successful in ridding Judah of this threat. In order to deal with this potential threat, Jehoshaphat stationed troops in all Judah's fortified cities (verse 2).

Verse 3 tells us that in his early years Jehoshaphat walked with the Lord like his father David had done. He rejected the worship of Baal, choosing rather to follow the commands of the Lord God of his ancestors (verse 4).

The result of this obedience was that the Lord God established his kingdom and made it strong. Jehoshaphat was honoured by his people who brought him many gifts. Jehoshaphat became a wealthy man (verse 5).



Jehosphaphat's heart was devoted to the Lord God. He removed the high places used in pagan worship from the land. He also removed the pagan Asherah poles (verse 6).

In the third year of his reign, Jehoshaphat decided to send teachers into the various towns of Judah to teach the ways of the Lord. Verses 7-8 give us the names of 16 men involved in the teaching of the law throughout Judah. Included among them were both priests and Levites. These men acted as traveling teachers who took the Book of the Law with them as they travelled from town to town teaching the people of God's requirements (verse 9).

There seems to be a direct connection between this teaching of the Word of God and the fear of the Lord that fell on the kingdoms surrounding Judah. As the Word of God was taught and as God's people listened and obeyed, something happened. There was an increasing awareness of the blessing and power of God in the lives of His people. This blessing and empowering was so obvious that even the surrounding nations began to fear Judah. They did not dare attack her for fear of her God (verse 10). God's presence was evident in the life of the nation. Even the Philistines, natural enemies of God's people for many years, brought gifts of silver to Jehoshaphat. The Arabs brought him flocks of rams and goats.

According to verse 12 Jehoshaphat became more powerful. He built forts and store cities in Judah to store his increasing wealth. He had experienced fighting men stationed in the city of Jerusalem to defend it. Verses 14-19 record the number of fighting men by families in Judah. Under Adnah were 300,000 fighting men (verse 14). Jehohanan commanded 280,000 soldiers (verse 15). Amasiah volunteered to lead 200,000 warriors in verse 16. The tribe of Benjamin also had many valiant soldiers loyal to

Jehoshaphat. Eliada commanded 200,000 men armed with bows and shields (verse 17). A commander by the name of Jehozabad was in charge of 180,000 more valiant soldiers. In all there were over 1.1 million soldiers available to fight for Jehoshaphat.

Judah was well defended. God's rich blessing was on the nation because Jehoshaphat sought the Lord and His ways. What is particularly striking is that while Jehoshaphat did have a massive army, the nation's strength is not attributed to this army. The powerful army was just one of many blessings that came as a result of Jehoshaphat's obedience to the Lord. The nation's strength was in her relationship with God. The teachers of the law were of greater importance in the strengthening of the nation than the soldiers. As these teachers moved from town to town teaching the Word of God, the fear of the Lord came not only on those who heard the Word but also those who saw the result in the lives of those who chose to obey it.

How important it is for us to see what God is doing here. God is blessing the obedience of His people. As His people learn to walk in His way, things happen in the nation. The doors of heaven open and the blessing of God fills the nation. No nation dared to touch God's people for they saw clear evidence of God's presence, power and blessing on their lives. This was not the result of military might or skilful governing. It was the result of the teaching of the Word of God and a determination on the part of the leadership and people alike to live in obedience to God and His Word. We are left to wonder what would be the result in our nations if we were to have the same determination as Jehoshaphat and the people of his day.

## For Consideration:

- What connection does the author make between obedience to the Lord God and the blessing of the nation?
- What was the role of the teachers of the law in bringing renewal to the nation of Judah? What is the role of preachers and Bible teachers today in our nation?
- While Jehoshaphat had a large army, his success was not found in his army but in obedience to God and His law. How easy is it for us to trust in our strengths more than in God?

## For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to restore passion for the teaching of the Word in our day. Thank Him that His Word is powerful to change lives and nations.
- Ask the Lord to help you to learn to live in greater obedience to His Word. Ask Him to show you anything in your life that is not in agreement to His Word.
- Ask God to rise up gifted preachers and teachers for this generation. Ask Him to open the hearts of His people to His Word as He did in the days of Jehoshaphat.

# 37

## JEHOSHAPHAT'S

## ALLIANCE WITH AHAB

---

Read 2 Chronicles 18:1-34

In the last meditation we saw how Jehoshaphat sought the Lord and how the Lord richly blessed him and the nation of Judah. In chapter 18, however, we read how he made an alliance with the evil King Ahab of Israel. It appears he did this by giving his son to be married to King Ahab's daughter (see 2 Kings 8:18).

There are a couple of things we need to note about Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab through the marriage of his son to Ahab's daughter. First, God was not pleased with this alliance. In 2 Chronicles 19:1-2 God sent Jehu the prophet to Jehoshaphat to speak to him about his decision. Listen to what God said to Jehoshaphat:

When Jehoshaphat king of Judah returned safely to his palace in Jerusalem, Jehu the seer, the son of Hanani, went out to meet him and said to the king, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, the wrath of the LORD is upon you."

Notice what God is saying to Jehoshaphat. He is telling him that he helped the wicked and loved those who hated the Lord. God was not pleased with the fact that Jehoshaphat chose to ally himself with Ahab who did not love Him or walk in His ways.

The second important detail we need to see is that Athaliah, who married Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram, in later years, would seek to destroy the royal line of Judah (see 2 Chronicles 22:10). This gives us an understanding of the type of person she really was. Her heart was not in tune with God. She would prove to be a stumbling block for the nation of Judah and ultimately its worst enemy. By encouraging this marriage, Jehoshaphat was putting a stumbling block before the entire nation.

Jehoshaphat seemed to be blinded to the error of his ways. All he could see was that there was peace between his nation and Israel. He did not look into the future to see the consequences of his actions. Nor had he truly sought the Lord about this union.

In verse 2 Jehoshaphat went to Israel to visit King Ahab. Ahab welcomed him warmly and slaughtered many sheep and cattle for him. When they met, Ahab suggested that they join forces and attack the city of Ramoth Gilead which was in the hands of the Arameans (verse 3). Jehoshaphat was more than happy to help Ahab fight this battle but first wanted to seek the will of the Lord (verse 4).

It is interesting that, while Jehoshaphat was not completely living for the Lord, he still wanted to know if the Lord would be with him in battle. At this point in his life Jehoshaphat seems to be divided in his allegiance.

In response to Jehoshaphat's request, King Ahab brought together four hundred prophets and asked them whether he should go to war against Ramoth Gilead (verse 5). All the prophets were of one accord and told Ahab that he was to go to war.

It should be understood here that these prophets were not prophets of the Lord God. In those days, the nation of Israel had turned her back on the Lord and His ways. In fact, 1 Kings 18:12-13 tells us that Ahab and his wife Jezebel had been murdering the prophets of God in the land of Israel. Jehoshaphat's comments in verse 6 make it clear that the prophets who stood before them that day were prophets of the pagan religion of Israel at the time:

"But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there not a prophet of the LORD here whom we can inquire of?"

Jehoshaphat heard the words of the four hundred prophets of Ahab but was not comfortable with their response. He needed to hear from the Lord his God.

Ahab did not have much use for the true prophets of God. He did know, however, of one such prophet in his land. This prophet was a prophet by the name of Micaiah. Ahab made it clear to Jehoshaphat that Micaiah never prophesied anything good about him. Ahab didn't like him for this reason.

I find it interesting that Ahab judged the value of a prophet by how much good he said about him. For Ahab, a good prophet was a prophet who spoke good and encouraging things to him. He was willing to sacrifice the truth if, in doing so, he could hear the prophet confirm him in his ways. There are many people like this in our day. They really don't want to hear the truth of the Word of God. Like Ahab

they simply want to be confirmed in their own ways. They want Bible teachers and preachers to justify their sin and evil practices. They love preachers who tell them what they want to hear.

Despite what Ahab told him, Jehoshaphat still wanted to hear from the true prophet of God. While Jehoshaphat was not walking completely with the Lord, he was still willing to listen to what God had to say. Ahab ordered that Michaiah be brought to them (verse 8).

As they waited for Michaiah to come, the kings, dressed in their royal robes listened to the prophets. One of the prophets, a man by the name of Zedekiah, made some iron horns and declared that Ahab would gore the Arameans with them until they were destroyed (verse 10). When the other prophets heard this they all prophesied the same thing and encouraged the king to attack Ramoth Gilead. They assured him that he would be victorious (verse 11).

When the messenger, who had gone to bring Micaiah to the kings, met the prophet, he offered him some advice. He told him what the other prophets had been predicting and recommended that he bring a prophecy to the king that was the same (verse 12). He suggested that Micaiah speak favourably to the king and tell him that he would be successful. This comment shows that he really did not understand the nature of prophecy. The prophets of that day were not seeking the heart of God but speaking words they believed people wanted to hear.

Michaiah told the messenger that he would only speak what God told him to say. The true prophet cares little about what people want to hear but speaks God's heart.

It is interesting to note, however, that when Micaiah arrived and the king asked him if he should go to war, he responded, "Attack and be victorious, for they will be given into your hand" (verse 14). At first glance, Micaiah seems to do what he said he would not do. He spoke just what the king wanted him to speak and agreed with the prophets.

The context, however, makes it clear that Ahab knew that Micaiah was not being truthful. In verse 15 he told Micaiah, "How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"

Obviously, Ahab had dealings with Micaiah in the past. He knew that Micaiah was different from the other prophets. Micaiah also knew that the king really did not want to hear the truth. He knew that Ahab was quite content to hear the prophets confirm him and say only what he wanted them to say. Ahab gave Micaiah permission to speak the truth.

When Micaiah was given permission to speak the truth, he told King Ahab that he saw Israel being scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd (verse 16). King Ahab was obviously the shepherd of his people. What Micaiah was saying was that Israel would lose their king in this battle. Ahab's life was at stake if he went to war with the Arameans. King Ahab was not surprised to hear that Micaiah prophesied evil about him (verse 17).

Micaiah continued to speak the word of the Lord. He went on to describe a scene in heaven with the Lord discussing with His heavenly hosts what He should do about King Ahab. The Lord asked the angels what they thought He should do to entice Ahab to attack Ramoth Gilead. It was His intention that Ahab die in the battle (verse 19).



As the scene in heaven unfolded in Micaiah's mind, one angel suggested one thing and another something else. Finally a spirit came forward and said that he would entice him to go to battle. The Lord asked him how he would do this and the spirit told the Lord that he would be a lying spirit in the mouths of the prophets so that they would encourage him to fight (verse 21). The Lord gave the spirit permission to do what was on his mind. According to Micaiah, the Lord had put a lying spirit in the mouths of all Ahab's prophets so that he would be deceived and killed in battle (verse 22).

It is important that we say a few words about this prophecy of Micaiah. First, it is important that we understand the nature of prophetic pictures in Scripture. We should not assume that because Micaiah saw this picture that this is exactly how things happened in heaven. God gave prophetic pictures in Scripture to communicate a truth. These pictures were often symbolic in nature. A quick look at the book of Revelation, for example, will show us that John had many prophetic pictures revealed to him of terrible creatures and beasts. These were not real beasts. They were symbols of nations or spiritual powers at work in the world. We should not assume that God literally sat in heaven having a conference with His angels to figure out what He should do about Ahab. God does not need to consult angels about what He should do. As a sovereign God, He was fully able to determine the fate of Ahab and how that would come about.

The prophetic picture that Micaiah received was intended to communicate a message to Ahab in a way he could understand. God is pictured as a great military commander with His advisors gathered around Him. Together they are planning the strategy for their attack on Ahab. In this group is one who has been able to infiltrate the ranks of Ahab's

prophetic advisors. He suggests that he would be able to deceive them so that they mislead their king. The war committee agrees on this strategy and sends of their spy to do his deceptive work. Ahab could understand this prophetic picture. He had himself been involved in many such meetings as he prepared for battle against his enemies.

We should be very careful about drawing too much out of the prophecy of Micaiah. God does not encourage deception and lies. This is clear from the context of the rest of Scripture. What Micaiah saw in his vision was a picture from God intended for King Ahab. God gave him an earthly picture he could understand the message he was communicating. It was intended as a warning to him. God was against him and his efforts to conquer Ramoth Gilead, and Ahab would attack it at the cost of his life.

When Zedekiah the prophet, who had made the two iron horns, heard what Micaiah had said to the king, he was angry with him and slapped him in the face as a sign of contempt. He mocked Micaiah saying, "Which way did the spirit from the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?" (verse 24). Why did the Spirit tell me one thing and you another? In saying this he seems to be telling Micaiah that he was clearly wrong in his prophecy.

Micaiah responded by telling Zedekiah that he would find out who was right on the day he went to hide in an inner room (verse 24). While we do not have the details here, it is clear that the day was coming when Zedekiah would run and hide from a terror awaiting him. In the end, the true prophet would be revealed.

King Ahab was also very angry with Micaiah. In verse 25 he ordered that Micaiah be put into prison. He was not to be given any food or water until Ahab returned safely from

battle. Micaiah told the king, however, that if he returned safely from battle then the Lord had not spoken through him (verse 27).

Despite the warning of Micaiah, Jehoshaphat and Ahab decided to go to war against Ramoth Gilead (verse 28). What is particularly striking is that Ahab decided not to wear his royal robes in an attempt to disguise himself (verse 29). Four hundred prophets told him that he would be successful in his battle. Micaiah the prophet told him that he would die. Despite how far from God Ahab had wandered he was still plagued by the words of Micaiah. Deep down there was an awareness that the words of Micaiah could very well be true. He could not take a chance and so he tried to disguise himself so the enemy would not recognize him.

The king of Aram was intent on capturing and killing Ahab. In verse 30 he gave specific orders that his men focus their efforts on the king of Israel. This command almost proved fatal for Jehoshaphat. When the commanders saw Jehoshaphat in his royal robes, they assumed he was King Ahab. They sent their forces after him. Jehoshaphat knew he was in serious trouble and cried out to the Lord for help (verse 31). God heard his prayer and opened the eyes of the chariot commanders to see that he was not Ahab (verses 31-32).

While Ahab successfully disguised himself so that the army of Aram never recognized him, he failed to realize that he could not hide from God. Verse 33 tells us that a man drew his bow and shot an arrow at random. That random arrow flew through the air and struck Ahab between the sections of his armour. All day long the battle raged and no one noticed the King of Israel. All day long Ahab propped himself up in his chariot watching the battle. By

evening he was dead (verse 34). This was in direct fulfillment of the prophecy of Micaiah.

