

## ENDNOTES

1. Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 250.
2. Charles H. Dyer and Eugene H. Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, Swindoll Leadership Library, ed. Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2001), 197.
3. E. J. Young, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 358.
4. John W. Reed, "Ruth," in *BKC*, ed. John F. Walwood and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: Charis Victor, 1983), 415.
5. See detailed discussion in Donald Leggett, *The Levirate and Gavel Institutions in the Old Testament with Special Attention to the Book of Ruth* (Cherry Hill, NJ: Mack Publishing, 1974).
6. Based on Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 108.
7. In biblical times a position at someone's feet represented a place of submission (Josh 10:24-25; Ps 110:1). In this context such submission implies the submission associated with the marital relationship. Furthermore, the request for coverage (3:9) represented a request for security (Ezek 16:8). Once again this context indicates that this request was actually a petition for the security of marriage. J. Carl Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 68.

## 1-2 SAMUEL Kings and Prophets

The books of 1-2 Samuel form the **transition** from the era of the judges to that of the kings. They introduce a series of contrasts between good and evil judges and kings and their interaction with the prophets of God. As 1 Samuel opens, the era of the judges is still in the forefront, but it is fading fast. Gone are the military heroes of the previous book. The leadership of Israel rests upon the undisciplined and elderly Eli, the high priest of the tabernacle at Shiloh and one of the last of the minor judges (1 Sam 4:18). Throughout the early chapters of 1 Samuel, the author draws a sharp contrast between Eli and his ungodly sons and the godly prophet Samuel. By the middle of the book (chaps. 15-16), the same kind of contrast is drawn between Saul and David, Israel's first kings.

In 2 Samuel, the narrative shifts to the **reign of David** as he rises above Saul's son Ish-bosheth to become the king, first of Judah and then of all the tribes of Israel (5:1-4). The book records David's wars of conquest including the capture of Jerusalem and the relocation of the ark of the covenant to the City of David (chap. 6). But the author also records David's failures: his adultery with Bathsheba (chap. 11), Absalom's rebellion (chaps. 15-18), Sheba's revolt (chap. 20), and the disastrous census (chap. 24). Like all the prophetic writers, the author presents a portrait of his historical figures as they are analyzed from the perspective of their faithfulness to God's covenant.

The name *Samuel* means "the name of God," "His name is God," or "asked of God." The Massorates originally considered both 1 and 2 Samuel as one book. The LXX calls 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings "First, Second, Third, and Fourth Kingdoms." The content of each of the books is generally the same as 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings. Each of these books was included in the section of the "Former Prophets" in the Hebrew Bible because it was believed that they were written by the prophets, whereas 1-2 Chronicles was placed in the "writings" (*ketuvim*) because they were written by priests.

The books of 1-2 Samuel are **anonymous** works. They were most likely named in honor of Samuel who authored other works (1 Sam 10:25; 1 Chr 29:29) and was the head of a group of prophets (1 Sam 10:5; 19:20). However, Samuel could not be the author of all of the books' contents since the book records his death (1 Sam 25:1) and events after his death (2 Sam 1-24). *Baba Bathra* 15a asserts that the prophets Nathan and Gad wrote the rest of the material (cf. 1 Chr 29:29). These books were

birth of Samuel and extends until Saul's death. Because Samuel, who was born around the same time as Samson, had sons who were old enough to be judges before the reign of Saul (8:1-4), Samuel's birth could be around 1121 BC.<sup>2</sup> Thus, 1 Samuel covers the 110-year period of time between the birth of Samuel (1121 BC) and the death of Saul (1011 BC). Second Samuel covers the 40 years of David's reign (1011-971 BC).

Most of the major world empires (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon) were in a state of weakness during this time. The **Philistines** were the major enemies oppressing Israel when the events of 1 Samuel transpired. Known as the "Sea Peoples," the Philistines migrated across the Mediterranean in massive numbers during the time of the judges, taking the coastal plains during this time and pushing Israel into the hill country.<sup>3</sup> Due to their monopoly on the use of iron (1 Sam 13:19-22), the Philistines enjoyed a strategic advantage over Israel. The Philistines' aggressive military behavior during this time made Israel long for a king who would fight their battles for them (1 Samuel 8).

### OUTLINE

First and Second Samuel follow a **fourfold structure**. First, the house of Samuel is exalted while the house of priest-judge Eli is abased (chaps. 1-7). Second, the book records the conflicts in the Samuel and Saul narrative (chaps. 8-15). Third, the struggle between David and Saul is recorded (chaps. 16-31). Fourth, 2 Samuel records the reign of David. First Samuel 1-7 records the decline of the theocratic administration under the judges. Chapters 8-31 record the rise of the theocratic administration under the monarchy. In this last section Samuel represents the final judge, the "kingmaker" of Israel's first two kings. Second Samuel 1-24 records the reign of King David.

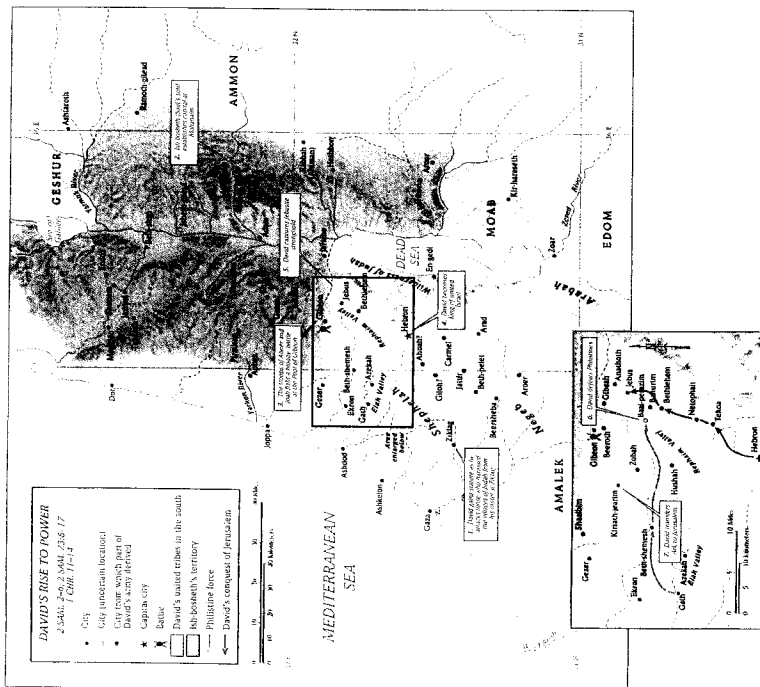
### Outline

- I. Transition from Eli to Samuel (1 Samuel 1-7)
  - A. Samuel's Birth (1 Samuel 1:1-2:10)
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- II. Samuel and Saul Narrative (1 Samuel 8-15)
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probably written circa 960 BC after the death of David in 971 BC and during the reign of Solomon (cf. 2 Chr 9:29).

