

2 CHRONICLES

2 CHRONICLES 1-9 — SOLOMON'S REIGN

HIS PRAYER AND ITS ANSWER (1:1-3)

With verses three and four compare I Chronicles 16, and especially verses 37-40. The tabernacle at Gibeon was the legal place for worship, but the threshing-floor on Matthew Moriah was chosen by David for the reason given (~~1~~1 Chronicles 21:29). A comparison with the corresponding place in 1 Kings will show how this account is abbreviated as the matter was not necessary to the author's purpose.

HIS POWER AND WEALTH (1:14-17)

This record is given in Kings near the close of the reign, but inserted here as a proof of the instant fulfillment of God's promise.

HIS CONSTRUCTION AND DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE (CHAPS. 2-7)

Huram is the same with whom we have previously met. The two houses (2:1) are the temple and Solomon's palace. The description of the temple here differs in several particulars from that in Kings. For example, this is more particular as to the plan of the building but less so as to the time when it began; this speaks of the arrangement of the building and its furnishings in an unbroken narrative, but that has two interruptions; this arranges the objects differently and describes with more fullness in some cases, etc. But remember what has been said about the Holy Spirit as the real author of Scripture, and His right to use such liberty to emphasize certain facts or impress certain lessons as He desires. This does not take into account errors of copyists to which reference also has been made.

Here the location of the temple is named for the first time (3:1, compare ~~1~~Genesis 22:2). Moriah means "land of the appearing of the Lord." Note the reference to the brazen scaffold (4:13) not given in Kings, the

additional words at the close of Solomon's prayer (vv. 40-42), and the fuller account of the divine acceptance of the temple (7:1-10).

The large number of oxen and sheep offered in sacrifice is astounding (7:5), but Josephus in his *Jewish Wars* says that even in Roman times, 256,000 passover lambs were slain at Jerusalem within a few hours. A current commentator reminds us that these colossal offerings and festivals are no more astonishing to us than the magnitude of our steam or railway trade, or of modern warfare would be astonishing to the ancients.

HIS EARTHLY END (CHAPS. 8-9)

In the first of these chapters we have brief notes of events recorded more at length in 1 Kings, for example: the building of certain cities, the palace for the daughter of the Egyptian king, the navigation to Ophir, etc. The comments upon these in that book occupy as much space as seems relatively necessary.

In the next chapter the story of the Queen of Sheba is very much as in 1 Kings.

QUESTIONS

1. Where was the tabernacle of Moses at this period?
2. Who is the real author of this book, and how does that fact bear on the differences in its record as compared with 1 Kings?
3. How may other differences be explained?
4. Tell what you know of the history of Matthew Moriah?
5. Give a later parallel to the large number of sacrifices at the dedication of the temple.

2 CHRONICLES 10-20 — REHOBOAM AND JEHOSHAPHAT

REHOBOAM (CHAPS. 10-12)

The story of the rejected counsel of the older men and what came of it (chap. 10) is practically as in ~~1~~1 Kings 12, and furnishes an illustration of the relation of divine sovereignty to human free agency.

The fortification of Judah's cities against Israel (chap. 11) was dwelt upon in the earlier books, as well as the return of the priests and Levites to Jerusalem.

Rehoboam's "wise" action (v. 23) is to be taken in the political sense. He thus gave his sons and grandsons something to do, each having a measure of independence, and being kept sufficiently apart from the others to lessen the likelihood of a cabal against the heir to the kingdom.

How long did Rehoboam remain faithful to God (11:17 and 12:1) ? What punishment was inflicted for his infidelity (vv. 2-4)? How is God's goodness shown to him (v. 5), and with what result (vv. 6-8)? Note verse 8 carefully. How much better to serve God than His enemies, but what bitter experience is necessary to teach this lesson (vv. 9-12). Note the reference to the heathen mother of Rehoboam (v. 13), and the reason for its record (v. 14), as showing her baneful influence on her son.