As for Jehoshaphat, he had great cause to reflect. He had almost lost his life in his association with Ahab and his evil ways. God heard his prayer and saved his life, however, giving him another chance to consider his ways.

For Consideration:

- Have you ever been tempted to form an alliance with those who are not godly? What tempts us to form such alliances?
- We have a picture of Jehoshaphat wandering from the Lord God in this chapter. Despite his wandering ways, what evidence is there of a tender heart to God?
- What is the difference between the false prophets of Ahab and Micaiah the true prophet?
- What does this chapter have to teach us about the sovereignty of God over evil?
- Can we hide from God? Why is it futile for us to attempt to hide our sins from Him?
- Despite his rebellion against God, Jehoshaphat's prayer for help is still heard. What encouragement does this bring you today? What does this teach you about the grace and mercy of God?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to help you to be true to Him.
- Ask God to give you a heart that is always tender toward Him.
- Thank the Lord that He is sovereign over evil and sin.
- Thank the Lord that He is a God of mercy who has compassion on us even when we are wandering from Him and His purposes.

## 38

### SINFUL ALLIANCES

---

Read 2 Chronicles 19:1-20:37

In the last chapter we saw how Jehoshaphat had allied himself with the evil king Ahab. This nearly resulted in Jehoshaphat's death. Jehoshaphat cried out to the Lord and his life was spared. This would certainly have given him cause to reflect on his evil alliances. It was also a very powerful warning from God.

After Jehoshaphat's safe return from battle, he went back to his palace in Jerusalem (verse 1). God sent a prophet to him by the name of Jehu. Jehu had a word from God for the king in verse 2:

Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, the wrath of the LORD is upon you.

Jehoshaphat had made an alliance with King Ahab and chose to side with Ahab against Aram. In doing this, he was loving those who had turned their back on the God and assisting them in their battles. God was not pleased with this and sent his prophet Jehu to rebuke Jehoshaphat.

According to verse 3 we understand that Jehoshaphat's heart was still tender toward the Lord God. God commended him for getting rid of the pagan Asherah poles in the land.

King Jehoshaphat took the words of the Lord seriously. We are left to wonder if the time he had almost lost his life in the battle with Ahab scared him into the realization of what he was doing. Verse 4 tells us that the result of these words from the Lord was that Jehoshaphat went out among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim and turned them back to the Lord God.

In order to restore his people to a right relationship with God, Jehoshaphat appointed judges for each fortified city in Jerusalem (verse 5). He told these judges that they were to judge not for man but for the Lord. In other words, they were to do what the Lord required of them, showing no favouritism. They were to judge fairly and in accordance with the clear teaching of the law of God. They were to be governed by the fear of the Lord. They were to take no bribes (verse 7).

In Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat appointed Levites, priests and heads of Israelite families to help in the administration of the law of God and settle any dispute that would arise in the land (verse 8). To these Levites, priests and family heads, Jehoshaphat gave this command:

You must serve faithfully and wholeheartedly in the fear of the LORD" (verse 9).

He told these leaders that they were to be careful in every case that came before them to warn the people not to sin lest the wrath of God fall on them (verse 10). He commissioned Amariah the chief priest to be over all the Levites,

priests and heads of family in matters concerning the law of God. Zebadiah was to be over them in regards to the civil matters pertaining to the king (verse 11).

In all this, Jehoshaphat showed his seriousness in seeking the Lord and His ways. God had been speaking to his heart about his evil alliances and Jehoshaphat wanted to be sure he was right with God.

Jehoshaphat's commitment to the Lord God would be tested. In chapter 20 we read how the Moabites, Ammonites and some of the Meunites came to make war with him (verse 1). From verse 2 we understand that they formed a massive army. Jehoshaphat was alarmed by the news of this army. Verse 3 tells us that he "resolved to inquire of the Lord and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah." Jehoshaphat knew that the source of his strength would be in the Lord God. The people of the nation turned their hearts to the Lord and sought His help (verse 4).

On that occasion Jehoshaphat stood in the presence of his people at the temple and prayed (2 Chronicles 20:5). In his prayer he confessed that the Lord God of his fathers was God in heaven (verse 6). That is to say, He was over all other gods. He ruled over all the kingdoms of the earth. All power and might came from Him. There was no nation or god who could withstand Him.

As God of all power, the God of Jehoshaphat's fathers had driven out the inhabitants of the land they now occupied, giving it to His people in answer to the promise He had made to Abraham. Jehoshaphat reminded God of His promise to His people.

Jehoshaphat also reminded God that His people had built Him a sanctuary in this nation (verse 8). When that temple



was built, it had been the prayer of Solomon that when calamity came to the nation, if God's people cried out to Him from this temple, He would hear and answer their prayer (verse 9). Jehoshaphat is referring here to the prayer of Solomon in 2 Chronicles 6:28-31.

Jehoshaphat then brought the particular problem they had with Ammon, Moab and the inhabitants of Mount Seir to the Lord (verse 10). He asked the Lord to judge these nations. He told the Lord that they did not have the power in themselves to face such a massive army. Their eyes were on Him alone for victory (verse 12).

As they prayed, the Spirit of the Lord came on a Levite by the name of Jahaziel (verse 14). God had a word to speak to the assembly through him in response to their prayers. God told Jehoshaphat that he was not to be discouraged because of the vast army that was coming against him. This was not his battle but the Lord's. How many times do we take on battles that are not ours to fight? The Lord is ready to fight those battles for us but, in our panic, we try to fight them ourselves. God was reminding Jehoshaphat that he would not have to fight this battle. God would fight it for him.

God also told Jehoshaphat that he was to march against the enemy. God told him where he would find them (verse 16). God told them that while they would not have to fight this battle they were still to take up their fighting positions and stand firm. Instead of fighting, however, they were to watch and see what the Lord God would do for them (verse 17).

When Jehoshaphat heard the word of the Lord, he bowed with his face to the ground in worship. The people did the same (verse 18). Then the Levites stood up and began to

praise the Lord with a loud voice (verse 19). The confidence of the people was in the Lord their God. They had His promise of deliverance and were encouraged. Their despair and discouragement was now changed to hope and confidence for they had the promise of God for victory.

The next day, Jehoshaphat and his men went to face the enemy. As they went, Jehoshaphat encouraged them to put their trust in the Lord and the word given them through his prophet. He reminded them that they would be victorious if they would keep their trust in God (verse 20).

Jehoshaphat then appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise Him for the splendour of his holiness. These men were to go out at the head of the army singing:

Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever (verse 21).

These singers had an important role to play. As they sang, they reminded the people that God was a loving God who was faithful to His promises. The closer they came to the enemy, the more they needed to be reminded of this. It would certainly have been easy for God's people to give in to fear. The singing kept their minds focused on the truth of God's loving faithfulness and gave them courage to face their enemy.

There was something else that happened that day. The Lord moved in power when the people began to sing praises (verse 22). A great confusion came into the enemy camp. The Ammonites and the Moabites rose up against the men from Mount Seir and fought them. They began to fight among themselves. The battle between these two parties was severe and when they had slaughtered the

men of Mount Seir the Ammonites and Moabites began to fight among themselves (verse 23).

By the time that the men of Judah had come to the place where God had told them they would meet the enemy, they found only dead bodies lying on the ground (verse 24). The enemy had destroyed itself. No one escaped.

Jehoshaphat and his men carried off the plunder. There was so much plunder that they could not take it all with them (verse 25). It took them three days to collect what God gave to them that day.

On the fourth day, when all the plunder was gathered, the people assembled in the Valley of Beracah where they held a great service of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord (verse 26). The word "baracah" literally means "praise."

After this great praise service, Jehoshaphat and his men returned to Jerusalem. There was great joy and rejoicing in Jerusalem for the victory the Lord had given them (verse 27). They entered the city and went to the temple with the sound of harps, lutes and trumpets accompanying them. These were days of great celebration. God had given them great victory (verse 28).

Not only did God's people have cause to celebrate, but the nations around them had great cause for fear. When the surrounding nations heard what the Lord God had done for His people the fear of the Lord God came on them. They refused to fight against Judah because they saw the power of their God. Judah would live at peace with their neighbours (verse 30).

All together Jehoshaphat would reign in Jerusalem for twenty-five years (verse 31). He walked in the ways of the

Lord God and did not stray from them (verse 32). While Jehoshaphat served the Lord there were still pagan high places in the land where false gods were worshiped. There were also people in the land who did not give their hearts completely over to the Lord (verse 33).

Toward the end of Jehoshaphat's life, however, he made an alliance with Ahaziah the king of Israel. Verse 35 makes it quite clear that Ahaziah was "guilty of wickedness." Jehoshaphat agreed to construct a fleet of trading ships with him (verse 36). When the project was completed, the Lord sent a prophet by the name of Eliezer to Jehoshaphat to speak to him about this evil alliance (verse 37).

Eliezer told Jehoshaphat that because he had made this alliance with the evil king Ahaziah, the Lord would destroy the ships he had made. While we are not told how this happened, verse 37 makes it clear that the ships were destroyed before they could ever set sail.

In the life of Jehoshaphat we see a man whose temptation was to form alliances with people who did evil. God had to rebuke him several times in his life. He was not an evil king but he was tempted particularly in this area of his life. It is unclear why he found such alliances tempting. God's heart for the nation of Judah was that they seek Him and honour Him in every way. Evil alliances with people whose heart and principles were ungodly was not God's purpose for His people. Are the relationships you have ones that honour God? Do your relationships cause you to compromise your faith and Christian principles? If so you would do well to take seriously God's warning to Jehoshaphat.

## For Consideration:

- What impact do you feel that Jehoshaphat's near death experience in chapter 18 had on his understanding of the dangers of sinful alliances?
- How did Jehoshaphat seek to restore his people to a right relationship with God in chapter 19?
- How was Jehoshaphat's commitment to God tested in chapter 20?
- God told Jehoshaphat that the battle before him was not his to fight. How often have you been tempted to fight battles that were not yours to fight?
- What was the result of the victory of God in the minds of the nations around Judah? Do people see evidence of God's power and presence in your life?
- Jehoshaphat's temptation was to form alliances with sinful partners. Consider your relationships. Are there any relationships that do not honour God?

## For Prayer:

- Thank God for the times He has sent people to warn you of sin in your life.
- Thank the Lord for the many times He has fought battles for you. Thank Him for the victories He has given.

- Ask God to demonstrate through you a greater measure of His power and presence so that others will see Christ in you to a greater measure.
- Ask God to show you if there are any relationships in your life that do not bring honour to Him. Ask Him for grace to deal with those relationships.

## 39

### **JEHORAM, EVIL KING OF JUDAH**

---

Read 2 Chronicles 21:1-20

When Jehoshaphat died, he was buried in the City of David with his fathers. His son Jehoram succeeded him as king in Judah (verse 1). Jehoram had six brothers whose names are listed in verse 2. Jehoshaphat had given these sons much wealth in silver, gold and articles of great value. He also gave them fortified cities in Judah. Because Jehoram was the eldest son, however, he made him king.

When Jehoram established himself as king over Judah, he decided to put his brothers and some other princes in the land to death (verse 4). This may have been an attempt to assure that his reign would not be threatened.

Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king. He served as king for eight years (verse 5). He was an evil king. Verse 6 describes him as a king who walked in the ways of King Ahab of Israel. We also discover from this verse that he married one of Ahab's daughters whose influence likely led him away from the Lord.

Jehoram's evil stirred up the wrath of God. It was only because of God's gracious promise to David that He did not destroy Jehoram and his family (verse 7). God promised that He would maintain a lamp for David and his descendants forever. Had it not been for this promise, Jehoram and his descendants would have been destroyed.

While God was not willing to destroy the descendants of David because of Jehoram's sin, He did punish him for his evil. In the days of Jehoram, Edom rebelled against Judah. In the days of Jehoshaphat, Jehoram's father, the fear of the Lord filled the surrounding nations so that they did not dare to attack Judah (see 2 Chronicles 20:29-30). This was a radical change for the nation of Judah. No longer do the nations fear to attack God's people. The empowering presence of God is no longer evident in the nation. Sin had stripped her of that power.

Edom rebelled against Judah (verse 8). Jehoram gathered his chariots and military officers to attack Edom. Edom surrounded him and threatened to overpower him but he was able to escape (verse 9). Jehoram was unable to deal with this rebellion. The region of Libnah also revolted and Jehoram was powerless against them. Verse 10 makes it very clear that the reason Jehoram was powerless against these insignificant regions was because he had forsaken the Lord.

The effect of sin in the life of the nation is obvious. At one point they were feared and prosperous. Under Jehoram's reign, however, this was no longer the case. The whole nation was weakened by sin.

While the effect of sin should have been obvious to the nation, verse 11 tells us that Jehoram continued in his rebellion by building high places in the hills of Judah. The



people of Jerusalem worshiped false gods and prostituted themselves to them. The nation was led astray from the true God. Common sense would have shown the nation that these practices were stripping them of the blessing they once knew. This, however, seemed to matter little. For the pleasures of sin, the nation was willing to sacrifice all they once knew of the blessings and presence of God.

Satan is able to blind the eyes of those who fall into his trap. Speak to the young person who has fallen into the sin of immorality. Speak to the business person who has become trapped in the snare of success. You will see very quickly that earthly pleasure and success have blinded their eyes to the things of God. They don't seem to care that their lives and the lives of those around them are being destroyed. They are indifferent to the things of God. This is what is happening in Judah. They have turned their hearts from God and His presence. They are indifferent to the fact that the nation is being destroyed. All they see is their sin and their sinful ways. This is all they want.

In the midst of this terrible evil, a letter came from Elijah the prophet to Jehoram. Elijah had a word from the Lord for the king. In the letter Elijah told Jehoram that he had not been walking with God as his fathers Jehoshaphat and Asa had walked. Instead, he was walking in the ways of the kings of Israel who had abandoned the Lord. He was leading the nation away from God and had murdered his brothers who were better men than him (verse 13).

Elijah went on to tell Jehoram that the Lord was angry with him. God was going to strike his people, his sons and his wives with a heavy blow (verse 14). God would also strike him with a lingering and painful disease of the bowels (verse 15). God was very serious about the sin in Judah.