### BACKGROUND

The dates of the reigns of Israel's three kings of the united kingdom must be kept in mind when determining the scope of 1-2 Samuel. Saul reigned from around 1051 to 1011 BC (Acts 13:21). David reigned from 1011 to 971 BC (2 Sam 2:11; 5:4-5). Solomon reigned from 971 to 931 BC (1 Kgs 11:42). Moreover, 1 Samuel begins where the judgeship of Samson left off (Judg 16:31). Thus, 1 Samuel begins with the



**MESSAGE**

In 1 Samuel, God transitions His covenanted nation away from the failing theocratic administration under the tribal judges and toward the theocratic administration through the united monarchy. By showing the deficiencies of the final phase of the judges' era (1-7), 1 Samuel is an **apologetic for the new monarchy**, which God graciously establishes for His people in spite of their sin. The book also highlights the inferiority of Saul in comparison to David (16-31) whose rule was yet to be inaugurated. The promises to David anticipate the coming of David's greater son who will rule in perfect obedience to God's covenant (Gen 49:10; Deut 17:14-20; 2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 89:36-37; Isa 7:14; 9:6-7). Therefore, 1 Samuel is the first biblical book in the English Bible to use the term "anointed one" or *mashiach* (2:10).

**Hebrew Highlight**

**Anointed. Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ (*mashiach*).** The Hebrew word *mashiach* is translated "anointed one" or "messiah." First Samuel 2:10 represents one of the early biblical references to this term. The word *mashiach* is used in reference to those who were specially empowered by God's Spirit to accomplish a significant task. For example, the word *mashiach* was applied to patriarchs (Ps 105:15), priests (Lev 4:3,5,16), and Hebrew (2 Sam 1:14,16; 22:51) as well as Gentile kings (Isa 45:1). The Old Testament ritual of anointing a person with oil was used to recognize their calling to a special task. Thus, prophets (1 Kgs 19:16), priests (Exod 29:7), and kings (2 Sam 1:14) were "anointed." Eventually *mashiach* was used in reference to the coming Messiah (Ps 2:2; Dan 9:25-26). The Greek counterpart of this Hebrew name is *christos*. This title was applied to Jesus as "the Christ" in recognition of His special task of delivering His people from their sin and ultimately ushering in the long-awaited kingdom (Matt 16:16-17; Rom 1:1; 3:24). The title *christos* carried over into the church age as those who belong to Jesus were later called "Christians" (Acts 11:26).

The message of 1-2 Samuel also highlights the **role of the prophets** in relation to the kings. Samuel and Nathan confront the sins of Saul and David and call them to repentance (1 Samuel 13; 15; 2 Samuel 12). Whereas Saul makes excuses for his mistakes, David genuinely repents saying, "I have sinned." These stories set the stage for future accounts of prophets (e.g., Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah) confronting the errant kings of Israel and Judah.

**I. Transition from Eli to Samuel (1 Samuel 1-7)**

God used Samuel to anoint Israel's first two kings thereby transitioning the nation away from the judges' era and into the monarchy. Thus, the writer shows the **pre-eminence of Samuel** over the existing regime as represented by the household of

judge-priest Eli. The writer shows this preeminence in the first three chapters where he highlights the interchange between Samuel and the house of Eli.

**A. Samuel's Birth (1 Samuel 1:1-2:10)**

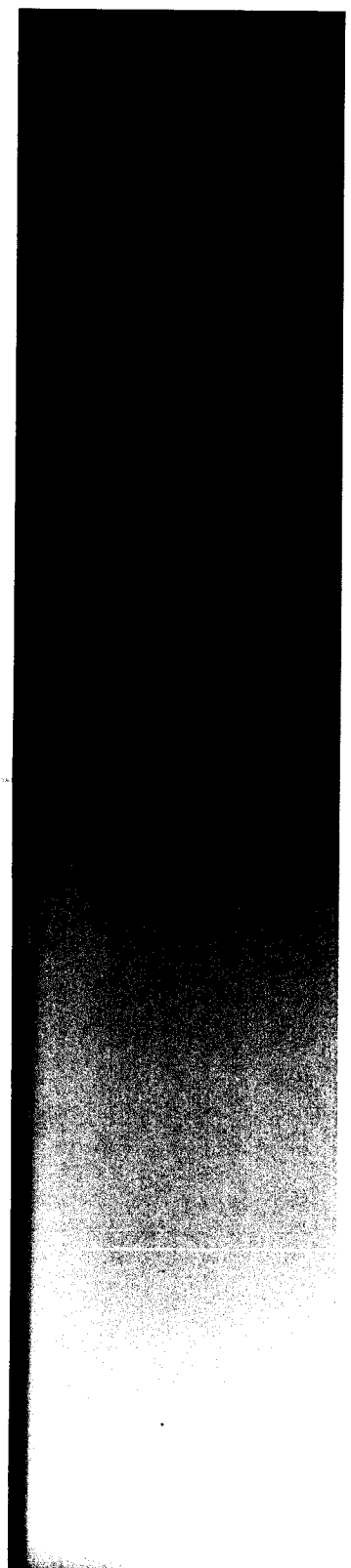
The spirituality of Samuel's lineage is seen in **Hannah's prayer** for a child after being provoked by her rival (1:1-8), her vow to dedicate her child to the Lord (1:9-18), the providential birth of the child (1:19-23), her faithfulness to her vow (1:24-28), and her praise to God (2:1-10). Thus, Hannah's praise to God emphasizes the sovereignty of God as well as His promotion of those whose hearts are right before Him (cf. Luke 1:46-55). Chapter 2 focuses on the wickedness of Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, emphasizing the spiritual failure of this judge and his sons.

