

The Books Of The Chronicles Of The Kings Of Judah

In some respects, the next two books are a mirror image of the Books of Kings. They reflect the events of the reigns of the kings who ruled the two-tribe kingdom of Judah, with cross-references to the kings of Israel on the north side of the frontier.

1 Chronicles begins with a compilation of several sets of genealogies. These lists of ancestors were important to the Jews because they needed them to prove they were descended from Abraham as members of the Chosen People. Chapters one and two take us from Adam through Abraham to Jacob (Israel) and concentrate on the ancestors of King David. Chapter three lists David's descendants down to the time of the Captivity in Babylon. Four to seven run through the families of all twelve tribes. Chapter eight and the end of nine focus on the family of Saul, the first king, while the beginning of nine lists those men from Judah who returned to [Jerusalem](#) after the Captivity in Babylon.

The historical record starts in chapter ten, where we are transported back in time to the death of Saul, and the beginning of David's reign. 1 Chronicles gives more detail than Samuel and Kings of the bringing up of the ark into David's city, of the promise God made to him, and his military conquests. It focuses on the choice of Mount Moriah as the site for the Temple. Above all, it highlights the energy of David in the last years of his reign as he prepared for the construction of a Temple he would never see. He was determined that everything would be in place, right down to the writing of the hymns that would be sung, the training of the musicians, and the appointment of the doorkeepers. He held a national assembly to invite others to donate money to the project, supplementing his personal contribution, worth millions of

pounds. He died 40 years after he came to the throne.

2 Chronicles carries in the first nine chapters a review of the reign of **Solomon**, enlarging upon the Temple construction and his wealth and power. After that, chapters 10 to 36 repeat the history of God's people up to the Captivity in Babylon, but with much more information about the kings who ruled in the south. The province of Judah retained the Temple and the Levitical priesthood, and had many godly kings who kept the way of the Lord alive. Some of them were heroes of faith. **Asa**, for example, in 2 Chronicles 14, went out to face an army of a million invaders with one-third their numbers on his side. *"O LORD"*, he cried, *"there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O LORD, you are our God; let not man prevail against you. So the LORD defeated the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah"*. 2 Chronicles 14:1.

Then there was **Jehoshaphat**, who married his son to Ahab and Jezebel's daughter, and consequently felt obliged to aid evil Ahab in battle. He narrowly escaped with his life. The prophet of the Lord was waiting when the shaken king returned home. *"Should you help the wicked"*, he said, *"and love those who hate the LORD?"* It is a lesson in the dangers of compromise; better to keep ourselves entirely separate from those who despise God, in spite of the potential gains.

Little king **Joash** came to the throne at the age of eight, following the revolt against his wicked grandmother Queen Athaliah. His uncle, the high priest **Jehoiada**, who had led the coup, was his mentor, and kept the young king faithful to the Lord until he died at the age of 130. Sadly, Joash then kicked over the traces and abandoned his faith.

Even uncles can have a good influence on the younger generation.

Joash's grandson **Uzziah**, whose reign is found in 2 Chronicles 26, was another young king, crowned at sixteen. He *"set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God, and as long as he sought the LORD", says the chronicler, "God made him prosper"*.

Uzziah was something of an engineer. He loved building and farming projects, and invented new weapons for his army. Unfortunately success went to his head. One day he decided to go into the Temple to offer incense, which was the privilege of anointed priests only. The High Priest bravely confronted his royal master, and in the ensuing row Uzziah found himself struck down with leprosy. He ended his days miserably in a leper house outside Jerusalem. It is poignant to find that the prophet Isaiah, contemporary with Uzziah, builds up a refrain in his second chapter against all those who are "proud and lofty". By coincidence, in 1931 a plaque was discovered in Jerusalem stating "to this place the remains of Uzziah, King of Judah, were moved. Do not disturb". He is also named on several Assyrian monuments.

Two generations later we come to an outstanding monarch named **Hezekiah**. After impatiently waiting for the death of his weak and idolatrous father, he introduces in the first year of his reign a sweeping reformation, restoring the Law of Moses and the priesthood. Hezekiah was backed by Isaiah, his close friend. His true qualities shine forth when he is faced with the invasion of his country by the cruel and invincible Assyrians under **Sennacherib**. They had already captured all the walled towns of Judah using revolutionary siege warfare tactics, and now threatened the capital, Jerusalem. It fell to Hezekiah to persuade his people that the living God of

Israel was stronger than the idols of the Assyrians. Here are his words -

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him, for there are more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles." 2 Chronicles 32:7

His faith was justified. The army of the enemy was decimated by a violent illness that left Sennacherib so short of soldiers he was forced to return home. His campaign monument, discovered by the English archaeologist Sir Henry Layard in the ruins of his palace in **Nineveh**, is unable to record the capture of Judah's most important city. It can be seen in the British Museum. Another fascinating find was a water tunnel deep under Jerusalem, constructed by Hezekiah to protect the city water supply from enemy action. It is described in 2 Kings 20:20 and 2 Chronicles 32:30. Visitors to Jerusalem can still walk through the tunnel today.

Hezekiah's son **Manasseh** turned back to idolatry, and though his son **Josiah** was a good man, idol worship and the accompanying immorality and social injustice was spreading like a cancer through the body of Judah. This was the era of the prophet **Jeremiah** of Jerusalem, who tried in vain to stem the rot. The kingdom collapsed into ruins, with four rulers in quick succession. The end came when **Zedekiah**, the third of Josiah's sons to sit on the throne, rebelled against **Nebuchadnezzar** of **Babylon**, the new emperor of the Middle East. This folly brought swift reprisals. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, burnt it with fire, and marched off the people of Judah into captivity. **Ezekiel**, another prophet living amongst the exiles taken to Babylon, warned them Zedekiah would be the last king.

“Remove the turban and take off the crown ... a ruin, ruin, ruin will I make it ... until he comes, the one to whom judgment belongs, and I will give it to him”. Ezekiel 21:26, 27

The throne of David has stood empty ever since, awaiting the coming of Jesus, the one to whom judgment belongs. As God promised his forefather David, he will sit upon it forever.

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