In verse 16 we discover that this prophecy of Elijah was fulfilled when God aroused the Philistines and the Arabs against Jehoram. They attacked Judah and carried off all the goods they found in the king's palace. They also took his sons and his wives captive. The only son that was left to him was Ahaziah, his youngest (verse 17).

A further fulfilment of the prophecy of Elijah came when Jehoram was afflicted with an incurable disease of the bowels (verse 18). Over time Jehoram's bowels came out because of his disease. It is unclear how this happened but we can be sure of one thing, his disease was a violent one and ended in a horrible death. He suffered two years from this terrible disease.

When Jehoram died there was no royal funeral. He was not treated with the customary honour in his death. In fact, verse 20 tells us that no one regretted his death. He was not even buried in a special tomb reserved for kings.

What a difference we see in the reign of Jehoram. During the reign of his father there was prosperity in the land of Judah. The nation lived at peace with the surrounding neighbours. The nations saw the power of God and feared Judah. This was not the case for Jehoram. His was a reign filled with insecurity and turmoil. He murdered his brothers to assure his position. We can only imagine the result of this news in the minds of the people in the nation. No one dared to speak against him for fear of being killed. Under Jehoram, the nation of Judah became weak and powerless. The Edomites revolted and were a constant thorn in their side. The Philistines and the Arabs stripped them of everything of value. The royal family was taken into exile and Jehoram was struck with a horrible disease that would take his life. After eight years of reign, the nation of Judah was powerless and poor. God's blessing and presence

was no longer evident in the land. They had lost everything. This was the result of sin.

For Consideration:

- Why do you suppose Jehoram killed his brothers when he became king? What effect do you suppose the news of these murders would have had on the nation as a whole?
- Why did God not completely destroy the nation of Judah?
- What was the result of Jehoram's sin? What has been the result of sin in your life?
- What causes us to be indifferent or blind to the effect of sin in our own lives and in the lives of others around us?
- How seriously did God take the sins of Jehoram? What was his punishment? Does God take sins seriously in our day?
- God warned Jehoram of his sin and the consequences of those sins through a prophet. How does God warn us today?

## For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord for His mercy toward us even when we sin. Thank Him that He is gracious in His punishment.
- Ask God to open your eyes to the effect of your sin on the lives of others.
- Thank God that He takes sin very seriously. Thank Him that He is a holy God who will bring justice.
- Ask God to give you grace to receive the warnings He brings concerning your sins. Ask Him to help you to be humble enough to accept His rebuke. Ask Him for grace and strength to make things right.

## AHAZIAH AND ATHALIAH'S EVIL REIGN

---

Read 2 Chronicles 22:1-23:21

The nation of Judah was severely weakened under the reign of Jehoram. He led the nation into sin and rebellion against God. This resulted in the Lord stirring up the Philistines and the Arabs so that they attacked Judah. The king's palace was stripped of all that was of value and Jehoram's family was either taken into exile or killed. From verse 1 we understand that Ahaziah's brothers had been killed by the Philistine and Arab raiders who had attacked Judah in the reign of Jehoram. Ahaziah was the only remaining descendant of Jehoram left. The people of Jerusalem anointed him as king over them.

Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king in Jerusalem and would only reign for one year. His mother was Athaliah a daughter of Ahab, king of Israel (verse 2).

Ahaziah did not follow the ways of the Lord but chose instead to walk in the pagan ways of the Israelite kings. His mother Athaliah encouraged Ahaziah to turn from the Lord and follow the ways of her evil father Ahab, king of Israel

(verse 3). God warned His people about marrying unbelieving wives. We see here how this would be an important factor in the nation's fall.

Encouraged by his evil mother Athaliah, Ahaziah turned his back on the Lord God of his ancestors. He listened to the evil counsel of his mother (verse 4).

On the advice of his father's evil counsellors, Ahaziah joined forces with Joram, king of Israel to fight Hazael the king of Aram. In that battle, King Joram of Israel was wounded and returned to the city of Jezreel to recover from his wounds (verses 5, 6).

Because Ahaziah had a good relationship with King Joram, he went down to visit him when he was recovering from his wounds (verse 6). This visit would be used of God to judge Ahaziah and bring about his downfall (verse 7).

There was a man in Israel at that time by that name of Jehu. God had chosen Jehu to judge the nation of Israel for their sin. Jehu killed the household of Ahab in Israel. As he was doing this, he found the princes of Judah, sons and relatives of Ahaziah, in Israel attending to King Joram in his sickness. He decided to kill them as well (verse 8).

After killing the household of Ahab and the relatives of Ahaziah, Jehu proceeded to search for Ahaziah to kill him as well (verse 9). They found King Ahaziah and his men hiding in Samaria. Jehu put him to death. Notice in verse 9 that they decided to bury him because he was the son of Jehoshaphat "who sought the Lord with all his heart." Ahaziah was treated with some respect in his death because of his godly heritage. After the death of Ahaziah, however, there was no one in his house powerful enough to take control of the nation (verse 9).

When Ahaziah's mother Athaliah heard that her son was dead, she proceeded to destroy the remainder of the royal family in Judah. She proved to be a great enemy to the nation that had taken her in by marriage (verse 10).

As Athaliah was on her rampage killing off the royal family, Jehosheba, wife of Jehoiada the priest, took Joash, the son of Ahaziah and stole him away from the royal princes who were about to be murdered. She cared for him and nursed him in her own bedroom. Because of Jehosheba, Joash was spared from the evil intention of Athaliah. Joash would remain hidden away from Athaliah for six years. During those six years Athaliah reigned as uncontested queen over Judah.

In the seventh year of Joash's life, Jehoiada the priest decided it was time to present Joash to the nation as rightful king (2 Chronicles 23:1). To do this required that Athaliah be deposed as queen. The matter was very delicate and required the utmost of secrecy. If Athaliah heard that Joash was alive, she would most certainly try to kill him as she had done to the rest of the royal family.

Jehoiada entered an arrangement with a number of military commanders. They went throughout the land, gathered the Levites and the heads of the Israelite families together, and brought them to Jerusalem (verse 2). When they had assembled in Jerusalem, he made a covenant with them at the temple of the Lord proclaiming that Joash, the rightful heir of the throne, would rule over them as king (verse 3).

That day, Jehoiada the priest proposed a plan for making Joash king. One third of the priests and Levites were to go on duty on the Sabbath and watch the doors of the temple (verse 4). Another third of these priests and Levites were

to gather at the royal palace and the final third at the Fountain Gate. Other men were to gather in the courtyards of the temple (verse 5). They were all to assure that no one entered the temple but the priests and the Levites who were on duty at that time (verse 6). The Levites were to station themselves around the king, each man with his weapons in hand ready to defend him if required. If anyone tried to enter the temple during that time, they were to be put to death. The Levites were to stay with the king wherever he went (verse 7).

According to verse 8, the Levites did exactly as Jehoiada the priest ordered. Jehoiada also gave the commanders of hundreds the spears and shields that had belonged to King David (verse 9). Armed with these weapons the men surrounded the king (verse 10). Jehoiada was not going to take any chances. He needed to assure the safety of the young king.

When all these precautions were in place, Jehoiada and his sons brought Joash out and put a crown on his head. They then presented him to the people and proclaimed him to be king. When he was anointed, the people cried out with a loud voice "Long live the king!" (verse 11).

When Athaliah heard the noise of the people cheering, she went out to the temple to see what was happening (verse 12). When she saw Joash standing with the officers and trumpeters beside him, and all the singers and musicians leading in praise she shouted: "Treason! Treason!"

Usually that cry would have been enough to bring soldiers to her side, but not this time. Jehoiada the priest sent out the military commanders to capture Queen Athaliah. He commanded that anyone who followed her was to be put to death (verse 14). Following the orders of Jehoiada, the



priests and commanders seized the queen, took her to the Horse Gate and put her to death (verse 15).

When Queen Athaliah was put to death, Jehoiada the priest made a covenant that he and the people would be the Lord's people (verse 16). The result was that the people of Jerusalem tore down the temple of Baal, smashed the foreign altars and idols and killed the priests of Baal in front of the altars (verse 17).

Jehoiada placed the oversight of the temple of the Lord in the hands of the priests and assigned responsibilities to each of them (verse 18). He stationed doorkeepers at the gates of the temple so that no one who was unclean could enter (verse 19).

With the help of the military commanders, nobles and rulers, Jehoiada brought the king from the temple to the palace where they seated him on the royal throne (verse 20). The people of the land rejoiced at the crowning of Joash. Notice in verse 21 that the city was quiet because Athaliah had been slain with the sword. This leads us to believe that there was no revolt against the crowning of Joash nor was there any particular reaction to the death of such an evil queen.

God had not given up on His people. Jehoram, Ahaziah and Athaliah led the nation into rebellion against God for a number of years. While God's people had rebelled against Him, God had not forgotten them. In time, He judged those who had rebelled. God protected a descendant of David and raised up a priest who would be responsible to restore the nation to blessing again.

How thankful we ought to be that while evil may raise its ugly head, our God is bigger. He does not abandon His

people. Throughout this evil time, God was preparing an escape for His people. He wanted to restore them. They lost much because of their sin during the reigns of Jehoram, Ahaziah and Athaliah. Their enemies were nearby causing problems. They had lost territory they once occupied. The wealth and prosperity of David and Solomon's time was greatly diminished but God was willing to restore them to fellowship and blessing again if they would return to Him.

#### For Consideration:

- How did God protect the line of David from Jehu and Athaliah?
- King Jehoram married the evil Athaliah against the purpose of God. She would prove to be a great enemy of Judah. What does this teach us about forming evil alliances? Are there any such alliances and partnerships in your life?
- How does God prove to be bigger than the rebellion of the nation of Judah in these chapters? What encouragement does this bring you today?
- What did God's people lose because of their sin? What has sin taken from you?

#### For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He does not give up on us, even in our rebellion.

- Thank the Lord that He is a holy God who will judge sin and evil.
- Thank the Lord that He is willing to restore all who will repent and return to Him.
- Ask the Lord to help you to turn from your evil to Him.

# 41

## JOASH, KING OF JUDAH

---

Read 2 Chronicles 24:1-27

Joash was seven years old when he became king in Judah. He would reign forty years (verse 1). Verse 2 tells us that as long as Jehoiada was priest, Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. This is an important statement about the king's spiritual condition. His spirituality depended on Jehoiada. His relationship with Jehoiada was a strong relationship. There was no one as faithful as Jehoiada the priest to Joash. Joash had been raised in his home until the age of seven by Jehoiada's wife. Jehoiada had been a key figure in deposing the evil queen Athaliah and establishing Joash as king over Judah. The king obviously felt an obligation to Jehoiada and to his God.

From verse 3 we understand that Jehoiada chose two wives for Joash. We learn from this that Jehoiada was not only a loyal supporter and protector for Joash but he also acted as a father to him. Joash had no father or mother. Jehoiada and his wife were the only parents he knew. Joash had sons and daughters through these wives (verse 3)

Joash was responsible for many reforms in Judah during the years of Jehoiada the priest. In verse 4 he decided to

restore the temple in Jerusalem. Obviously, during the years of Athaliah's reign the temple had fallen into disrepair. She and her followers led the people of God astray into the worship of Baal. According to verse 7, Athaliah's sons had even broken into the temple and used its sacred objects for the worship of Baal. There was much work to do so that the temple could be purified.

Joash commissioned the priests and Levites to go into the towns of Judah to collect money from the people for the temple of God (verse 5). This tax was required by the Law of Moses but had not likely been collected for many years under the reign of Athaliah (see Exodus 30:14-15). Notice in verse 5 that Joash felt there was urgency in this task. "Do it now," he told them.

Verse 5 tells us that the Levites delayed in going out to collect the temple tax. We are not told the reason for this delay. Maybe they hesitated to collect the taxes for fear of what the people would think. This law had not likely been enforced for many years.

The king called Jehoiada to inquire as to the reason for the delay in collecting the money from the people (verse 6). We are not told the response of Jehoiada. What we do have, however, is the decision of the king to have a chest placed outside the temple (verse 8). The king then issued a decree that the people should bring their tax to the Lord and put it in the chest (verse 9). The response was positive. The officials and the people came to Jerusalem and put their money in the chest. Notice here that verse 10 tells us that they did this "gladly."

Whenever the chest was filled, it was brought to the king's officials. The royal secretary and an officer of the chief priest would take the money and the chest would be put

back in place (verse 11). Verse 11 tells us that they collected a great sum of money this way.

The money collected was given to the men who carried out the work on the temple (verse 12). With this money they were able to hire masons, carpenters, iron workers and bronze workers to restore the temple. These men were diligent and repaired the temple according to the original design (verse 13). This leads us to believe that the damage to the temple was significant.

The extra money was used to make articles needed for burning offerings. Dishes and other objects were also made to serve in the worship of God in the temple (verse 14). Remember that these articles had been stolen from them by foreign kings because of their evil.

As long as Jehoiada was priest, burnt offerings were continually offered in the temple of Jerusalem (verse 14). Jehoiada, however, was getting old. Verse 15 tells us that he lived to the age of one hundred and thirty years. When he died, he was buried with the kings of Judah because of the good he had done for the nation (verse 16).

Jehoiada was really the leader of the people in these days. Joash depended on him and followed his counsel. Verse 17 tells us that when Jehoiada died, Joash listened to the advice of the officials of Judah. This would prove to be his downfall. Following the advice of the counsellors of Judah, Joash abandoned the temple of the Lord. Judah again worshiped the pagan Asherah poles and idols (verse 18).

God was angry with Joash and the nation for their rebellion. He sent prophets to warn them but the people refused to listen to those prophets (verse 19). Finally, the Spirit of

God came to Zechariah the son of Jehoiada. He stood before the people and spoke a word from the Lord (verse 20).

Zechariah asked the people why they were disobeying the command of the Lord. He told them that they could not prosper as a nation if they rebelled against the Lord God. He went on to tell them that because they had forsaken God, God had forsaken them.