**B. Samuel Contrasted with Eli (1 Samuel 2:11-3:21)**

The third chapter begins by mentioning the **rarity of visions** in those days (3:1) presumably due to the general failure of the judges and the wickedness of Eli's household. God was not speaking because no one was listening. Consequently, instead of revealing His plans to the existing judge-priest Eli, God discloses His plans to the boy Samuel. The tender picture of God standing at the foot of his bed and calling the child by name shows the compassion of God for one person and His rejection of another. The message to Samuel was that God will bypass a disobedient generation and call a new generation to follow Him. God reveals that He will destroy Eli's household (3:12-14) and confirms Samuel as the divine spokesperson (3:17-21).



*Shiloh, about 30 miles north of Jerusalem, was Israel's religious center for over a century, after the conquest of Israel.*



### C. Soldiers Take the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 4:1–7:2)

The next major section of the book records the **journeys of the ark** (chaps. 4–7). The author includes this to demonstrate the superiority of God and shows that Israel's oppressed status had nothing to do with any failure on God's part. Rather it was due to Israel's own covenant disobedience. The book's fourth chapter discusses Israel's loss of the ark and the resulting consequences (4:1b–22). Israel's defeat by the Philistines soldiers (4:1–4) and the loss of the ark ushered in the destruction of Eli's household, thereby fulfilling the predictions of Samuel (4:11–22). Not only did Eli die (4:18), but so did his sons (4:11b) and his daughter-in-law while she was giving birth to Ishbub ("no glory") (4:19–22). For the Israelites, losing the ark meant a total disconnection from God's presence and the mosaic covenant.<sup>1</sup> But the loss was only temporary, for soon the Philistines returned the ark (6:1–16) because God severely punished the Philistines and their god Dagon while the ark was in Philistine territory (5:1–12). In the meantime God was raising up Samuel in the midst of the vacuum created by the destruction of Eli's household.

### D. Samuel's Judgeship (1 Samuel 7:3–17)

The failure of the judges' era is illustrated in the rebellious ways of Eli and his sons, which are set in contrast to the **successful judgeship** of Samuel (7:3–17). Samuel successfully led the people spiritually in the covenant renewal ceremony at Mizpah (7:3–6). He also successfully led the people politically by gaining victory over the Philistines (7:7–14). The chapter concludes by noting the various cities included in Samuel's circuit (7:15–17). Because all of these cities are located in the territory of Benjamin and since Saul was also from Benjamin, their inclusion links this larger unit involving Israel's final days under the judges (chaps. 1–7) to the following Samuel and Saul narrative (chaps. 8–15).

## II. Samuel and Saul Narrative (1 Samuel 8–15)

The writer's emphasis on the failure of the judges' era in the book's first seven chapters shows the **necessity of the coming monarchy**. The failure of even Samuel's sons shows the inadequacy of divine rule through the family of judges (8:1–5). However, 1 Samuel is not simply an apology for the monarchy. It is more specifically an apology for the kingship of David and his dynastic successors by showing that God will only rule in the era of the monarchy through an elect, obedient king. The writer communicates this point by recording the disastrous kingship of Saul (chaps. 8–15).

### A. Saul's Selection (1 Samuel 8–11)

As Samuel aged, the people of Israel insisted they select a king "like all the other nations" (8:5, author's translation). The events surrounding the selection of Saul for king (9:1–10:16) demonstrate that he was the **people's choice**, more than God's choice for a king. The people seemed to focus on Saul's outward appearance (9:2) rather than his heart (16:7). Even the events of Saul's coronation (10:17–27) reveal God's displeasure. Samuel indicated that the people had rejected God (10:19) in requesting a king.

However, Saul's resounding victory over Nabal's the Ammonite who threatened to gouge out the eyes of the people of Jabesh-gilead solidified Saul's authority as Israel's first king in the eyes of the people. Thus, the nation rallied around their new leader at Gilgal (chap. 11).

### B. Samuel's Warning (1 Samuel 12)

Samuel's subsequent warning against national covenant unfaithfulness (chap. 12) demonstrated that God's vision for Israel's king was vastly different from the vision the people espoused. **Samuel's warning** accompanied by thunder and rain threatened the wheat harvest. In great fear the people cried out: "We have added to all our sins the evil of requesting a king for ourselves" (12:19). Thus, the author skillfully shows that Israel's request for a king was ill motivated and ill timed. Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, not Judah, the promised messianic tribe (Gen 49:10). God's timing was also awaiting a descendant from the tenth generation of Judah's son Perez (cf. Ruth 4:18–22), but the people did not yet understand this.

### C. Saul's Rejection (1 Samuel 13–15)

Despite Saul's strong beginning (chap. 11) and being warned by Samuel to honor the Mosaic covenant (chap. 12), Saul's poor choices caused his kingdom to **deteriorate rapidly** (chaps. 13–15). For example, his usurpation of priestly functions while awaiting Samuel to offer the sacrifices at Gilgal before the battle with the Philistines (chap. 13) caused God to vow that He would remove the kingdom from Saul (13:14; 16:7). In addition, Saul's desire for vengeance against the Philistines, coupled with his insensitivity toward the physical needs of his men, caused him to make a rash vow that



Valley of Elah where David killed the Philistines, Goliath.

almost cost the life of his own son; Jonathan (chap. 14). Finally, Saul's disobedience (chap. 15) in following the divine command of exterminating the Amalekites (Exod. 17:8-16) caused Yahweh to reject him as king (15:23). Samuel's confrontation with Saul over his sin (chaps. 13, 15) emphasizes the ministry of the prophet as a covenant enforcer.

### iii. Transition from Saul to David (1 Samuel 16-31)

This theme of David's election over Saul is the dominant theme in the book's final and longest section (16-31), known as the **David and Saul narrative**. It describes a transition from the house of Saul to the house of David, indicating David's superior character in contrast to Saul's inferior character.

#### A. Anointed by Samuel (1 Samuel 16-17)

The events surrounding David's selection and anointing (16:1-13) make clear that he was **God's choice** to become the next king of Israel. As a Bethlehemite (16:1), David was from the tribe of Judah and, therefore, in line with the messianic promise. Samuel's anointing of David, as well as the Spirit's empowerment of him (16:13), made clear that David represented God's choice as king. In contrast to David, the Spirit departed from Saul, and demonic forces oppressed him.