Speaking of the punishment which befell Rehoboam and Judah from Egypt, it is interesting that its record is found today on the walls of the Egyptian palace at Karnak. Carved nearly three millenniums ago, it is there still an impressive corroboration of Holy Writ.

ABIJAH AND ASA (CHAPS. 13-16)

These kings may be coupled, as the record of the first-named is brief. Verse two of chapter 13 does not contradict verse 20 of chapter 11, since "Michaiah" and "Maachah" are the same, and as "the daughter of Uriel," she was the granddaughter of Absalom. Such general statements are common in the Hebrew text, and it is impossible to consider each of them.

The numbers in verse three are immense, but compare ^{<1306>}1 Chronicles 21:5. The harangue of Abijah (vv. 4-12), except in its character and terms, suggests that of the Assyrian commander before Jerusalem (^{<1280>}2 Kings 18), and seems to have been a custom in ancient warfare. What advantage is taken of this delay (vv. 13-14)? What prevented a rout of Judah (v. 15)? How terrific was Israel's punishment (v. 17)? What was its effect in the subsequent history of Abijah's reign (v. 20)?

How far did this victory show its effects in Asa's reign (14:1)? What was his religious character (vv. 2-5)? For certain qualifications of these words compare the latter half of chapter 16. The statement in verse eight is to be

taken in our sense of militia rather than a standing army. Great as was this force, what could it have accomplished against the Ethiopians (v. 9) but for God (vv. 11-14)? Which of his successors does Asa, in his faith, suggest? How is he further encouraged (15:1-2)?

Note the story of a typical revival. Its need appears in verses 3-6, a people without God in the sense that they were without the teaching of His Word in power (v. 3), and therefore without peace (v. 5) and in affliction (v. 6). Its progress is set before us in verse eight — courage, repentance, prayer. Its results, (vv. 9-15) — the gathering of the people (vv. 9-10), their offerings (v. 11), renewal of their covenant (v. 12), separation from the world (v. 13), joy and peace (v. 15). Its cause is revealed in the opening of the chapter as the Spirit of God, the man of God, the Word of God, and the work of God (vv. 1-2 and 7). O, that history would repeat itself in our day; or rather that God would once more pour out His Holy Spirit upon some prophet through whom His word would have potency as of old!

It is a mystery that Asa with such an experience should act as in chapter 16, except as we recognize the same inconsistency in ourselves. Sin makes fools of us all. As there is some confusion in the chronology here, however, it is uncertain just when this event occurred. (Compare verse 1 with ~~1153~~ 1 Kings 15:33.)

It is not a sin in itself to seek a physician's aid (v. 12), but an Egyptian physician such as Asa consulted doubtless used demoniacal charms and incantations forbidden by the law of God. It is the same now. An honest physician who heals in accordance with the well-understood principles of therapy may be consulted by any Christian without sin; but it is different with a New Age healer, a palmist, a hypnotist, a spiritualist, a Christian Scientist, or other practitioner whose underlying philosophy is pagan and contrary to the Gospel.

The "very great burning" (v. 14) is supposed to refer to the cremation of the corpse, a custom which prevailed at that time among the Hebrews (compare 21:19, also ~~9812~~ 1 Samuel 31:12; ~~2815~~ Jeremiah 34:5 and ~~3060~~ Amos 6:10).

JEHOSHAPHAT (CHAPS. 17-20)

The story of this reign opens with the customary characterization of the king, which as we know from the book of Kings, was commendable,

resulting in the divine blessing (17:1-6). But in verses 7-11 something of special interest is recorded. The word "to" before each name should be omitted, for it was the princes themselves who were sent on this godly mission — "the first practical measure adopted by any of the kings for the religious instruction of the people." No wonder such consequences should have resulted (vv. 10-11). Here is the secret for a revival, viz: the instruction of the people in the Bible by the best men in the church. This is worth tons of sermons on civic righteousness and reforms, and no end of so-called evangelistic campaigns and religious "movements," which have so much of man in them and so little of God.