The people of Judah did not receive these words from the Lord. They plotted against the prophet. Joash himself gave the order to have Zechariah stoned in the courtyard of the temple (verse 21). Verse 22 makes it clear that the sin of Joash in having Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada stoned to death was two-fold. First, he had refused to listen to the Word of the Lord. Second, he did not remember the kindness of Jehoiada who had raised him as a son when he had no father. He repaid Jehoiada for his kindness by killing Zechariah his son. As Zechariah was dying, he said to Joash: "May the LORD see this and call you to account" (verse 22).

As Zechariah had said, Judah could not prosper as long as they were living in rebellion against God. God was now against them for their rebellion. At the turn of the year, the army of Aram marched against Judah (verse 23). Aram killed a number of Judah's leaders. They took much plunder from the city and sent it back to their king in Damascus. It is clear from verse 24 that the Aramean army was very small and insignificant but it defeated Judah.

Joash was severely wounded in that battle against Aram, (verse 25). Joash's own officials conspired against him and murdered him in his bed. They did this because he had murdered Zechariah the son of Jehoiada. He would not be buried with the kings of Judah. He would not have

the honour of Jehoiada in his death. A fuller account of his life was recorded in the records of the kings of Judah. His son Amaziah would become king in his place (verse 27).

The story of Joash is the story of a king who did not have the strength to stand on his own. It is the story of a king influenced by those around him. When he was surrounded by godly people, he lived like them but when those people were removed from his life and ungodly people surrounded him, he followed their advice. There are many people like Joash. Their spiritual life is not based on personal convictions but on the influence of the time. They are influenced by those around them and like to be popular. They are more concerned for what people think of them than following their convictions and doing what is right.

As for the people, they were influenced by the leader of the time. They served God as long as Jehoiada was priest but fell like Joash when their godly influence was taken from them. May God raise up a generation of people who have personal convictions that are not dependant on the influences around them.

For Consideration:

- What was the relationship between Jehoiada and Joash? What influence did Jehoiada have in the life of Joash?
- What people have been influential in your life? Has this influence been good or bad?
- How did Joash change when Jehoiada died? What does this tell us about his personal convictions?



- What was the result of Judah's rebellion in the later years of Joash? What hope do we have as a nation, a church or personally, apart from obedience to God and His word? How important is obedience to God?

For Prayer:

- Take a moment to thank the Lord for someone who has had a profound influence on your life for good.
- Ask the Lord to give you personal convictions that are not dependant on the influences of people around you.
- Ask God to help you to see if there are any people around you who are influencing you toward evil.
- Ask God to give you grace to live in obedience to Him no matter what others might say.
- Ask God to help you to be a positive influence for God's glory on the people around you.

## KING AMAZIAH OF JUDAH

---

Read 2 Chronicles 25:1-28

After the death of Joash, his son Amaziah became king. Amaziah was twenty-five years old at the time. He would reign in the city of Jerusalem for twenty-nine years (verse 1). Amaziah was a good king but he served the Lord with a divided heart (verse 2).

One of the first things Amaziah did as king of Judah was to execute the officials who had murdered his father Joash on his sick bed (see 2 Chronicles 24:25-26). It is of interest that verse 4 tells us that Amaziah did not put to death the sons of these men but acted according to the Law of Moses. In particular, the reference is to Deuteronomy 24:16 which stated:

Fathers shall not be put to death for their children,  
nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to  
die for his own sins.

What is significant about this is that the practice of the time was to wipe out entire families. We see this in the case of Jehu of Israel (2 Chronicles 22:7-8) and Athaliah of Judah (2 Chronicles 22:10). Amaziah chose not to act in this way.

Instead, he acted in accordance with the clear teaching of the Law of Moses. He was to be commended for this.

In verse 5 Amaziah decided to gather his armed forces. He called together those who were twenty years of age and more and found that there were three hundred thousand men ready for military service. To supplement this, he hired a hundred thousand fighting men from Israel for a hundred talents of silver. One hundred talents of silver are about three and three quarters of a ton (3.4 metric tons).

Amaziah's decision to take soldiers from Israel did not please God. The nation of Israel had turned from God and His Word. God did not want Judah associating with Israel because she would only turn them from Him. His blessing and presence had been removed from the nation of Israel. God calls us to be careful of associations we make in His service.

God sent a prophet to speak to Amaziah about his decision to hire Israelite troops. God told Amaziah that he was not to march with the Israelite troops because the Lord's presence was not with them. The prophet warned Amaziah that even if he fought courageously God would overthrow him before his enemies if he went to battle with these Israelite soldiers.

It is important that we see here the importance of obedience to the Lord. Any act of disobedience can hinder our blessing and victory from the Lord. Amaziah needed to deal with all known sins so that his victory and blessing could be assured. We are advised to do the same.

When Amaziah heard the words of the prophet, his immediate concern was the money he was going to lose. He had just paid one hundred talents of silver to Israel for these

troops (verse 9). He would not get this money back. The prophet told him, however, that God was able to give him much more than the one hundred talents he would lose to Israel if he obeyed His command.

There was a sacrifice to make for Amaziah. Obviously, he had acted without consulting God in hiring these Israelite soldiers. He was going to lose one hundred talents but he would know the blessing of God if he obeyed. There are many people today who are not ready to lose what they have invested. The prophet's words, however, are important. God is able to give us far more. The blessings of obedience far outweigh anything we might obtain by other means. These blessings will not always be material in nature but we can be assured that God's rewards will be far greater than anything this world can offer.

In obedience to the word of the Lord, Amaziah dismissed the Israelite troops (verse 10). The troops did not appreciate being dismissed. They left in a great rage. Verse 13 tells us that they raided Judean towns from Samaria to Beth Horon, killing three thousand people on their rampage and carrying off great quantities of plunder. Not only did Amaziah lose one hundred talents of silver but he also suffered tremendous damage in the country by these raiding Israelite soldiers. Obedience for Amaziah came at a cost.

Amaziah led the army that remained into the Valley of Salt. God gave him victory and he killed ten thousand men in the region of Seir (verse 11). They also captured another ten thousand men alive, took them to the top of a cliff and threw them down to their death (verse 12). The victory the Lord gave Amaziah was significant. This was a direct result of his willingness to obey the word He had given through His prophet.

Amaziah brought back some of the Edomite gods when he returned home from his victory (verse 14). He set these gods up, bowed down to them and burned sacrifices to them. It is unclear why Amaziah did this. Could it be that he attributed some of his victory to the gods of Edom?

God was angry with Amaziah for worshiping the gods of the Edomites. He sent His prophet to speak to him about this. The prophet asked the king why he would consult the gods of the Edomites when they could not even give their own people victory (verse 15). Amaziah did not accept the word from this prophet. In verse 16 he said, "Have we appointed you an adviser to the king?" He also warned him that if he continued to speak, he would strike him down. The prophet listened to the king but, before he left, he told him that God had determined to destroy him (verse 16).

When Amaziah returned from his defeat of Edom, he turned his attention to the nation of Israel. The Israelite soldiers he had hired had done much damage to his nation. It may have been that Amaziah was thinking about this when he challenged Israel to a battle in verse 17.

King Jehoash of Israel responded to Amaziah's threat with an insult in verse 18. He told him that a thistle sent a message to a cedar requesting that he give his daughter to his son in marriage. Before there was any response to this, however, a wild beast came by and trampled on the thistle so that it died. What was Jehoash trying to tell Amaziah in this story?

The thistle in this story is Amaziah. The cedar was Jehoash. By comparing himself to a cedar and Amaziah to a thistle, Jehoash is telling Amaziah that he saw him as being below him in dignity. He did not have any respect for him as leader of Judah. The reference to the potential marriage

is more difficult to understand. We should not read too much into this, however. What Jehoash seems to be saying is that even if Amaziah came to form a friendly alliance with him by asking for his daughter for his son he would crush him like a wild beast crushing a thistle. In the history of Amaziah's family there had been alliances formed with Israel by marriage. Jehoash would not consider such an alliance because he saw Amaziah as being so inferior to him that it would be beneath his dignity to even allow his daughter to marry his son.

Jehoash went on to tell Amaziah that he had become proud because he had defeated the Edomites. He reminded him that he would not have the same success with Israel. He told him to stay home lest he find himself in serious trouble at the hands of Israel (verse 19).

These words offended Amaziah. He chose to ignore the words of the prophet and the words of Jehoash of Israel (verse 20). In the battle that ensued, King Jehoash of Israel attacked Amaziah. They faced each other at Beth Shemesh in Judah (verse 21). Judah was routed by Israel and fled before them (verse 22). King Jehoash eventually captured Amaziah and broke down a six hundred foot long section of the wall of Jerusalem. He took all the article of gold and silver found in the temple and brought them back to Israel along with many hostages (verse 24).

Amaziah would live for fifteen years after the death of Jehoash (verse 25). The events of his reign were written in the records of the kings of Judah (verse 26).

Verse 27 tells us that from the time Amaziah turned his back on the Lord there was a group that conspired against him in Jerusalem. Because of this conspiracy, he was forced to leave Jerusalem and settle in Lachish. His

enemies followed him there, however, and killed him. He was brought back to Jerusalem by horse and buried with his fathers (verse 28).

Amaziah's story is the story of a man whose heart was not fully devoted to the Lord God. He had other loves in his life. Ultimately, what Jesus said to his disciples in Luke 16:13 came true in the life of Amaziah:

No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

God is looking for someone who will be devoted to Him alone. God will not share us with other lovers. We cannot serve God if our hearts are focused on other things. Amaziah is a clear example of this.

For Consideration:

- What does it mean to serve God with a divided heart? How was Amaziah an example of this?
- What good qualities did Amaziah demonstrate at the beginning of his reign?
- What do we learn about the cost of obedience? What did it cost Amaziah to obey the word of the Lord and send the Israelites troops home? Have you ever had to pay a price for obedience to the Lord?

- What do we learn about associating with those who are not walking with the Lord?
- What was the result of Amaziah's disobedience at the end of his life?

For Prayer:

- Ask God to give you a heart that is wholly devoted to Him. Ask Him to reveal to you anything that would distract you in your spiritual walk.
- Ask God to make you willing to pay any price to be obedient to Him.
- Thank the Lord that He is able to reward us with far more than this world could ever give if we walk in obedience to Him.



## 43

### UZZIAH AND JOTHAM OF JUDAH

---

Read 2 Chronicles 26:1-27:9

Uzziah was the next king of Judah. He became king at the age of sixteen (verse 1). He reigned in Jerusalem for fifty-two years (verse 3).

According to verse 2, he was known for his military campaigns and construction projects. He rebuilt the city of Elath. Elath had belonged to the Edomites who had revolted against King Joram (see 2 Kings 8:20-22). Here, however, we see that the city was restored by Uzziah to Judah's control and underwent a significant construction project.

Uzziah was a good king. Notice, however, that he sought the Lord during the days of Zechariah the priest. Zechariah instructed him in the fear of the Lord. Verse 5 is quite clear when it says that as long as Uzziah sought the Lord, he had success.

We have many examples of the success of Uzziah in the early part of his reign. In verse 6 he fought with the

Philistines and was successful. He broke down the walls of the Philistine cities of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod. He built towns near the city of Ashdod and in other regions of Philistia. God gave Uzziah victories over the Philistines and the Arabs (verse 7).

Further evidence of the blessing of God on his life could be seen in the fact that the Ammonites brought tribute to him. His fame spread as far as the border of Egypt because he had become a very powerful king (verse 8).

As we have already seen, Uzziah was engaged in many construction projects. In verse 9 he built towers in the city of Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate and at the angle of the wall. He also was responsible for building towers in the desert (verse 10). Uzziah dug cisterns so his great quantities of livestock could have water to drink (verse 10). He had many people working for him in the fields, vineyards and fertile lands. Uzziah loved the soil (verse 10).

The blessing of God was also evident in Uzziah's army. Verse 11 tells us that his army was well-trained. It was well organized by divisions. Uzziah had 2,600 leaders over his 307,500 fighting men (verse 12). Uzziah provided these men with shields, spears, helmets, coats of armour, bows and sling stones (verse 14). This would have been at great expense to himself.

Uzziah designed fighting machines in Jerusalem that could be used on the towers he had constructed. These machines were capable of shooting arrows and hurling large stones at an approaching enemy (verse 15).

Uzziah's downfall was pride (verse 16). On one occasion he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the

altar of incense. Only the priest could burn incense on this altar. Uzziah seemed to see himself as being above the Law of Moses and decided that he was going to burn the incense himself. Pride is a terrible sin. Scriptures warns us of its dangers and gives us many illustrations of men and women who fell as a result of its influence. Seventy thousand Israelites lost their lives as a result of David's pride when he numbered the people in his nation (2 Samuel 24). King Nebuchadnezzar was severely judged for his pride in the book of Daniel. God judged entire nations because they allowed themselves to become proud (see Isaiah 10:5-19). Isaiah 14:11-15 seems to indicate that even Satan fell as a result of pride.

Azariah the priest and eighty other "courageous" priests followed him into the temple on that occasion and confronted him with his sin (verses 17-18). They told Uzziah that it was not right for him to burn incense to the Lord because he was not a priest or a descendant of Aaron. They asked him to leave the sanctuary. They made it clear that by offering this incense Uzziah would not honour God.

As the priests spoke, Uzziah had the censer in his hand ready to burn the incense. What the priests had to say made him angry (verse 19). The passage does not tell us what Uzziah had to say to the priests but as he was expressing his rage God struck him with leprosy. This leprosy broke out on his forehead.

When Azariah the chief priest and the other priests saw the leprosy, they rushed him out of the temple. Uzziah put up no resistance for he knew that the hand of God was against him (verse 20).

Uzziah would never be healed of his leprosy. This meant he would have to live in a separate house with little contact

with anyone. He was no longer able to go to the temple because he was unclean (verse 21). His son Jotham would govern the people in his place. When Uzziah died he would be buried at a distance from his fathers because of his leprosy (verse 23).

The description of Jotham's reign is quite brief. He was twenty-five when he became king. He would rule in Jerusalem for sixteen years (27:1).

Jotham, his son served the Lord and did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. Unlike his father Uzziah he honoured God and did not enter the temple to perform the duties of a priest (verse 2). While Jotham served the Lord there were many people in the land who continued to follow evil.

Like his father Uzziah, Jotham was involved in many construction projects. He rebuilt the Upper Gate of the temple and did extensive work on the wall at the hill of Ophel (verse 3). He built towns in the Judean hills, and forts and towers in the forests (verse 4).