God's selection of David receives further confirmation through David's resounding **victory over Goliath** of Gath in the valley of Elah (17). In contrast to Saul, who began his tenure as king hiding by the baggage (10:22), David left his own baggage to take on Goliath (17:22). In fact, David's boldness in contrast to Saul's fear is brought out routinely in this chapter. That God brought the victory through David rather than through Saul is evidenced by the fact that David refused to use Saul's armor (17:38-40). David rises to the Philistine's challenge of a "battle by champions" by separating himself from Saul, standing alone with God and winning a dramatic victory because he believed that "the battle is the LORD'S" (17:47).

#### B. Attacked by Saul (1 Samuel 18-31)

This section begins with a description of the friendship and covenant between David and Jonathan (18:1-5). This friendship is significant since God will later use Jonathan to protect His elect king from Saul's pursuit. The chapter records the upward ascent of David and the **downward spiral** of Saul (18:6-16). While David's popularity accelerates (18:7), Saul is depicted as jealous, demonically tormented, and capable of murdering David. Despite Saul's attempt to have him killed in battle, David enjoyed military success, the acclaim of the people, and the loyalty of two

members of Saul's own family, Jonathan and his sister Michal, whom David eventually married (18:17-30). As Saul's jealous and murderous rage intensified (19:6), God supernaturally protected David through the work of Jonathan (19:1-10; 20) and Michal (19:11-17), Saul's own children.

The next several chapters record **David's exile** (chaps. 21-30). God continued to protect and bless David since he represents the elected king destined for the throne. These narratives also emphasize the contrast between his character and that of Saul. The theme of preservation is evident as David continues to escape Saul's pursuit of him in the wilderness of Judah near the Dead Sea caves (22:1-2; 24:1-3). David's character is also highlighted as he refuses to kill Saul, showing his respect for the office of king and the significance of God's anointing. This is especially seen in the incident at the cave of En Gedi when David humiliates Saul but refuses to kill him. As a consequence Saul acknowledges that one day David will be king (24:20).

**Samuel's death** (25:1) reminds the reader that a prominent character from the old era has passed, but before long another leader of Israel would follow. Saul's debased character became even more transparent through his consultation with the witch at Endor (chap. 28). Not only was this action a hypocritical violation against Saul's own national ban prohibiting mediums, but it also constituted a gross covenant violation (Leviticus 18; Deut. 18:9-14). The need to seek the guidance of such a medium furnished another sign of God's rejection of Saul because the Lord would no longer speak to him directly (28:15). Another confirmation that David was God's choice as the future king of Israel happened when the revived Samuel promised that the kingdom would be torn away from Saul and given to David (28:17).



The hills around En Gedi where David hid from Saul.



View of the tel of ancient Gath, home of Goliath the Philistine, and where David fled from Saul's relentless pursuit.

The final two chapters (chaps. 30–31) form an **epilogue** by paving the way for David's future position of authority as Israel's king. God's favor upon the elect heir is evident through his preservation in the wilderness (30:1–12) as well as through his ability to recover everything the Amalekites stole from Ziklag. Whereas God no longer spoke to Saul, the Lord continued to speak to David (30:8). Tragically for Saul, David was driven away by the king's own paranoia, and he was not present to assist him in his final and disastrous battle with the Philistines at Mount Gilboa. This battle resulted in Israel's defeat, Saul's wounding and suicide, and Jonathan's death (chap. 31).

#### IV. Reign of David (2 Samuel 1–24)

The book of 2 Samuel follows a **fourfold division**. The first section exemplifies David's triumphs (chaps. 1–10). The second section emphasizes David's transgression (chaps. 11–12). The third section highlights David's troubles (chaps. 13–20). The fourth section represents six nonchronological appendices dealing with the greatness of the Davidic covenant and kingdom (chaps. 21–24).

##### A. David's Faith (2 Samuel 1–10)

The book's first 10 chapters begin by emphasizing David's political victories. They describe how David, the elect king, consolidates and unifies the entire nation under his authority. The high point of David's triumphs in this unit is the reception of

the **Davidic covenant** (chap. 7). The covenant's unconditional nature and conditional blessing (7:14) sets the tone for the remainder of the book.

After receiving word concerning **Saul's death** (1:1–10), David disposed of the man who took credit for killing Saul (1:11–16). David is presented in a positive light as one who is still concerned with proper treatment of the Lord's anointed (1 Samuel 24; 26). Because of this concern, David lamented the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (1:17–27). Eventually, David was anointed king of Judah at Hebron at age 30 (2:1–4). In the meantime, Saul's son Ish-bosheth was raised to power over the 10 northern tribes of Israel (2:8–10), but he was eventually assassinated by two of his own men, whom David later executed for their evil deed (4:1–12). Afterward, the elders of the northern tribes came to Hebron and anointed David king over all Israel (5:1–4).

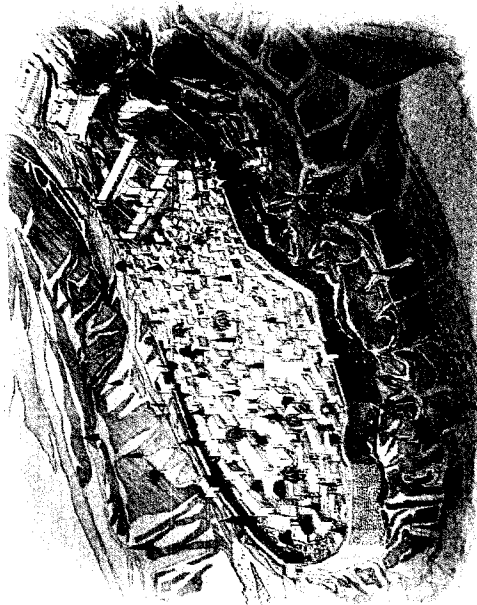
Further evidences of David's upward political ascent include his **capture of Jerusalem** from the Jebusites (5:7–10; Judg 1:8,21), his alliance with Hiram, king of Tyre (5:11–12), his many children which were a sign of covenant blessing (5:13–16), his defeat of the Philistines (5:17–25), and his decision to move the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (chap. 6). This is followed by the confirmation of the Davidic covenant (chap. 7) and David's military victories over Philistia, Moab, Zobah, Aram, and Edom (chap. 8). Thus, David extended Israel's borders from Egypt to the Euphrates in partial fulfillment of what was originally promised to Abraham (Gen 15:18). David established justice and righteousness, installed trusted public officials, and incorporated foreign territories into the land of Israel. As vassals these nations had to pay tribute to the Israelite government. During this prosperous season in David's life, the Lord helped David with victory wherever he went (8:6,14).