Verses 12-19 show that no monarch since Solomon equaled Jehoshaphat "in the extent of his revenue, the strength of his fortifications and the number of his troops." It pays to serve God.

Chapter 18 is the same as ~~122~~1 Kings 22, which we considered in its place, commenting on the lapse it indicates. This lapse met its rebuke (19:2) and its punishment (chap. 20). Note in the meantime 19:4, comparing again 17:7-11. And do not overlook 19:5-7. Judicial courts had been established earlier but here they are localized in the fenced cities. What a charge to the judges! It will be heard again when He comes who shall judge the people righteously! Verses 8-11 refer to a kind of supreme court established at Jerusalem.

Chapter 20 brings us face to face with a crisis in Judah (vv. 1-2). How is it met by this pious king (vv. 3-4)? Study the prayer, observing its argumentative character ending in an appeal (vv. 5-12). God loves to be thus argued with on the ground of His promises. Many such instances will be found later in the prophets. Compare Abraham (Genesis 18), and Moses (~~123~~Exodus 32).

QUESTIONS

1. How does chapter 10 illustrate the dogma referred to in the lesson?
2. Why did Rehoboam deal with his sons as recorded?
3. How may we account, humanly speaking, for Rehoboam's infidelity?
4. How does archaeological research corroborate the truth of any part of this lesson?
5. What, in general terms, was the character of Asa's reign?

6. How would you explain 16:12?
7. What religious instruction was adopted by Jehoshaphat, and what has it to teach us?
8. How does Jehoshaphat's reign show that it pays to serve God?
9. What lessons in prayer may be gathered from it?

2 CHRONICLES 21-32 — JEHORAM TO HEZEHIAH

JEHORAM (CHAP. 21)

Jehoshaphat followed Rehoboam's example in arranging for his sons (v. 3), but without the hoped-for result (v. 4). Such a brother as Jehoram proved might be expected to act in his kingly capacity as verses five to seven testify. Elijah (v. 12) may be mistaken of the transcribers for Elisha, as the former died earlier (~~1~~2 Kings 2); unless we take the view in the margin that this was a "writing" he left behind him. For the fulfillment of this "writing" read the rest of the chapter. We had a much fuller account of this reign in 2 Kings.

AHAZIAH (CHAP. 22)

This king is called Jehoahaz in the preceding chapter (v. 17). The peculiarity in the figures (22:2) was noticed in ~~1~~2 Kings 8:26, and the fact that his mother was the grand-daughter of Omri (v. 2). Note her influence (v. 3) like that of the mother of what other king recently considered?

In the story of verses 5-9, it is of interest to know that archaeological research has found the names of Hazael and Jehu on Assyrian sculptures.

Athaliah's motive (v. 10) may have been inspired partly by anger at the destruction of her own house of Ahab, partly by the necessity of self-defense against Jehu, and partly by pride and ambition, since if any of the young princes became king his mother would supersede her in power and dignity.

Verse 12 means that the priests and their families, some of them at least, were privileged to dwell in the buildings in the outer wall of the temple.

JOASH (CHAPS. 23-24)

"Chief of the fathers of Israel" (23:2), means Judah and Benjamin only, the name usually employed in this book for all that remained of Israel. ^{<1245>}2 Chronicles 24:15-22 has no parallel in Kings. It mentions the honor shown Jehoiada. Burial in cities, except Jerusalem, was prohibited, and in that case only allowed to kings. What request did the princes make to the king after the death of the faithful priest (v. 17)? Does the next verse indicate its character? And was the king himself guilty (v. 21)? Compare ^{<1239>}Matthew 23:29-35. In this last passage Christ speaks of the slain prophet as the son of Barachias instead of Jehoiada, but possibly he was the latter's grandson. In his death the prophet said, "The Lord shall see and require" (v. 22), and for the fulfillment of the warning read the chapter to the end.