Jotham had a measure of military success as king. He fought the Ammonites and conquered them. In one year these Ammonites paid him a hundred talents of silver (three and three quarter tons), ten thousand cors (62,000 bushels or 2,200 kilolitres) of wheat and the same quantity of barley (verse 5). The Ammonites paid Jotham the same amount of tribute for three years. The secret to Jotham's success is found in 2 Chronicles 27:6:

Jotham grew powerful because he walked steadfastly before the LORD his God.

The events of King Jotham's reign were recorded in detail in the records of the kings of Israel and Judah (verse 7).

He reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem. When he died, his son Ahaz became king in his place (verse 9).

The reigns of Uzziah and Jotham have some important lessons for us. First, we see that the secret to their success as kings was found in their obedience to the Lord God. God's blessing rested on them as long as they walked in His path and honoured Him. We are left to wonder to what extent the blessing of God would have fallen on the nation had Uzziah continued to honour and obey the Lord God.

In the case of Uzziah, however, we see the great danger of pride. The more he became successful the more he was tempted to pride. Pride destroyed Uzziah. God's judgment fell swiftly on him and he died separated from his society as a leper.

For Consideration:

- What evidence of blessing do we see in the lives of Uzziah and Jotham when they sought the Lord?
- What was the result of pride in the life of Uzziah? How did pride bring about his downfall?
- How can we resist pride in our lives? Are there any practical steps we need to take to be sure that pride does not overtake us?
- Is it possible to become so afraid of becoming proud that we fear to step out in faith? How does Satan use our fear of becoming proud to keep us from becoming all that God wants us to become?

## For Prayer:

- Ask God to protect you from pride. Thank Him that He is fully able to give you grace to overcome the temptation to become proud.
- Take a moment to consider where you would be without the Lord God, His strength and grace. Thank the Lord that all you have has come from Him. Ask Him to help you to be always aware of your need of Him and His grace in your life and ministry.
- Ask the Lord to show you anywhere in your life where you are not walking in obedience to Him. Ask for forgiveness and grace to turn from these things to seeking God's purpose alone.

## KING AHAZ OF JUDAH

---

Read 2 Chronicles 28:1-27

Ahaz became king at the age of twenty. He would reign in Jerusalem for a period of sixteen years. He was not faithful to the Lord (verse 1). Verse 2 tells us that he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. That is to say, he wandered from the true God and worshiped foreign gods.

Ahaz burned sacrifices to pagan gods in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. He even sacrificed his own sons in the fire to these detestable gods (verse 3). His evil was as bad as the evil of the nations God had driven out of the land before them. Verse 4 tells us that King Ahaz offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places of the land and under every spreading tree.

From this we see that the heart of King Ahaz was far from God. He was sold out to sin and evil. He followed the ways of the evil nations around him and had nothing to do with the Lord God of his ancestors.

It goes without saying that the Lord God was very angry with Ahaz because of his ways. There was a serious price to pay for rebellion. God handed him over to the king of Aram. The Arameans defeated him and took many of his

people as prisoners to Damascus (verse 5). The once great nation was being humbled.

Not only did the Arameans prove to be a threat to Judah under King Ahaz but Israel was a serious problem for them as well. King Pekah of Israel attacked Judah (verse 5). Verse 6 tells us that in one day King Pekah killed a hundred and twenty thousand soldiers in Judah. This was a significant loss. Verse 6 tells us that the reason for this heavy loss was because Judah had forsaken the Lord God.

Not only did Judah lose one hundred and twenty thousand soldiers but significant leaders were also killed that day. Among them were Maaseiah, the king's son, Azrikam the officer in charge of the palace and Elkanah, second in command after the king.

Israel also took captives from Judah. Verse 8 tells us that they took two hundred thousand women who were wives of the men as well as their sons and daughters. Israel carried off a great deal of plunder from Judah. The cost of them turning their backs on God was significant. The nation of Judah was being destroyed because of sin. The judgment of God fell heavily on Judah during the reign of Ahaz.

What is particularly interesting to note is the grace of God in the midst of all this judgment. In verses 9-15 we have the story of how God dealt with Israel for taking so many Judeans as slaves to Israel.

The Lord sent his prophet Oded to speak to the army that had returned from Judah to Samaria, the capital of Israel. Oded told the army that the Lord God was angry with Judah because they had wandered from the truth. It was for



this reason that he had allowed Israel's army to overpower them (verse 9). Israel, however, had not acted respectfully to Judah. They had slaughtered them in rage and had now made them their slaves. This angered the God of Judah. Oded reminded the Israelites that they had been guilty of great sins against the God of their ancestors (verse 10). God commanded the Israelites, therefore, to send back the Judean men and women they intended to make slaves (verse 11). Hearing this, some of Israel's leaders confronted those returning from battle and told them that they were not to bring these prisoners into Israel (verses 12-13). The soldiers released the prisoners and restored some of the plunder to them (verse 14). The prisoners were given clothes (for some of them were naked). They were provided with sandals, food, drink and healing balm. Those who were weak were put on donkeys and taken to Jericho (verse 15).

Israel was God's instrument to bring justice in Judah. Israel acted inappropriately, however, by slaughtering and mistreating the people of Judah. This angered God. We need to understand here that God is a God of justice but He is also a God of compassion and mercy. In their judgment, Israel forgot compassion. God does not act this way. Even in anger He remembers mercy. God's anger is controlled. He judges righteously. In judgment He does what is right. Israel was not motivated by the same intentions as God.

Notice that while God had judged His people, He had compassion on them in their need. He covered their nakedness, provided them with food, balm for their wounds and donkeys for their weak. In judgment He was still compassionate. We would do well to follow this example. God despises sin but He still reaches out to the sinner in his or her need.

How often have we been like Israel in our judgment of others? I have seen churches act with great severity in judging those who have fallen. They fail, however, to show the same compassion as God in their judgment.

Despite the compassion of the Lord, King Ahaz refused to return to Him. Instead of turning to God he called for the king of Assyria (verse 16).

Ahaz found himself in a very difficult situation. Not only had he been defeated by the Arameans and the Israelites but now the Edomites revolted against him. They, too, carried off prisoners from Judah (verse 17). The Philistines raided what was left of the nation. They captured and occupied a number of Judean cities (verse 18). In all this, the Lord humbled the nation of Judah because of its sin and rebellion (verse 19).

Ahaz refused to be humbled, however. As we have already seen, instead of turning to the Lord God for help, he turned to the Assyrians. Instead of bringing help, however, these Assyrians brought trouble (verse 20). Ahaz paid them by giving them articles from the temple of the Lord but the Assyrians did not help Judah (verse 21).

God stripped Ahaz of all his support. There was no help for him in any of the nations around him. He could have humbled himself, recognized his sin and turned to God, but he refused. Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the Lord. He hardened his heart to God and His ways (verse 22).

In verse 23 Ahaz decided to offer sacrifices to the gods of Damascus who had defeated him. He believed these gods to be more powerful than the gods of Aram. He needed all the help he could get and chose to worship whatever god he felt would give him the most help (verse 23).

While he pursued the gods of the nations, Ahaz stripped the temple of God in Jerusalem of its furniture and closed its doors (verse 24). In doing so, he stopped the worship of God. This shows us how hard his heart was becoming to the things of God.

Ahaz built altars to pagan gods and set them on every street corner in Jerusalem (verse 24). He built high places to worship other gods in every town in Judah. In doing this, he provoked the anger of the Lord (verse 25).

Under the reign of Ahaz, the nation of Judah was devastated. The blessing of God was removed from the land. The worship of God stopped and the whole nation was filled with pagan altars and high places. When Ahaz died, he was not buried in the tombs of the kings of Judah. He was not worthy of such an honour. His son Hezekiah succeeded him as king on the throne.

#### For Consideration:

- What price did Ahaz pay for turning his back on the Lord God? What price did his nation pay?
- How does God demonstrate compassion on Judah in His judgment?
- How easy is it for us to forget compassion in discipline? Have you ever seen an example of discipline exercised without compassion? What was the result?
- Does showing compassion on someone who has fallen into sin mean that we accept their sin?

- What do we learn in this passage about the hardness of Ahaz's heart? How did God seek to break that hard heart? Is it possible for us to harden our hearts to God and His purposes?

For Prayer:

- Ask God to soften your heart toward Him and His ways.
- Thank the Lord that in His judgment He remembers compassion.
- Ask God to help you to show compassion to those who have fallen into sin.
- Thank the Lord for the blessing He gives those who walk with Him. Ask Him to speak to your church and nation about the sin that separates them from God's blessing.

## THE WORSHIP OF GOD RESTORED

---

Read 2 Chronicles 29:1-30:27

At this point in the history of God's people in Judah the worship of the Lord God had stopped. In fact, Ahaz had closed the doors of the temple. There were idols in every town. God's people were worshiping foreign gods in the high places and on the street corners of the city of Jerusalem. This resulted in the devastation of Judah. Foreign nations had taken much of their wealth and many of their people had been captured and taken into exile. These were difficult and barren days in the nation of Judah. As long as they wandered from God, there was no hope of real blessing and restoration for them.

Under the reign of King Hezekiah things would radically change in the land of Judah. He would become king at the age of twenty-five and would reign for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem (verse 1). Hezekiah is described in verse 2 as a good king who did just as his father David had done. This was a very high complement to his reign. This is especially noteworthy seeing that his father had devastated the land and encouraged the worship of pagan gods in Jerusalem.

In verse 3 we read that Hezekiah opened the doors of the temple. Verse 3 tells us that it was the first month of the first year of his reign that he opened the doors. This gives us an indication of what was important to Hezekiah. One of his first priorities was to restore the temple and the worship of God in the land.

In order for the worship of God to be restored, Hezekiah needed to begin with the priests. He called an assembly in the square on the east side of the temple (verse 4). When the priests had gathered, he asked them to consecrate themselves and the temple of the Lord God (verse 5). They were to do this by removing all the defilements from the temple.

How easy it is for us to allow things to come into our lives and our fellowship groups that do not honour God. For the temple to be consecrated and the worship of God to be restored, the first thing that needed to happen was that the people of God remove all that did not honour Him. If we want to be right with God then we too need to examine our lives to see if there is anything that needs to be removed so that God's glory may more fully be revealed in us.

Hezekiah reminded the priests that their fathers had been unfaithful and had done evil in the land. They had turned their back on the Lord God and His temple (verse 6). During the days of their fathers the doors of the temple had been shut and the lights had gone out. Sacrifices to the Lord and incense had also come to an end (verse 7).

The anger of the Lord was on the nation as a whole (verse 8). This was the inheritance of Hezekiah's generation from their fathers.

The sins of the fathers had a profound effect on the lives of Hezekiah's descendants. They were born into a nation that was under the curse of God. They were born into a nation who had closed its heart to God and His word. There was no worship of God in the land and the temple was in disrepair. As a nation they were powerless against their enemies. They were impoverished and weak. This was their inheritance both physically and spiritually. What will our children inherit from us? What is the spiritual heritage we will pass on to our children? We would do well to consider this important question.

Hezekiah was fully aware of the inheritance he had received. He was determined that he would not pass this same inheritance on to his children. He was not going to live under the curse of his father's rebellion. In verse 10 he decided that he was going to make a covenant with the Lord God so that His fierce anger would turn from the nation. He called the priests together that day for this reason. He challenged them as those whom God had chosen to be diligent in their responsibilities (verse 11).

The Levites took Hezekiah seriously. In verse 12 they gathered their fellow Levites together and set to work (verse 15). The names of those who were involved in the cleansing of the temple are recorded for us in verses 12-14.

The priests too were involved in the purifying of the temple. They went into the temple and brought out everything they determined was unclean (verse 16). We need to understand that these unclean things should not have been in the temple at all. This was in indication of just how bad things had become in Judah. When the priests brought out the unclean things from the temple, the Levites would take

these articles to the Kidron Valley and dump them there (verse 16).

Verse 17 tells us that the consecration of the temple began on the first day of the month. By the eighth day of that month they had reached the portico. Verse 17 goes on to tell us that they worked for yet another eight days to clean the inner temple itself. All together it took them sixteen days to clean out the impurities from the temple. We are not told how many people were involved in this cleaning but we should understand here that the temple was in serious disorder.

When the priests and Levites had completed the work of cleaning out the defilements from the temple, they went to King Hezekiah and reported to him (verse 18). They told him that they had also consecrated the articles that his father King Ahaz had removed from the temple. All these articles were now back in place (verse 19).

When everything was ready, the next morning the King gathered the city officials and went up with them to the temple (verse 20). They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven male lambs and seven male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom of Judah. Hezekiah commanded that the priests offer these animals on the altar to the Lord. Notice that it was only after they had removed the defilements from the temple that they came to the Lord for forgiveness. It is all too easy for us to seek forgiveness without any intention of doing anything about our sin. Hezekiah clearly turned his back on the sins of his fathers and only then did he come to the Lord for forgiveness. He sought God not only in words only but also by his deeds.

In accordance with the command of the king, the priests slaughtered the bulls and sprinkled their blood on the altar.



They did the same with the rams and the lambs (verse 22). All this was done in accordance with the Law of Moses as recorded in Leviticus 17:6.

When they had slaughtered the bulls, rams and lambs, purifying and consecrating the altar, the priests then took the goats for a sin offering. They laid their hands on them confessing the sins of the nation (verse 23). The rams were slaughtered as an offering to God for the sins of the people (verse 24).

As this sacrifice was taking place, the Levites stationed themselves in the temple with musical instruments. They had cymbals, harps, lyres and trumpets (verses 25-26). As the burnt offering was being made on the altar the Levites began to sing to the Lord accompanied by the musical instruments (verse 27). When the singing began, the whole assembly bowed down to worship. This continued until the sacrifice was completed (verse 28). The king bowed down to worship (verse 29). The worship continued as the Levites sang hymns written by David and Asaph the seer. There was gladness in the air as the people worshiped (verse 30).

After the offerings for sin and the dedication of the people and the articles of the temple were complete, Hezekiah called for volunteer thank offerings to be made. All whose hearts were willing brought animals to be sacrificed to the Lord (verse 31).

The assembly brought seventy bulls, a hundred rams and two hundred male lambs as thank offerings to the Lord (verse 32). Altogether six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep and goats were sacrificed to the Lord during that celebration (verse 33). In fact, there were too few priests present that day to deal with all these sacrifices so

the Levites helped the priests to skin the animals (verse 34).