#### The Davidic Covenant

David achieved spiritual victory by receiving the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89). Although David wanted to build a house (temple) for God, God instead promised to build a house (dynasty) for David. In this covenant God unconditionally promised David fame (7:9), land (7:10), rest (7:11), seed (7:12), a kingdom (7:13), a throne (7:13), a house (7:16), and the eternity of all these promises (7:16). Christ is most clearly predicted in 1–2 Samuel through the giving of the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7). The same three promises of an eternal kingdom, throne, and seed are later given to Christ (Luke 1:32–33). The promise of a permanent dynasty is fulfilled in Christ, the "son of David" (Matt 21:9; 22:45), who will sit upon the throne of David (see Isa 9:7; Luke 1:32). Unlike the other Davidic kings, only Christ will perfectly fulfill the covenant's righteous requirements and bring the true kingdom of heaven to earth in His millennial reign.

##### B. David's Faults (2 Samuel 11–12)

David's **covenant violations** take place in the book's pivotal eleventh chapter. They involve adultery (11:1–3) and murder (11:14–27) as well as a host of deceptive



Reconstruction of David's Jerusalem.

obeyed God in purchasing the threshing floor "set up an altar to the LORD," and on this site Solomon would later build the temple (24:18-25). Thus, the book ends with Israel strategically positioned to build the temple during Solomon's reign.

**THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

Numerous theological themes recur throughout 1-2 Samuel to support the basic teachings of **covenant fidelity**. The sovereignty of God is displayed as God unilaterally transitions from one form of theocracy to the next and raises a lowly shepherd to the pinnacle of power. Robert Bergen observes that Samuel's "narrative tapestry is woven around the theological threads of the Torah," which he lists as: covenant, land, divine presence, and obedience to God.<sup>3</sup> The books of 1-2 Samuel also explain the offices of both the prophet and the king and their interconnection with each other. The prophet rises above judges, priests, and kings as the spokesman for God. The "seer" (*rofeh*) becomes the "prophet" (*nabi*) who sees what is in the mind of God and announces it to the people of God, calling them to repentance and faith. From the end of the era of the judges to the beginning of the era of the kings, the author makes clear that the Lord Yahweh alone is the ultimate king of Israel (1 Sam 8:6-7). Thus, human kings will only prosper as they obey Him and keep His covenant.

**For Further Reading**

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**Study Questions**

1. In what way did Samuel represent the transition from the judges to the kings?
2. Why was Israel's initial request for a king wrongly motivated?
3. What are some of the obvious contrasts between Saul and David?
4. How does the Davidic covenant point to its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ?
5. What lessons can we learn from 1-2 Samuel about the importance of obedience to God's Word?

acts committed in an attempt to cover up these sins. The incident involving Bathsheba occurred while David remained in the palace and the troops were fighting across the Jordan against the Ammonites (11:1-5). Having been attracted by Bathsheba's beauty, David sent for her, slept with her, and she became pregnant. Attempting to cover this up, David made arrangements for her husband's death and then married her.

God sent the prophet Nathan to confront David's sin with the judicial parable about the rich man who stole a poor man's sheep (12:1-4). Infuriated by the story, David unwittingly pronounced judgment upon himself and his household. Nathan announced that David was the rich man and that God's judgment would fall on David's household. This meant that the child born out of wedlock would die (12:15-22), as would David's sons Amnon (13:28-33) and Absalom (18:14-15). As a result of Absalom's rebellion, David's concubines would be kidnapped. But worse than all, David's sins caused his enemies to blaspheme the Lord. The subsequent birth of Solomon ("peace"), also called Jedidiah ("loved by the Lord"), to David and Bathsheba indicated that David's sins had not nullified what was promised to him in the covenant. Although David suffered the consequences of his sins, his genuine repentance (see Psalm 51) brought God's forgiveness and restoration.

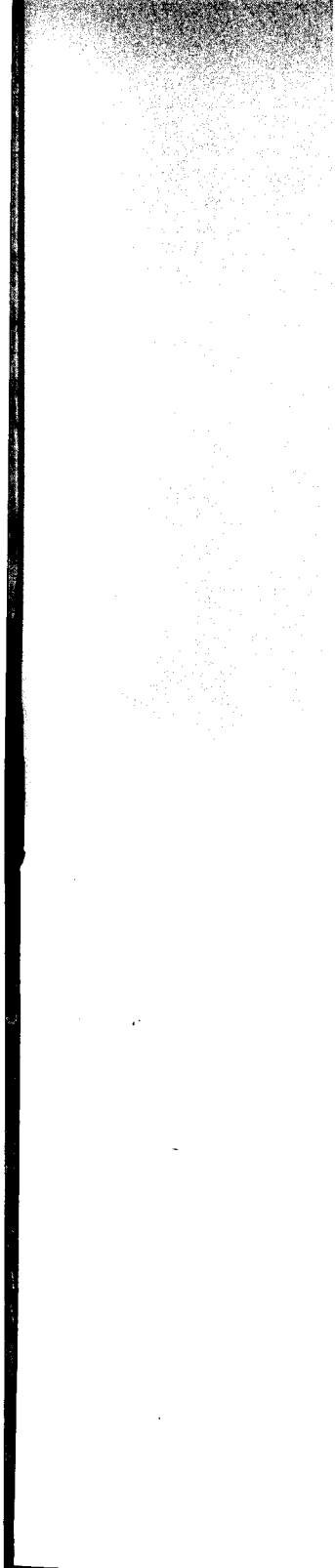
**C. David's Foes (2 Samuel 13-20)**

The next section (chaps 13-20) describes the **outworking of the curses** that Nathan predicted would come upon David and his family. It depicts both trouble in David's immediate family (chaps. 13-18) and trouble within the nation (chaps. 19-20). Tamar's rape by her half brother Amnon and his execution by her brother Absalom eventually led to Absalom's ill-fated rebellion and death. Nevertheless, in spite of all of the covenant discipline that was inflicted upon David and his family, God was faithful to preserve the Davidic dynasty and fulfill His original promises to David.