AMAZIAH (CHAP. 25)

This history is divided into three parts:

- (1) the general account of the reign, and its spirit, especially at the beginning (vv. 1-4);
- (2) the conquest of the Edomites (vv. 5-13); and
- (3) the idolatry of the king and its punishment at the hands of Israel (vv. 14-28). The second of these events is given with detail not found in the earlier record, and is valuable for the reply of God's servant to the king (v. 9), the lesson of which should not be disregarded. The third event also contains new matter (vv. 14-16), explaining why the calamity of the following verses was permitted.

UZZIAH (CHAP. 26)

Two periods suggest themselves in this case: early obedience and prosperity (vv. 1-15), then pride and punishment (vv. 16-23). A comparison of the record of the first period with ^{<1241>}2 Kings 14-15 shows new matter illustrating Uzziah's prosperity, who is there called "Azariah." This latter name is that of the Assyrian inscriptions also. Do not let verse five escape. "He sought God in the days of the Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God." How valuable the prophets in the history of God's people, and especially those who understand the visions of God! There is a difference in prophets. Some understand what others do

not. How necessary, therefore, that the Scripture interpreter should fear the Lord that he may possess his secrets.

Uzziah desired to exercise regal and sacerdotal functions at the same time, as in the case of pagan kings and emperors, but which was contrary to the divine law (^{<0200>}Exodus 30, ^{<0400>}Numbers 18). For the sin, compare ^{<0100>}1 Samuel 13, and the punishment, ^{<0400>}Numbers 12, ^{<0100>}2 Kings 5.

JOTHAM AND AHAZ (CHAPS. 27-28)

of Jotham's reign little need be said except to call attention to the lesson in verse six. The story of Ahaz is divided into four parts:

- (1) his general character and reign (vv. 1-5);
- (2) the invasions by Syria and Israel (vv. 6-15);
- (3) the alliance with Assyria (vv. 16-21); and
- (4) the summary (vv. 22-27).

There is much that is new as compared with Kings, but the prophetic intercession for Judah with their brethren of Israel is particularly interesting (vv. 9-15). Was it their power, or God's judicial sentence that caused Israel to be victorious (v. 9)? How had they abused their opportunity? What should make them cautious and merciful (v. 10)? Verses 12-15 accord with the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), and Christ may have drawn upon this episode.

Ahaz's alliance with Assyria is attested by the Assyrian monuments. In the summary of the close of his reign, what language (v. 24) indicates the suspension of the worship of God in his time?

HEZEKIAH (CHAPS. 29-32)

After the beginning of Hezekiah's history, in chapter 29 we have the cleansing and consecration of the temple. In 30, the great passover. In 31, the religious reforms following. In 32, we have Sennacherib's expedition, Hezekiah's sickness, and the close of the reign. In Kings the military and political side of the reign is given more fully, but not the inner religious and theocratic side, as we see by comparing chapters 29-31 with the introductory verses of ^{<0200>}2 Kings 18.

Noting a few outstanding points, "all the uncleanness" (29:16) means probably the sacrificial vessels formerly employed in idolatry, and possibly the remains of idolatrous offerings. "Ye have filled your hand unto the Lord" (v. 31 margin), means they had consecrated themselves to God (^{<0234>}Exodus 28:41) after offering the expiatory sacrifices which preceded such consecration. Keep in mind that God accepts nothing from us as either gift or service until He accepts us. And we can be accepted only on the ground of the expiatory sacrifice of Christ. Note the last word of this chapter in the light of its context. That is the way a revival comes. O, that God would now surprise us with one!