It is particularly important that we note that the reason why there were too few priests to deal with these sacrifices was because the Levites had been more careful to keep themselves pure than had the priests (see verse 34). Until the priests had been consecrated fully they could not take part in the sacrifices to the Lord. This shows us that God is interested in a people who are clean and pure to serve Him.

It was by this means that the worship in the temple of God was restored in the days of Hezekiah the king. There was great celebration and rejoicing in those days (verses 35-36).

It is important, in this context, that we also examine what took place in the days that followed the restoration of the worship in the temple. Chapter 30 gives us the story of how the celebration of the Passover was restored.

According to verse 1 of chapter 30, Hezekiah wrote letters to all the people of Israel and Judah inviting them to come to the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover. The Passover had not been celebrated for a long time because there were not enough priests consecrated to lead the people (verse 3).

The king's couriers went throughout Israel and Judah with letters from the king to come to the Passover celebration (verse 6). In that letter, the king invited the people to return to the Lord God so that He would return to them. He reminded them that already the king of Assyria had taken many captives from Israel. He challenged those who remained in the land to return to God. He warned them not to be like their fathers who had been unfaithful to the Lord

so that He had turned His back on them. It was because they had turned their back on God that they were in their present situation (verse 7). Hezekiah challenged the people of Israel and Judah to submit to the Lord and to come to Jerusalem to worship Him (verse 8). He challenged them to serve the Lord and honour Him so that His fierce anger would be turned from them. He promised that if they returned to the Lord, He would show mercy on them and their captors would treat them with compassion (verse 9). God would not turn His face from them if they returned to Him.

This was a very powerful letter. Hezekiah is very clear that the reason for their downfall as a nation had to do with their rebellion against God and His Word. He believed that if they returned to the Lord God, He would be compassionate and forgiving. He issued a nationwide appeal for God's people to return to their God. We can only imagine what it would be like for the leaders of our various countries to make such an appeal today. We can only imagine what the response of the inhabitants of our nations would be to such a call.

In verse 10 we see the response of the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh and Zebulun to Hezekiah's appeal. We are told that the people "scorned and ridiculed" the couriers. It was not in the heart of the people to return to their God. Nevertheless there were some who did listen to the call of God through King Hezekiah (verse 11).

The hand of the Lord was particularly on the nation of Judah. Verse 12 tells us that God gave them unity of mind to take up the challenge of the king. Notice that it was God who gave them this unity of mind. The reality of the matter is that without the work of God and His softening influence on our lives, none of us would ever have been responsive

to the call of God. How thankful we need to be that God softens our hearts.

When the day for the Passover arrived, a very large crowd gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (verse 13). In those days, the people cleared away the pagan incense altars in the land and threw them into the Kidron Valley (verse 14). During the Feast of Unleavened Bread the Jews would clean out their homes in anticipation of the Passover. Here the whole nation is being cleansed.

There were some very powerful things happening in those days. On the day of the Passover, a Passover lamb was slaughtered (verse 15). Verse 15 tells us that the priests who had not been following the Lord were ashamed and consecrated themselves to the Lord. God was doing a work in the hearts of the religious leaders. These priests were being broken by God and dealing with their sins.

The work which began in the lives of the leaders spread to the crowd that had come that day. Many in the crowd were not right with God. Passover lambs were sacrificed for the people who were not ceremonially clean (verse 17).

Many of the people who came from outside Judah were not ceremonially clean (verse 18). Israel had turned its back on the Lord as a nation. Many of the priests of Israel were pagan priests who did not follow the ways of God. These people had not been taught the ways of the Lord God. In their hearts, however, they wanted to serve the Lord and honour Him. They ate the Passover meal even though they were not clean before God.

Hezekiah prayed to God for those who ate the Passover though unclean. He asked God to pardon them for their

offense (verse 18). He reminded God that these individuals had set their heart on seeking God. Even though they were unclean, their hearts were set on seeking God (verse 19). The Lord God saw the hearts of these individuals and heard the prayer of Hezekiah and turned His anger from them (verse 20). God was willing to be merciful to those who were unclean because He knew their hearts. This shows us that God does not just look at the outward actions, He looks at the heart. There are times when we don't get everything right but God is gracious because He knows our heart. There are other times when we can do everything exactly as God commanded but God will refuse our offerings because our hearts are not right.

For seven days the people celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread (verse 21). During that time, there was great rejoicing in the land. The Levites and priests sang and worshiped the Lord every day accompanied by instruments (verse 21). Hezekiah encouraged the Levites. Further offerings were made as the whole assembly praised and thanked the Lord.

When the seven days of the Feast were over the people did not want to go home. They decided to stay for seven more days. Those days were filled with joyous celebration (verse 23). Hezekiah provided a thousand bulls, seven thousand sheep and goats for the assembly. The officials of the land provided another thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep and goats (verse 24). These animals were sacrificed and likely provided food for the great crowd that had gathered.

Verse 24 tells us that during those days a great number of priests consecrated themselves. For many years these priests had failed to follow the way of the Lord. Now God was doing a powerful work among the spiritual leadership.

The entire assembly of Judah rejoiced with the priests and Levites. God was giving them oneness of mind and tremendous joy in worship and celebration. Even the people of pagan Israel were being touched by this powerful move of God (verse 25). Nothing like this had happened in the city of Jerusalem since the days of Solomon and David (verse 26).

God was manifesting His presence in those days. The priests and Levites stood before the people to bless them and God heard from heaven and answered their prayers. God reached down from His holy dwelling place in heaven to touch the people who had gathered in Jerusalem that day (verse 27). A great revival was taking place. Under the ministry of King Hezekiah the nation of Judah was being restored to her God. These were glorious days.

#### For Consideration:

- What was the condition of the land of Judah when Hezekiah became king? What spiritual inheritance will you leave your children?
- Hezekiah did not settle for things the way they were. He chose to do something about the sin and evil in the land. Have you ever settled for something that was less than God's standard for your life?
- Hezekiah had the priests clean out the temple of all its impurities. It took them sixteen days to clean it out. What sinful habits or attitudes need to be cleansed from your life?

- Can we say we are repentant if we do not turn from our sins?
- What evidence was there in that day of the work of God in Jerusalem? What evidence is there of God working in your life?
- What was the place of joy in the revival that took place in Hezekiah's day? Do you experience a measure of this joy? What do you suppose hinders your joy?
- Not everyone who came to Jerusalem and who was part of the revival of Hezekiah's day was ceremonially clean yet God still accepted them. Who are the people of our day we would consider unclean? Will God accept them?

#### For Prayer:

- Ask God to help you to leave a godly heritage for your children.
- Ask God to give you victory over the past and the ungodly things that have been passed down to you. Thank Him that you do not have to settle for defeat.
- Ask God to cleanse you of all impurities that stand between Him and yourself.
- Ask God to help you to accept His call to renewal and revival. Thank Him that He accepts you as you are. Ask Him to renew and refresh you in your spiritual walk.

## 46

### HEZEKIAH IS TESTED

---

Read 2 Chronicles 31:1-32:33

God had been doing some wonderful things in the land of Judah under the reign of King Hezekiah. Revival was spreading. God's people had spent over two weeks celebrating His goodness at the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This had been the first such celebration since the reigns of David and Solomon. God was restoring His people to Himself.

As the people left the celebrations in Jerusalem, they went into the various towns of Judah smashing the sacred stones and Asherah poles used in the worship of the pagan gods (verse 1). This was all part of what God was doing in cleansing the land of its impurities.

Hezekiah assigned the priests and Levites to ministry teams. Each team had a task to perform. Some were to burn offerings, others were to give thanks and sing praises at the gates of the temple (verse 2).

In verse 3 Hezekiah gave the animals for the morning and evening burnt offerings as well as for the offerings required on special days (Sabbath, New Moons and other appointed feasts). He also commanded that the people who



lived in Jerusalem give a portion of their resources to the priests and Levites so that they could devote themselves to serving the Lord according to the Law of Moses (verse 4). The inhabitants of the city were more than willing to contribute to the ministry of the Levites and gave generously of the first fruits of their grain, wine, oil, honey and crops. They also brought a tithe to the temple for the service of the Lord (verse 5). All this was an indication that the Lord was doing a wonderful work in the lives of His people in the days of Hezekiah.

Those living in the various towns of Judah also contributed a tithe of their belongings to the Lord. These tithes were brought to the temple and piled in heaps until they could be used (verse 6). When Hezekiah and his officials saw the heaps of offerings that had been given to the work of the Lord, they praised the Lord and blessed the people (verse 8). Hezekiah ordered that the priests prepare store-rooms in the temple to store the offering the people had been giving (verse 11).

Not only did the priests need to prepare store rooms for the offerings the people had been bringing but they also set Levites in charge of the tithe offerings. In verse 12 Conaniah and Shimei were given the responsibility to oversee the contributions and offerings. Ten other Levites assisted them in this work. Their names are recorded in verse 13.

Another Levite by the name of Kore was given charge of the freewill offerings. These were given on top of the tithe offerings listed above (verse 14). He was responsible to get these offerings to where they were needed. He was assisted by six men whose names are recorded in verse 15. These men would distribute the freewill offerings to the priests and those who served at the temple as required

(verse 15-17). These freewill offerings were used to provide for the ministry and personal needs of the priests and their families (verse 18).

Hezekiah made sure that those who served the Lord and their families were well provided for. He served the Lord faithfully (verse 20). God blessed Hezekiah for his faithful efforts and everything he did prospered (verse 21).

While God's presence was obviously with Hezekiah, he still faced obstacles in his life. Chapter 32 shows us that even those who serve the Lord with their whole heart can face tremendous problems.

In 2 Chronicles 32:1 we read how Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, invaded Judah and laid siege to the fortified cities with the intention of conquering them. When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib intended to make war on Jerusalem, he consulted his advisers and devised a plan of action.

In verse 3 he decided to block the water from the springs outside the city. They decided to do this so that the Assyrian army would not have water (verse 4). In verse 5 he also decided that they needed to repair broken sections of the wall, build other towers and walls for defence and reinforce the supporting terraces. He had large numbers of weapons and shields made in preparation for the Assyrian attack.

In verse 6 he appointed military officials over the people and had them assemble before him in the square at the city gate. When the people gathered, Hezekiah spoke to them. In his words to the people, Hezekiah challenged them to be strong and courageous. He told them that they had no reason to be afraid of the army of Assyria, for as big as it was, it was no match for the power of God that

was with them that day (verses 7-8). Hezekiah's words give the people confidence (verse 8).

The day arrived when King Sennacherib sent his officers to Jerusalem with a message for Hezekiah and the people (verse 9). In this message Sennacherib told the people that what Hezekiah was telling them was false. Sennacherib told them that Hezekiah's confidence in the Lord God was not well founded. He reminded the people of how Hezekiah had removed the pagan gods from the land and torn down their altars (verse 12). In saying this he was telling the people that these gods would be angry with them. Sennacherib also reminded the people he was on a very successful military campaign and nations were falling to his army (verse 13). The gods of these nations were unable to deliver their people from his hands. He challenged the people to surrender and not believe Hezekiah who was telling them that their God was able to deliver them from his hands (verse 15). This was a serious test of faith for the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem who had been experiencing great renewal in their land. Would their new-found faith be strong enough to get them through this trial?

Sennacherib's officers spoke boldly against the Lord God and His servant Hezekiah (verse 16). Sennacherib wrote insulting letters against the Lord God, telling them that He could not possibly deliver them from his hands (verse 17). His officers would call out in the Hebrew language to the people of the city in an effort to make them afraid (verses 18-19). We are led to believe that this tactic went on for some time.

When King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah heard what the Assyrians were doing, they cried out to the Lord God in prayer. It is interesting that in his time of crisis the Lord

provided Hezekiah with a godly man to stand with him. Both Isaiah and Hezekiah joined together to seek the Lord.

As the two men sought the Lord, the Lord sent an angel into the Assyrian camp. The angel went through the camp and destroyed the fighting men and leaders (verse 21). We are not told how this happened. It may be that the angel of the Lord caused a plague or sickness of some kind to break out in their camp. Sennacherib was forced to withdraw in disgrace. When he returned home and went into the temple of his gods, his own sons struck and killed him with the sword (verse 21).

God heard the prayers of Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet and saved them from this serious threat. They did not have to fight this battle. Verse 22 tells us that the Lord took care of Judah from all sides. People from various places brought offerings to Jerusalem for the Lord their God. They also brought valuable gifts for Hezekiah (verse 23). Because of this incident, Hezekiah was highly regarded by all the nations. They knew that the Lord God was with him.

An even greater test came after these events. With all the wealth and acknowledgment that was coming his way; the heart of Hezekiah became proud. The Lord struck him with an illness. Hezekiah was at the point of death and cried out to the Lord. God heard his prayer and saved his life (verse 24). Hezekiah's heart, however, was still proud. Because of the pride of his heart, the anger of the Lord came on the nation of Judah as a whole (verse 25).

When Hezekiah realized what his pride was doing to the nation, he repented. Notice in verse 26 that the whole city of Jerusalem also repented of their pride and the Lord's wrath did not come on them.

This victory over the Assyrians was a blessing from God but it was also a test of the sincerity of the hearts of God's people as well. Hezekiah allowed this victory to make him proud as did the people of Jerusalem. This almost destroyed them.

Verse 27 tells us that Hezekiah had many riches. He was greatly honoured among his people and the nations. He had great treasures of silver, gold, precious stones, spices, shields and other valuables. He made buildings to store his grain, wine and oil. He constructed stalls for his cattle and pens for his flocks (verse 28). He built villages and acquired great quantities of flocks and herds (verse 29). He blocked a spring and channelled the water to the city. He succeeded in everything he did (verse 30).

In verse 31 a further test came from the Lord in the form of some Babylonian envoys. They came to ask him about a miraculous sign that had occurred in the land. This may have been a reference to how the Lord had delivered him from Assyria. We are told that at that time "God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart." In 2 Kings 20:13 we read that Hezekiah warmly received these envoys and showed them all the wealth of his kingdom. This act in itself was likely an act of pride and resulted in Babylon coming back to take that wealth for themselves. God would humble the nation for its pride.