The Davidic covenant's **unconditional nature** allowed David to believe that in spite of Absalom's rebellion he would eventually be returned to the throne. Thus, David instructed Zadok to return the ark to Jerusalem instead of having it accompany him into exile (15:25). David's optimism is also seen in how he expressed confidence that the curses uttered against him by Shimei would one day be turned into blessing (16:12). David's restoration finally came after the failed revolts of Absalom (chaps. 16-18) and Sheba (chaps. 19-20).

**D. David's Fame (2 Samuel 21-24)**

The author concludes with six nonchronological **appendices** extolling the preeminence of the Davidic covenant (chaps. 21-24). Each appendix brings out a different facet of David's covenant obedience. He vindicated the Gibeonites against whom Saul had sinned (21:1-9), properly buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan (21:10-14), defeated the Philistines (21:19-22), sang a song of thanksgiving (chap. 22), and gave his farewell words expressing his confidence in the "everlasting covenant" (23:1-7). The author concludes with a list of David's warriors (23:8-39), the military census, and resulting plague, which stopped at the threshing floor of Araunah in Jerusalem (24:1-17). David



## ENDNOTES

1. Cf. Ronald F. Youngblood, "1, 2 Samuel," in *LBC* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 125-54; Eugene H. Merrill, "1 and 2 Samuel," in *BAC* (Colorado Springs, CO: Charis Victor, 1983), 431.
2. E. H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 149, dates the birth of Samuel to 1121. On p. 179 he dates the birth of Samson to 1123 BC.
3. E. E. Hindson, *The Philistines and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972); T. Dothan, *The Philistines and Their Material Culture* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1983).
4. See details in Marten Woudstra, *The Ark of the Covenant from Canaan to Kinship* (Philadelphia: P&R, 1965).
5. Robert Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, NAC 7 (Nashville: B&H, 1996), 43.

## Chapter 16

# 1-2 KINGS Kings of Israel and Judah

The books of 1 and 2 Kings tell the story of the kings of Israel (northern kingdom) and Judah (southern kingdom) from the time of David until the Babylonian captivity some 400 years later. Written from the perspective of the prophets, the book of Kings (Hb. *melukim*) was undoubtedly one book in its original form. Patterson and Austel observe, "Thematically the continuity of Elijah narrative (1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2), itself part of the prophetic section dominating 1 Kgs 16:29-2 Kgs 9:37, and the recurring phrase 'to this day' (1 Kgs 8:8; 9:13; 10:12; 2 Kgs 2:22; 10:27; 14:7; 16:6; 17:23,34,41; 21:15) clearly indicate that the two books of Kings form a single literary unit."<sup>1</sup>

Although the book is an anonymous work, several pieces of evidence point to **Jeremiah** as the book's author. First, Jewish tradition (*Baba Bathra* 15a) cites Jeremiah as the author. Second, similarities of style can be detected between the books of Jeremiah and Kings (Jeremiah 40-44; 52; 2 Kgs 24:18-25:30). Third, both books speak of God's righteous judgment upon apostasy, idolatry, and immorality. Fourth, because the phrase "to this day" is used repeatedly throughout the book (1 Kgs 8:8; 9:13; 10:12; 12:19; 2 Kgs 2:22; 10:27; 14:7; 16:6; 17:23,34,41; 21:15), the book was obviously written prior to the Babylonian exile and therefore would fit the general time period of Jeremiah's ministry, with the exception of the reference to the release of Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 25:27-30), which was probably added in 560 BC after Jeremiah's death.

The book of Kings makes use of several theological and historical **source materials**. Examples include Solomon's proverbs (1 Kgs 4:32), official court records (2 Kgs 18:18), Isaiah 36-39 (2 Kings 18-20), the Book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kgs 11:41), the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (14:19; 15:31; 16:5,14,20,27), and the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah (14:29; 15:7,23; 22:45). Jeremiah probably would have had access to these records since he descended from the priestly line of Abiathar. Since Jeremiah used Baruch as his scribe (Jer 36:4), it is also possible that Baruch helped compile and complete this inspired record.

## BACKGROUND

If Jeremiah wrote this book throughout his ministry, then the **intended recipients** would be the people of Judah before the exile in 586 BC and afterward. Since the final form of the book was completed after 560 BC, Jeremiah's prophecy (see Dan 9:1–3) and this book were written for the benefit of the Jews of the Babylonian captivity and the dispersion. Throughout the prophet's history of the kings of Israel and Judah, numerous references to foreign powers are interwoven in the account: Egypt, Syria, Assyria, and Babylon play major roles in Israel's history.

Because the book begins with the end of David's reign and the beginning of Solomon's reign (971 BC) and ends with the release of Jehoiachin (560 BC), the book's events transpired over a **411-year period**. Key events that transpired within this time period include David's death, Solomon's inauguration (971 BC), Solomon's death, Rehoboam's enthronement, the division of the kingdom (931 BC), Jehu's accession and purge of both the northern and southern kingdoms (841 BC), the Assyrian captivity (722 BC), Sennacherib's threatening of Hezekiah resulting in God judging Assyria (701 BC), and the three deportations to Babylon (605, 597, 586 BC).

The book of Kings follows a **threefold structure**. The first part consists of the united kingdom under Solomon (1 Kings 1–11). These events take place between 971 and 931 BC. The second part consists of the divided kingdom from the time of the north-south division until the Assyrian dispersion of the northern kingdom (1 Kings 12–2 Kings 17). This tragic historical period unfolded between 931 and 722 BC. The third part consists of the remaining years of the southern kingdom of Judah, from the time of the Assyrian dispersion until the Babylonian conquest (2 Kings 18–25). This section of Kings reports key events between 722 and 586 BC.