Why could they not keep the passover in the appointed first month (30:2-4)? Was change ever permissible (^{<0406>}Numbers 9:6-13)? Note the breadth of the invitation (vv. 5-9), and the reception it met from Israel (vv. 10-11). See the difficulty in the case of Judah and the cause of it (v. 12). "Healed the people" (v. 20) means forgave their guilt. "That they might be encouraged (steadfast) in the law of the Lord" (31:4), means that they might live carefree while performing their official duties.

Note that Hezekiah was a man of prayer and faith, who did not neglect means (32:1-8). To understand "he repaid not" (v. 25), compare ^{<0210>}2 Kings 20:12. How disappointing this is in so good a man. What a lesson it teaches as to the need of prayer and watchfulness to the end of our lives (v. 31).

QUESTIONS

1. Count the fulfillments of prophecy in this lesson.
2. What warning for mothers is found in it?
3. How is it corroborated by archaeology?
4. How may Athaliah's conduct be explained?
5. Recite the story of the reign of Joash.
6. Name the divisions of chapter 25.
7. What was Uzziah's sin?
8. Where is the parable of the Good Samaritan suggested here?
9. What comes first in the divine order, salvation or consecration?
10. What lesson is taught by the latter part of Hezekiah's life?

2 CHRONICLES 30-36 — MANASSEH TO THE CAPTIVITY

MANASSEH AND AMON (CHAP. 33)

The history of the first-named is divided into three parts:

- (1) the outline of his character and reign down to the crisis of his punishment (vv. 1-10);
- (2) his affliction and repentance in Babylon (vv. 11-13); and
- (3) his later career and death (vv. 14-20). The first part was considered in Kings. For the reference to "groves" and "the host of heaven," compare ^{<5162>}Deuteronomy 16:21 and 17:3. It was in such groves, and on the high hills, and under the trees, that the heathen were guilty of their idolatrous practices. As a comment on verse 6 see ^{<5183>}Deuteronomy 18:9. Verse 7 is a forerunner of what we read of the Antichrist in ^{<2701>}Daniel 7-9 (see also ^{<4101>}Matthew 24, ^{<3101>}2 Thessalonians 2, ^{<6101>}Revelation 13, etc.).

God is merciful and long-suffering, but without avail (v. 10). The Assyrian king was Esarhaddon, son and successor to Sennacherib. "Among thorns" may mean that Manasseh was hiding in such a thicket, but some versions have another Hebrew expression translated "among the living," as intended to show only that he was taken alive. His condition was humiliating indeed, hands manacled and ankles fastened together with rings and a bar.

Observe the process of his repentance — affliction, supplication, humility, mercy, spiritual apprehension, restoration, reformation, zeal, prosperity, (vv. 12-16). Here is a good outline for an expository discourse. It was some political motive that induced the Assyrian to restore him to his kingdom, perhaps to use him as an ally against Egypt, "but God overruled the measure for higher purposes."

The story of Amon calls for no comment.

JOSIAH (CHAPS. 34-35)

The first ten years of this reign (vv. 1-7) are distinguished by a reformation and revival more thorough than that of Manasseh, and suggesting the one

under Hezekiah. The exact chronological order is not followed but the great facts are the same as in Kings. That a king of Judah should have such influence among the tribes of Israel, is explained by the fact that the captivity of the latter had taken place, and the remnant remaining in the land kept in touch with Judah as their protector (v. 6). "Mattocks" has been translated "deserts" and may mean the deserted localities or suburbs of these tribes.

The remainder of this chapter has been alluded to sufficiently in Kings. The first half of 35 is the account of the great passover, the origin of which was treated in ^{<921>}Exodus 12, but a few features call for attention here. For example, "the holy place" in this case (v. 5) means the court of the priests where the animals were sacrificed, and the people admitted according to their families, several households at a time. The Levites stood in rows from the slaughtering places to the altar, passing the blood and fat from one of the officiating priests to another. The Levites, both here and at Hezekiah's passover, did more than the law authorized them to do, but the peculiar conditions in each case justified the liberty. The singers (v. 15) were chanting ^{<931>}Psalms 113-118, and doubtless repeating them over and over as each group entered the holy place. The comparison with Samuel's passover (v. 18) suggests that of Hezekiah's and Solomon's (30:26), the distinction being found in the terms on which the comparisons are based. One perhaps on the grandeur of the ceremonies, and the other on the ardor of the people.