Further details of the life of Hezekiah are written in the book of Isaiah. The events of his life were recorded in the records of the kings of Israel and Judah (verse 32). Hezekiah died and was buried on the hill where the tombs of his fathers were located. The nation of Judah honoured Hezekiah in his death. His son Manasseh succeeded him on the throne (verse 33).

What is particularly important for us to note here is that Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem who had been restored and renewed were put to the test. It is relatively easy for us to follow the crowd but the true believer is known for his sincerity in the midst of testing and trial. God was allowing His people to be tested to see the sincerity of their newfound faith. Even the great king Hezekiah was tested and fell. His temptation was pride. While God was gracious to him, Hezekiah wrestled with this until his death. Where would you stand if your faith was tested?

#### For Consideration:

- What impact did the revival in Judah under Hezekiah have on how the people contributed to the ministry of the Lord?
- How was the sincerity of the people involved in this revival tested? Would your faith pass such a test?
- In his trial, Hezekiah was supported by Isaiah the prophet. Do you have people who can stand with you and pray with you in your trials?
- How does God's deliverance become a stumbling block for Hezekiah? How can our spiritual gifts, ministry success or material possessions become a stumbling block for us today?
- Have you ever been tempted to become proud? What in particular can make you proud?

## For Prayer:

- Ask God to give you willingness to be generous with what He has given you.
- Ask God to give you a sincere heart that passes the tests He allows you to go through in life.
- Ask God to protect you from pride.
- Take a moment to thank the Lord for those who have stood with you in your trials. Ask Him to give you the opportunity to stand with someone in their trial.
- Thank God that He is bigger than our worst enemy. Thank Him that there is victory for those who trust in Him.

## MANASSEH AND AMON OF JUDAH

---

Read 2 Chronicles 33:1-25

The life of Manasseh shows us that God can radically change the life of an evil person. When he became king in Judah, the nation had been experiencing spiritual renewal. Manasseh's father Hezekiah had been responsible for great things happening in the land. Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king. He would reign for fifty-five years (verse 1).

Initially in his reign he did not follow the ways of his father Hezekiah. He was a very evil king. Verses 2-10 give us some examples of the evil of Manasseh.

In verse 2 we read that Manasseh followed the "detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites." He turned from the Lord God and followed the gods of the nations around him. This was in direct contrast to the wonderful work God had been doing in the nation of Judah under the reign of his father Hezekiah.



Manasseh rebuilt the high places dedicated to the foreign gods his father had demolished (verse 3). He erected altars to Baal and made pagan Asherah poles. He worshipped the stars. In just a short while the nation that had been revived under King Hezekiah's reign had returned to the evil from which God had delivered it.

Notice in verse 4 that Manasseh built foreign altars and put them in the temple. He put these altars in the outer and inner courts. From verse 5 we understand that these altars were for the worship of the stars. In doing this, Manasseh showed that he had no respect for the God of his father.

From verse 6 we understand that Manasseh sacrificed his sons in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. He practiced sorcery, divination and witchcraft. He consulted mediums and spiritists. His involvement in the occult and his evil deeds angered the Lord God.

Manasseh took carved images he had made and put them in the temple of God (verse 7). He showed his total disregard for the warning of the Lord that if His people disobeyed Him, their land would be taken from them (verse 8).

Manasseh led Judah and the people of Jerusalem away from God. In fact, he was more evil than the surrounding nations (verse 9). Though God spoke to him, he refused to pay attention and continued his evil practices (verse 10).

These verses show us just how far Manasseh was from God. What is so upsetting about these verses is that just prior to this, Judah had experienced such a wonderful revival. In such a short time they were worse than they had ever been. The whole nation had turned their back on God and His ways.

God was angry with Judah and brought Assyria against them. These Assyrians took Manasseh prisoner. They put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon (verse 11). Manasseh was broken by this event. Verse 12 tells us that in his distress he turned to the Lord God and sought His favour. We are told that he "humbled himself greatly before the Lord God of his fathers" (verse 12). God was moved by his prayer and listened to him (verse 13). In response to his prayer and repentance, the Lord opened the door for Manasseh to return to Jerusalem as king. When this happened Manasseh knew that the Lord was God (verse 13).

Upon his return to Jerusalem, Manasseh was a different man. Verse 14 tells us that he rebuilt the outer wall of the city making it much higher than it was previously (verse 14). He stationed military commanders in all the fortified cities of Judah.

When he had assured the security of the city, Manasseh proceeded to cleanse the nation of its pagan gods. He removed foreign gods and the image he had put in the temple. He destroyed the altars he had built on the temple hill and threw them outside the city (verse 15).

When he had thrown out the pagan altars, he restored the altar of the Lord God. He offered fellowship and thank offerings on it as the Lord had commanded (verse 16). While Manasseh had been radically changed by the Lord, the people continued to offer sacrifices to foreign gods in the high places (verse 17).

The events of Manasseh's life were recorded in the history of the kings of Israel and Judah (verse 18). He was known as an evil king but one whose prayer of repentance moved the heart of God and restored him to fellowship (verse 19).

When Manasseh died his son Amon would succeed him as king (verse 20).

Amon became king at the age of twenty-two. He would reign in Judah for only two years (verse 21). He was an evil king. He chose to follow the early example of his father and led Judah away from the Lord. He worshiped the idols his father Manasseh had made (verse 22). Unlike his father Manasseh, however, Amon refused to repent of his evil.

Amon's officials conspired against him and assassinated him in the palace (verse 24). That incident caused a revolt in the land. The people rose up and killed those who had plotted against King Amon and put his son Josiah on the throne in his place (verse 25).

There are several important lessons we need to learn from the lives of these kings. Let me give three lessons we can learn from the lives of Manasseh and Amon.

First, each person is accountable to God and must make up his own mind as to what he is going to do with Him. Hezekiah was a wonderful king who followed the way of the Lord with all his heart. His son Manasseh did not follow his example but chose to lead Judah astray from God. He was humbled and returned to God with all his heart. Manasseh's son Amon chose to wander from God and never did repent or come to the Lord. Each generation has a decision to make. As important as it is for us to set an example for our children, each child must individually make up his or her mind as to whether they will follow after the Lord or not. Some, like Manasseh, choose to wander but turn back to God at a later point in life. Others like Amon will persist in rebellion. This is not a decision that anyone can

make for us. We must each make up our own mind about what we will do with the Lord God.

Second, we learn from this passage that the Lord God is willing to listen to the humble and repentant prayer of even the worst sinner. Manasseh is a clear example of this. Here was a man who was heavily involved in the occult. He did terrible evil in the land of Judah and led many astray. God captured his attention, however, when He sent him into exile in Babylon. When he humbled himself and prayed, God was willing to restore him to fellowship. No matter how far you have wandered from the Lord God, if you repent, there is forgiveness available to you. You can be restored to God.

Finally, this passage shows us just how quickly revival fires can be snuffed out by disobedience. In just a few short months, Manasseh had succeeded in turning the nation of Judah away from God. The temple that had been cleansed and purified was quickly defiled by foreign altars and images. The land that had been cleansed of its pagan altars and idols found itself again the centre of evil idolatry.

How important it is that we remain true to the Lord. How quickly we can fall. How easy it is for the enemy to come in and defeat us. In a moment of inattention or weakness we find ourselves far from God and His blessing. This passage warns us that we must persevere in obedience if we are to continue to know the blessing of God. The Christian life is one that requires constant vigilance. The enemy is always seeking for a way to penetrate our ranks. We must always be alert and attentive to his ways.

## For Consideration:

- What does this chapter teach us about the evil Manasseh did in the beginning of his reign?
- How did the invasion of Assyrian and Manasseh's ultimate capture change the king's life? Has God ever used tragedy in your life to change you or open your eyes?
- What do we learn about how revival fires can be quickly snuffed out? What does this teach us about the importance of being watchful?
- What do we learn about the willingness of God to accept all who will repent of their sin and evil?
- Why is it so difficult for us to learn from the mistakes of others? Did Manasseh and Amon learn from their fathers?

## For Prayer:

- Take a moment to consider lessons that God has taught you through trials and difficulties in life. Thank God that He uses trials to teach us important lessons. Ask God to open your heart to the lessons He wants to teach you today.
- Ask God to help you to be watchful and alert in your spiritual walk.
- Thank the Lord that He is willing to forgive you for your sin. Thank Him that He delights to restore the repentant sinner.

## **REVIVAL UNDER JOSIAH: THE DISCOVERY OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW**

---

Read 2 Chronicles 34:1-33

Josiah became king, in the place of his evil father Amon, when he was eight years old. He would reign in Jerusalem for thirty-one years (verse 1). Unlike his father Amon, Josiah was a good king who walked in the ways of King David (verse 2). He served the Lord faithfully.

In the eighth year of his reign, when he was still quite young (likely about fourteen years of age), he began to seek the Lord (verse 3). By the twelfth year (about eighteen years old), Josiah took on the responsibility of purging the land of its evil practices. He removed the pagan Asherah poles and idols in Judah. Under his direction, the Baals were torn down and cut to pieces. The incense altars used in the worship of the Baals were torn down and smashed (verse 4). The Asherah poles were broken to pieces and scattered on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. He even burned the bones of the priests who sacrificed to these gods on their pagan altars. 2 Kings

23 gives us a more detailed account of what took place in those days of Josiah. We understand from 2 Kings 23:16 that Josiah actually emptied tombs of their bodies to burn on these altars. All this was in direct fulfilment of a prophecy that was given in 1 Kings 13:1-2 many years before the birth of Josiah. In all this, Josiah was sending a very clear message to his people. He would not tolerate the worship of any other god in Judah.

Josiah was not content to cleanse the nation of Judah only. In verse 6 we see how he went into the towns of the tribes of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon and Naphtali (in the country of Israel) and tore down their altars as well (verse 6). He crushed these idols and ground them to powder. He went throughout these regions of Israel destroying their pagan altars and returned to Jerusalem (verse 7).

By the time he was twenty-four (the eighteenth year of his reign), Josiah set his heart to purifying the temple in Jerusalem (verse 8). He commissioned Shaphan and Joah to clean and repair the temple. Shaphan and Joah went to the high priest Hilkiah and gave him money the Levites had collected from the people of Israel and Judah (verse 9). They entrusted the money to men they appointed to supervise the repairs on the temple (verse 10). These supervisors used the money to hire carpenters and builders and to purchase dressed stone and timber for beams and joists for the buildings that had fallen into ruin (verse 11). This gives us a small sense of the extent of the damage in the temple and surrounding area. Beams and joints had to be replaced in order to make it safe for people to use.

These men did the work of the Lord faithfully (verse 12). Verse 12 tells us that Jahath and Obadiah (descendants of Merari) and Zechariah and Meshullam (descendants of Kohath) directed the workers. The Levites had an

important role to play in the repairs of the temple, acting as supervisors, secretaries and doorkeepers (verse 13). Notice in verse 12 that those who were skilled in playing musical instruments had charge over the labourers. While this was not their usual responsibilities, they had to be flexible in this situation. The first responsibility was to repair and purify the temple. Their regular responsibilities had to be put aside until this had been accomplished.

While they were cleaning out the temple, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the Lord. This contained the law God had given through Moses (verse 14). It is of significance that this book had been lost. For years no one read this book or even appeared to miss it. Again this is evidence of the state of the nation. The Word of God had been completely lost to the nation of Judah.

Hilkiah told Shaphat the secretary that he found the Book of the Law of the Lord in the temple. He gave the book to Shaphan (verse 15). Shaphan took the book to King Josiah when he went to give him a report on the progress of the work (verses 16-17). Shaphan then read some of the book to the King (verse 18).

When Josiah heard what Shaphan read from the Book of the Law of the Lord, he was deeply touched. Verse 19 tells us that he tore his robes in a sign of mourning. He gave orders that Hilkiah, Ahikam, Abdon, Shaphan and Asaiah inquire of the Lord about what was written in the Book of the Law (verse 20-21). Josiah learned from this book that the Lord was very angry with His people because they had not kept His law.

It is interesting here that while these men had the Book of the Law, they still felt the need to hear a specific word from the Lord. It was for this reason that they called for a



prophet. This is important for us to note. There have been many people who have read the Bible but do not understand it or see its application. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to help us to understand this Word and apply it to our lives. The Spirit of God delights to open up God's Word to us and show us its practical application to our lives. Sometimes He does this personally by speaking to us directly about the Word of God. At other times He may use others to speak to us and teach us the truth of that Word. In any case, if we are to understand the truth and application of God's Word we must do more than read it. We must let the Spirit of God use it to teach and instruct us in the way He would have us live.

Josiah understood enough of the words of the Book of the Law of God to know that he and his nation were in trouble. He now sensed the need to take these words to the Lord and seek His direction and leading concerning what he had just heard. We would do well to follow his example in our study of the Word of God.

Hilkiah the priest and the men Josiah had commissioned to seek the Lord went to the prophetess Huldah and inquired about the will of the Lord concerning the words they had just read (verse 22). Huldah told them that God would indeed bring disaster on Judah according to all the curses that were written in the Book of the Law (verse 24). This would happen because they had forsaken the Lord and served other gods, provoking Him to anger (verse 25). God's anger would not be quenched; He would pour it out on the nation of Judah.

Huldah also had a special word for Josiah the King. In verses 27-28 she told him that because he had a humble and responsive heart toward God, he would be buried in peace. His eyes would not see the disaster God was going

to bring on the nation. God put off His judgment for a time because of the humility and responsiveness of Josiah's heart. We can only wonder what effect our own lives play in God's timing to judge our sinful world.

Hilkiah and the other men took the word of Huldah back to Josiah. When the king heard the word of the Lord, he gathered the elders of Judah and Jerusalem together (verse 29). They gathered with the people of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple. Present that day were men and women of all ages (verse 30). Josiah read the Book of the Law to the people. The king renewed their covenant with God. That day, the officials and the people of Judah committed themselves to follow the commands, regulations and decrees of the Lord God with all their heart and soul (verse 31). They committed themselves to obey the words of the Book of the Law of the Lord (Book of the Covenant). Everyone in Jerusalem and Benjamin made this pledge before the Lord God (verse 32).

The words of the Book of the Law and the word of God through the prophetess Huldah had a profound impact on the life of Josiah and the nation of Judah as a whole. He and his nation committed themselves to seeking God and to live in accordance with His word. Verse 33 tells us that as long as Josiah was their king, the people did not fail to follow the Lord God.