### KINGS OF ISRAEL<sup>2</sup>

King	Scripture	Years of reign	Dates of reign (Thiele) <sup>3</sup>	Prophet
Jeroboam I	1 Kgs 11:26–14:20	22	931–910	Ahijah
Nadab	1 Kgs 15:25–28	2	910–909	
Baasha	1 Kgs 15:27–16:7	24	909–886	Jehu
Elah	1 Kgs 16:6–14	2	886–885	
Zimri	1 Kgs 16:9–20	7 days	885	
Omri	1 Kgs 16:15–28	12	885–874	
Ahab	1 Kgs 16:28–22:40	22	874–853	Elijah, Elisha
Ahaziah	1 Kgs 22:40–2 Kgs 1:18	2	853–852	Elijah, Elisha
Joram	2 Kgs 1:17–9:26	12	852–841	Elisha
Jehu	2 Kgs 9:1–10:36	28	841–814	Elisha
Jehoahaz	2 Kgs 13:1–9	17	814–798	Elisha

### KINGS OF ISRAEL<sup>2</sup> (Continued)

King	Scripture	Years of reign	Dates of reign (Thiele) <sup>3</sup>	Prophet
Jehoash	2 Kgs 13:10–14:16	16	798–782	Elisha
Jeroboam II	2 Kgs 14:23–29	41	793–753	Jonah, Amos
Zechariah	2 Kgs 14:29–15:12	6 months	753–752	Hosea
Shallum	2 Kgs 15:10–15	1 months	752	Hosea
Menahem	2 Kgs 15:14–22	10	752–742	Hosea
Pekahiah	2 Kgs 15:22–26	2	742–740	Hosea
Pekah	2 Kgs 15:25–31	20	752–732	Hosea, Obadiah
Hoshea	2 Kgs 15:30–17:6	9	732–722	Hosea

### KINGS OF JUDAH<sup>4</sup>

King	Scripture	Years of reign	Dates of reign (Thiele)	Prophet
Rehoboam	1 Kgs 11:42–14:31	17	931–913	Shemiah
Abijam	1 Kgs 14:31–15:8	3	913–911	Iddo
Asa	1 Kgs 15:8–24	41	911–870	Azariah
Jehoshaphat	1 Kgs 22:41–50	25	870–848	Jahaziel
Jehoram	2 Kgs 8:16–24	8	848–841	Obadiah
Ahaziah	2 Kgs 8:24–9:29	1	841	
Athaliah	2 Kgs 11:1–20	6	841–835	
Joash	2 Kgs 11:1–12:21	40	835–796	Joel
Amaziah	2 Kgs 14:1–20	29	796–767	Unnamed prophets
Uzziah	2 Kgs 14:21, 15:1–7	52	767–740	Isaiah
Jotham	2 Kgs 15:32–38	16	740–732	Isaiah, Micah
Ahaz	2 Kgs 16:1–20	16	732–716	Isaiah, Micah
Hezekiah	2 Kgs 18:1–20:21	29	716–687	Isaiah, Micah
Manasseh	2 Kgs 21:1–18	55	687–642	Nahum
Amon	2 Kgs 21:19–26	2	642–640	

## MESSAGE

The kings, as the nation's representatives, are evaluated from a **covenant perspective** by the prophetic author. Thus, the book traces the glory of the United Kingdom under Solomon, its eventual division, and how the kings of the divided kingdoms led the people into increasing apostasy and idolatry culminating in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Despite this downward pattern, the writer also makes clear that God has a glorious future in store for Judah on account of her elect status. These truths are recorded so that the exiles, in light of their history, would be encouraged and repent of their sin (1 Kgs. 8:33-34) so God could restore them back to the Promised Land.

The kingdom was established in First Samuel and consolidated in Second Samuel. First Kings records its division and decline, and Second Kings its destruction and deterioration.<sup>77</sup> Although the book of Kings represents a single book, it is still likely that the writer composed the different parts of the book, known as 1 and 2 Kings, with different purposes based on the **themes** emphasized in each section. These contrasting themes are represented on the following chart.<sup>8</sup>

### 1 KINGS

Opens with David, king of Israel  
Solomon's glory  
The temple built and consecrated  
Begins with blessing for obedience  
The growth of apostasy  
The united kingdom is divided  
Kings' failure  
Elijah predominant  
The Lord's patience  
Concludes with a note of despair

### 2 KINGS

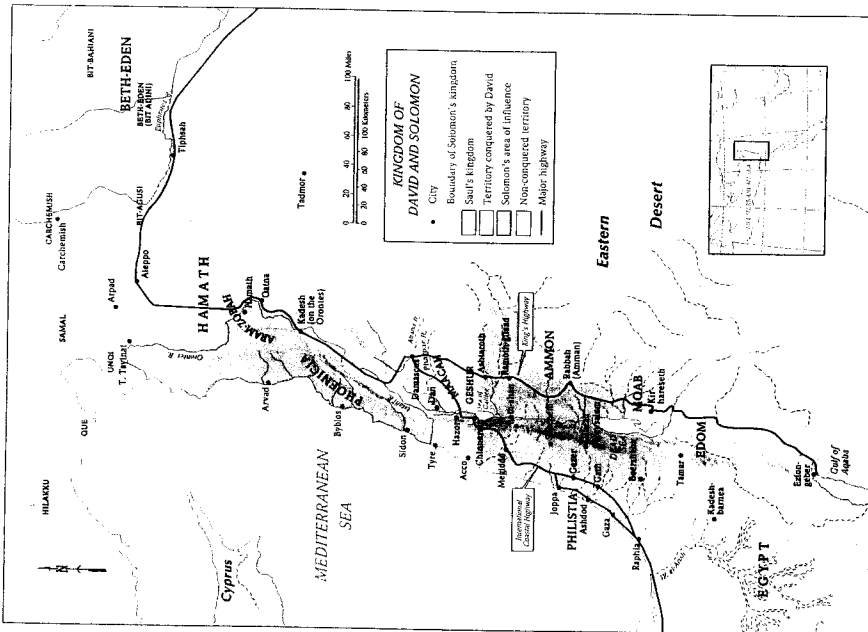
Closes with Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon  
Zedekiah's shame  
The temple violated and destroyed  
Ends with judgment for disobedience  
The consequences of apostasy  
The two kingdoms destroyed  
Consequences of the failure of the kings  
Elisha predominant  
The Lord's judgment  
Conclusion with a note of hope

The book of Kings represents the outworking of both covenant discipline and God's unconditional covenant promises to Judah. The book mentions several prophets thereby explaining how the **ministry of the prophets** began to develop in the era of the kings. The book also shows how the kings functioned as the people's representatives. Thus, their covenant rebellion negatively impacted the entire nation and was consistently confronted by God's true prophets.