In the story of Josiah's death (vv. 20-27), we repeat what was said in Kings. Egypt and Assyria are rivals for world power, and Palestine is the buffer between them. Judah is Assyria's vassal, and it is Josiah's duty to oppose her enemy's advances. The valley of Megiddo is identical with the plain of Esdraelon of which we shall hear later. Necho's reference to God's command (v. 21) may not mean Jehovah, but some false god of Egypt, and yet verse 22 raises a doubt about it. For this reason, some think Jeremiah, who was a contemporaneous prophet in Judah, may have communicated such a revelation to the Egyptian king. If so, it adds a new cause for Josiah's death, for if the prophet revealed it to Necho, he would hardly have kept it a secret from Josiah.

Jeremiah's lamentation is not recorded (v. 25) except as it may be found unidentified in his book of Lamentations. The event is thought to be again referred to in ^{<821>}Zechariah 12:11.

JEHOAHAZ (36:1-4)

This was the popular choice to succeed Josiah, but being his younger son, there was a question of its legitimacy, which may explain, in part, his removal by the king of Egypt and the substitution of his older brother. His reign was short, and as we learn from ^{<1233>}2 Kings 23:32, it was also wicked.

JEHOIAKIM (36:5-8)

His brother was no improvement (compare ^{<2213>}Jeremiah 22:13-19). At first the vassal of Egypt, he subsequently sustained the same relationship to Babylon, which had now become the head of the Assyrian empire, and had finally driven the Egyptians out of Asia. Rebellng against Babylon later on, the latter punished him (vv. 6-7). Daniel was taken captive at this time (^{<2700>}Daniel 1:1-6). Jehoiakim himself was not taken prisoner however, although that seems to have been Nebuchadnezzar's original intention. (Compare with v. 6, ^{<1242>}2 Kings 24:2-7, Jeremiah as above, and also 36:30.)

JEHOIACHIN (36:9-10)

This king is "*Coniah*" and "*Jeconiah*" in Jeremiah (chaps. 22-23), and according to ^{<1248>}2 Kings 24:8, was eighteen years old instead of eight when he began to reign. This age seems corroborated by what our lesson says of him (v. 9). Compare also ^{<3801>}Ezekiel 19:1-9. "When the year was expired" (v. 10), means when the spring had come, and its opportunity for military campaigning.

ZEDEKIAH (36:11-21)

As we know from Kings, Zedekiah was not the brother, but the uncle of his predecessor. He was called brother in accordance with Hebrew latitude in speaking of family relationships. Note the distinction given a prophet of God, implying both inspiration and authority (v. 12). Note carefully verse 21. We learned in the Pentateuch that the land was to lie fallow every seventh year in Israel as a sacred rest unto the Lord. But the greedy people had disregarded this law. Now they were to pay the penalty, per ^{<1333>}Leviticus 26:33-35. Judah, providentially, was not colonized by other peoples, as was Israel, so that at the close of seventy years there might be a return (^{<2572>}Jeremiah 25:12-13).

This book concludes with an account of that return (vv. 22-23), showing it was written after that event. The story of the return is detailed in Ezra.

QUESTIONS

1. Outline Manasseh's history.
2. How does he become a type of the Antichrist?
3. Who succeeded Sennacherib in Assyria?
4. How do you explain Josiah's influence in Israel as well as Judah?
5. What are the Passover psalms?
6. Name four great passovers of the people after entering Canaan.
7. What testifies to the people's love for Josiah?
8. Name Judah's kings, and give their relationship, from Manasseh to the captivity.
9. What hint is given in this book that it was written after that event?