The story of Josiah is a story of a good king who wanted to follow the ways of the Lord his God. It is also the story of a good man who discovered the Word of God and was profoundly impacted by that Word. The Word of the Lord had been hidden for many years. Josiah knew something about the worship of the Lord God from the history that had been passed on to him, but it was not until he discovered the Word of God that he was able to have a firm and true

footing on which to base his reforms. The Word of God gave direction to the renewal that took place in the days of Josiah. It was also what kept the renewal fires burning as long as Josiah lived.

#### For Consideration:

- What evidence is there that the hand of the Lord was on Josiah in his early years? What reforms did he bring to the nation in his early years?
- Josiah was a man who loved the Lord but did not have access to the Book of the Law. How did the discovery of the Book of the Law impact Josiah? How important is the Word of God today?
- How far do you think the revival under Josiah could have gone without the Book of the Law? What role does the Word of God have in renewal and revival today?
- Why do we need the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the interpretation and application of the Word of God?

#### For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He has given us His word to be our guide into truth.
- Ask the Lord to give you a deeper appreciation of the truth of the Word of God.

- Thank the Lord that He has given us His Holy Spirit to guide us into the truth of the Word of God. Thank Him also for men and women He has gifted to teach and apply that Word.

## 49

### A PASSOVER AND

### FINAL BATTLE

---

2 Chronicles 35:1-27

Josiah's reforms had a powerful impact on the nation of Judah. Under his leadership, the nation was cleansed of its impurities and the worship of the Lord God restored.

One of the highlights of the reign of King Josiah was a Passover celebration which took place in the city of Jerusalem. On that occasion, Josiah appointed priests to do the duties required for the celebration of this Passover. He encouraged them to take their responsibilities seriously (verse 2). This shows us that Josiah was responsible for a big part of this movement toward God in Judah. It is the king who is encouraging the priests to take their role seriously.

Josiah also told the Levites to bring the Ark of the Covenant into the temple. It is unclear why the Ark of the Covenant was not in the temple. It may be that it was moved for protection. During the reigns of former kings of Judah, the temple was desecrated and its articles given away to foreign lands. Josiah wanted everything to be in order. The

Ark of the Covenant belonged in the temple and now it would be restored to its rightful place.

Notice, however, that Josiah gave particular commands that this ark was not to be carried on the shoulders of the Levites. This was important. We need to remember that the Book of the Law of the Lord had been lost to the people. For many years it was not consulted or followed. Josiah had discovered the Book of the Law and had read how the Ark of the Covenant was to be carried. There were two poles that were attached to the side of the Ark. It was to be carried by those poles. Josiah was careful to observe the law of God as he knew it.

Once the priests were clear on their responsibilities and the Ark of the Covenant was in place, the priest and Levites were to slaughter the Passover lambs, consecrate themselves first and then the people (verses 4-6). Notice in verses 7-8 the offerings that were made that day.

Who Offered	Offering
King Josiah	30,000 sheep and goats 3,000 head of cattle
King's Officials	2,600 sheep and goats 300 head of cattle
Levites	5,000 sheep and goats 500 head of cattle

We have a record here of an offering of 37,600 lambs and goats and 3,800 cattle. All these animals were offered as a free will offering for the Passover celebration. This was no small event.

As the events of that day unfolded, the Passover lambs were slaughtered and the priests sprinkled the blood of these sacrifices to purify the people. The Levites were responsible for skinning the animals (verse 11). This would have been a big task.

When the animals were skinned and their blood sprinkled, a certain number were set aside as a burnt offering. The same was done for the cattle (verse 12). The remainder were roasted over a fire or boiled in pots, cauldrons and pans and served to the people (verse 13). When the people had been served, the Levites prepared the meal for themselves and for the priests who were busy offering sacrifices until nightfall (verse 14).

As the celebration of the Passover unfolded, the musicians were in their places singing and playing music to the glory of God (verse 15). The gatekeepers were at each gate assuring that nothing unclean entered the city during these celebrations. They did not leave their posts during these celebrations. The Passover meal was brought to them at the gate.

The celebrations lasted seven days in Jerusalem (verse 16). Verse 18 tells us that there had not been a Passover celebrated like this since the days of Samuel the prophet. No other king celebrated the Passover like Josiah celebrated it that day in the eighteenth year of his reign.

When things in the temple and in his land were set in order, Josiah marched out to meet King Neco of Egypt in battle (verse 20). It is unclear why Josiah did this. He may have felt threatened. King Neco sent messengers to Josiah telling him that he had no quarrel with him and that he had no intention of attacking Judah at that time. He told Josiah that God had told him to attack another nation. The nation

referred to here is Babylon. Neco's battle was with Babylon and not with Judah. He told Josiah that he was only hindering the purpose of God by opposing him (verse 21). He also warned Josiah that if he did not back off he would be destroyed.

Josiah refused to listen to Neco and the word of the Lord through him. According to verse 22 the Lord God had actually given this command to King Neco. In disregarding the words of King Neco, Josiah was fighting against the Lord God.

It is quite amazing to realize that the Lord leads even pagan kings. He can use the unbeliever to speak to us if we are willing to listen. Josiah refused to listen to the word of the Lord through King Neco and chose to go into battle against him. King Josiah, however, did disguise himself. His disguise did not help. As the battle raged, an archer shot King Josiah and he was badly wounded (verse 23). Josiah asked his officers to take him away from the battle. They put him in another chariot and brought him to Jerusalem (verse 24). Josiah died of his wounds. He was buried in the tombs of his fathers and the city of Jerusalem mourned for him. Even the great prophet Jeremiah composed a lament for Josiah that would be sung by both men and women singers in honour of this king (verse 25). Further details of the events of Josiah's reign were recorded in the records of the kings of Israel and Judah (verse 26-27).

What is particularly striking about the life of Josiah is that his greatest strength seemed to be his connection to the Book of the Law of the Lord. When he discovered this book it had a profound impact on his life. He made sure that his priests and leaders followed the Law of God in all they did. As long as he lived, the people followed God's Word.



Josiah, however, would die because he failed to hear the word of the Lord through King Neco of Egypt. God leads us both by His written word and His personal leading. As the apostles moved from one town to another, the Holy Spirit showed them where they were to go. Jesus was led by the Spirit in what He spoke and did. Josiah's failure had to do with his refusal to listen to the specific leading of God in the battle against Egypt. God has always specifically led His people through promptings and circumstances. We would do well to open our ears not only to the authoritative written Word of God but also to the leading of His Holy Spirit as He directs us in everyday matters.

For Consideration:

- What evidence do we have here in this passage that Josiah was the main motivation behind the reforms that took place in Judah? How does he stir up the people?
- What does Josiah's willingness to sacrifice so much show us about his deep desire to see God honoured? What are you willing to give so that God would be honoured?
- How did God speak to Josiah through King Neco? Why do you suppose Josiah ignored the word of the Lord through Neco?
- God leads us both through the clear teaching of His written Word but also through the ministry of His Holy Spirit. Will the Spirit and the Word ever contradict each other? Why do you suppose God has given us both the Word and the Spirit to lead us?

- Have you had times in your life where you refused to listen to the Lord and His leading? What kept you from listening?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to make you willing to sacrifice whatever He would call you to sacrifice for the sake of His kingdom?
- Thank the Lord for the authority of His written Word. Thank Him that it is a clear guide to all truth.
- Thank the Lord for the ministry of the Holy Spirit who leads us to understand the truth of the Word of God and who also guides us specifically in everyday decisions.
- Ask God to help you to love and obey His written Word and to know and follow the leading of his Holy Spirit.

## THE LAST KINGS OF JUDAH

---

Read 2 Chronicles 36:1-23

The final years of the nation of Judah before being sent off into exile were years of turmoil and rebellion against God. After the death of Josiah, Jehoahaz became king in Judah (verse 1). Jehoahaz was twenty-three when he became king but would reign for a period of only three months (verse 2). The king of Egypt removed him from his position and imposed a heavy tax on the nation (verse 3). The king of Egypt appointed Jehoahaz's brother Eliakim to be king in his place. Jehoahaz was taken as captive into Egypt.

King Neco changed the name of Eliakim to Jehoiakim (verse 4). Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king. He reigned in for eleven years (verse 5). His reign, however, would be under the watchful eye of Egypt who would prove to be a constant threat to them at this time.

Jehoiakim did not serve the Lord God (verse 5). We are not given the details of the reign of Jehoiakim, but verse 6 tells us that the result of his wandering from God was that Judah was attacked by Babylon and Jehoiakim was bound and carried off in bronze shackles to Babylon as a prisoner. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took many articles

from the temple with him into Babylon. He would put them in his temple in Babylon (verse 7). When Jehoiakim was taken away from Judah, his son Jehoiachin succeeded him as king on the throne (verse 8).

Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king. He reigned for a little more than three months (verse 9). He did not serve the Lord God. In the spring, King Nebuchadnezzar sent for him and brought him to Babylon. At that time, Nebuchadnezzar also plundered Jerusalem and took more articles of value from the temple (verse 10). Like his father, Jehoiachin was sent into exile into Babylon. His uncle Zedekiah would become king in his place.

When Zedekiah became king he was twenty-one years old. He reigned for eleven years (verse 11). He also rebelled against the Lord God and did what was evil in His sight. The Lord sent Jeremiah to speak to Zedekiah but he refused to listen to what the prophet had to say (verse 12).

Zedekiah even rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar. King Nebuchadnezzar had made Zedekiah take an oath of loyalty to him in God's name (verse 13). In breaking this oath, not only did Zedekiah show his contempt for Nebuchadnezzar, whom God had ordained to be his judge but he also showed his contempt to God before whom he had taken his oath.

Throughout his life, Zedekiah refused to listen to the Lord God. In fact, he became more and more hardened to the ways of the Lord (verse 13). The leaders of the nation and the priests also become hardened to the things of God and began to follow the practices of the nations around them (verse 14). In doing this, they defiled the land and the temple in which God was to be worshipped.

God had compassion on His people in those days and He sent His word to them through prophetic messengers (verse 15). These messengers were mocked (verse 16). Having warned them through His prophets, God then turned His wrath against His people. Notice in verse 16 that there was no remedy for the people of Judah. They had so consistently rejected God and His words that no more opportunity would be given them. They would now suffer the consequences of their sin and evil.

In verse 17 the judgment of God came in the form of the nation of Babylon. This nation attacked Judah with violence. The Babylonians killed the young Judean men with the sword in the temple. They also killed the women and the old men (verse 17). The entire nation was handed over to Nebuchadnezzar who carried off all the articles from the temple and brought them to his own land (verse 18). He also stripped the treasures of the king and his officials, leaving the nation impoverished.

When all the articles of value were taken from the temple, Nebuchadnezzar proceeded to burn it down. He broke down the wall of the city of Jerusalem, leaving it defenceless (verse 19). With no money left in the city, it would not be rebuilt for many years. The king's palace was destroyed and burned as there would no longer be a king seated on the throne.

The inhabitants of Judah, who had escaped the sword, were taken into exile to Babylon. They would remain there as long as Babylon was in power. In about seventy years the Persians would conquer Babylon and King Cyrus would issue a decree permitting them to return to their homeland. For seventy years, the land of Judah would enjoy a rest from the evil of its inhabitants. All this was prophesied by Jeremiah the prophet who lived at that time (verse

21). Jeremiah's prophecy about this time is recorded for us in Jeremiah 25:1-14.

At the end of seventy years of exile, the Lord put it on the heart of King Cyrus of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his kingdom. In that proclamation Cyrus told his people that the Lord God of heaven had appointed him to build him a temple in Jerusalem. He commissioned all who were willing to return to Jerusalem to build that temple for Him.

While God's people had to pay for their sin, God had not forgotten them. He moved Cyrus to release His people so that they could be restored. God's discipline has restoration as its ultimate goal.

In these final years of Judah's kings there was great turmoil in the land. All four kings were taken captive. All were powerless to defend their nation against foreign powers. God warned them but they consistently refused His challenge. In the end, God disciplined them. God's people lost everything, their homes, their land, their possessions and even members of their own family. Sin had devastated them but God would not forget them as a nation. The day would come when He would offer them another opportunity.

Sin has devastating consequences for our nations, churches and personal lives. A chosen nation of God's people had been destroyed because of their unbelief and rebellion. I can imagine that this would have been the farthest things from their mind. Never could they have imagined that they would lose so much. Their lives serve as a warning to us, our church and our nations. May God help us to see that the only hope for our church and nation is that we seek Him with all our heart.

### For Consideration:

- What was the effect of sin on the last few years of the nation of Judah?
- What warning do we need to take from this passage about sin and its consequences?
- What evidence was there that the blessing of God had been removed from the land of Judah in those last days?
- What happened to the temple of Jerusalem in the days of King Zedekiah?
- What was the prophecy of Jeremiah about this period of history? How did it come true?
- What do we learn about the compassion of the Lord God? Do you have compassion on those who have offended you?

### For Prayer:

- Ask God to give you a heart that is responsive to His Word and His Spirit's leading.
- Thank the Lord that He is a God of compassion who, even in His wrath and punishment, remembers to show mercy.
- Thank the Lord that He does punish sin. Thank Him that He is a God of justice and holiness.

- Take a moment to pray for the church and your nation. Ask God to give us all a heart that is sensitive to Him and His Word.





## Light To My Path Book Distribution

Light To My Path (LTMP) is a book writing and distribution ministry reaching out to needy Christian workers in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Many Christian workers in developing countries do not have the resources necessary to obtain Bible training or purchase Bible study materials for their ministries and personal encouragement. F. Wayne MacLeod is a member of Action International Ministries and has been writing these books with a goal to distribute them to needy pastors and Christian workers around the world.

To date tens of thousands of books are being used in preaching, teaching, evangelism and encouragement of local believers in over sixty countries. Books have now been translated into a number of languages. The goal is to make them available to as many believers as possible.

The ministry of LTMP is a faith based ministry and we trust the Lord for the resources necessary to distribute the books for the encouragement and strengthening of believers around the world. Would you pray that the Lord would open doors for the translation and further distribution of these books?

For more information about Light To My Path Book Distribution visit our website at [www.lighttomypath.ca](http://www.lighttomypath.ca)