Each king is identified with a consistent formula which includes: an introduction (name, age at accession, and patriarchal or matriarchal reference), accession, covenant evaluation, historical record, capital city (Jerusalem or Samaria), and concluding reference (death, burial, duration of reign, and successor). By contrast, the prophets generally appear on the scene without formal introduction in times of national crises.

## 1. United Kingdom under Solomon (1 Kings 1-11)

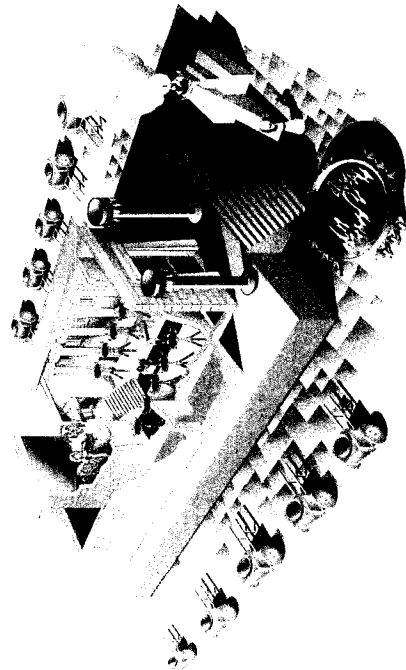
In the book of Kings, the various kings of the nation are evaluated by the Mosaic (Deuteronomy 28) and Davidic (2 Sam 7:14-16) covenants so that the exiles will learn from this history and be deterred from future covenant disobedience. The book's first major section (chaps. 1-11) puts Solomon under **covenant inspection** and begins by explaining the transfer of the kingdom from David to Solomon (1:1-2:12).



Solomon began on the right track, as he followed David's exhortation and purged the nation of those who posed a threat to Solomon's power and the covenant (2:13-46). Solomon's **covenant obedience** led to his successful consolidation of the nation. "So the kingdom was established in Solomon's hand" (2:46b). Solomon's blessings for his covenant obedience included wisdom (chap. 3) and prosperity (chap. 4), resulting in international fame (4:34). So prosperous was Solomon that God expanded Israel's borders to the degree originally promised in the Abrahamic covenant (4:21; Gen 15:18-21) and reaffirmed to Joshua (Josh 1:3-4).

Because the temple represented the presence of God among His people, the pinnacle of Solomon's career was his **construction and dedication of the temple** (chaps. 5-8). This section shows that covenant obedience invites God's presence. This connects to the exiles that similar covenant obedience on their part will return God's presence to their nation. However, because the nation will later experience idolatry and destruction despite the presence of the temple, this theme is also included to rectify a misconception among the exiles that the temple would act as a "good luck charm" warding off covenant curses in spite of national covenant disobedience.

Solomon prepared to build the temple (chap. 5) by contracting with Hiram, the king of Tyre, for building materials (5:1-12), workers, and administrators needed to accomplish this all-important task (5:13-18). Following these preparations, Solomon oversaw the construction of the temple from the fourth to the eleventh years of his reign (chaps. 6-7). The connection between Solomon's covenant obedience and the **presence of God** is brought out clearly in the dedication of the temple (chap. 8). God's glory residing on the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place assured the people of Israel that God was with them.



Reconstruction of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, Solomon lost most of God's blessings in the duration of one short chapter due to **covenant disobedience** (chap. 11). This transitional chapter is included to explain to the exiles that covenant curses follow covenant rebellion. Solomon's proliferation of wives (11:1-8) turned him away from wholeheartedly following the Lord. The disintegration of Solomon's empire was immediately felt as those Solomon once ruled over began to break away (11:14-40).

### II. The Divided Kingdom: Until the Assyrian Invasion (1 Kings 12-2 Kings 17)

This section begins with the **division of the kingdom** (12:1-24). Rehoboam listened to the inexperienced advice of the younger men, rather than the older men, concerning Jeroboam's request for tax relief. This rash decision alienated Jeroboam and the 10 northern tribes, thereby causing them to secede from Judah, rejecting the Holy City, the temple, and the Davidic line. In order to further draw the connection between the north's eventual defeat at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 BC and her covenant violations, the writer calls attention to Jeroboam's wicked rule over Israel (12:25-14:20). Most problematic was his creation of an alternative system of worship in an attempt to prevent northerners from returning to the Jerusalem temple. He also introduced golden calf worship and appointed non-Levitical priests, thus leading the northern kingdom into apostasy from Dan to Bethel.

The writer mentions the reigns of a series of **wicked northern rulers** (15:25-16:28) leading up to Ahab (16:29-34), skillfully using each of these reigns to solidify, in the minds of the exilic readers, the connection between covenant disobedience and covenant curses. The major focus of the next section is on the wicked practices of King Ahab and his Phoenician wife Jezebel (chaps. 16-22). The writer notes how Ahab's marriage to Jezebel encouraged him toward promoting Baal worship throughout the north, Baalism in a rival temple in Samaria, and the construction of numerous other centers of paganism throughout Israel.

The inclusion of the **Elijah narratives** (1 Kings 17-2 Kgs 2:11) is designed to express the courage of the prophets and expose the evil of the northern kings. These chapters demonstrate just how evil the kings of the north were. Second, they show the callousness of the nation since Elijah's miraculous ministry proved insufficient in returning the nation to covenant faithfulness. They also serve as a polemic revealing the supremacy of Yahweh over Baal in the confrontation between Elijah, the lone prophet of God, and the 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (chap. 18).

The **polemical nature** of the Elijah narratives is evident in the following contrasts: although Baal claimed the ability to control the rain, God demonstrated His supremacy over Baal as Elijah, whose name means "Yahweh is God," commanded a drought (17:1-7). While Baal guaranteed agricultural productivity, God demonstrated His supremacy as the true giver of grain and oil (17:8-16). While Baal claimed jurisdiction over life and death, Yahweh showed His supremacy by raising the dead (17:17-24). While Baal claimed to control lightning and fire, God again showed His supremacy as Elijah called fire from heaven (18:1-40). While Baal as the storm god claimed the

north was completely wicked as he followed in the wicked footsteps of his father Ahab (22:51-53).

The book of 2 Kings begins in the midst of Ahaziah's reign and continues the theme of covenant curses upon those who rejected the true worship of Yahweh. Second Kings then transitions away from the Elijah narratives (1 Kgs 17:1-2 Kings 1) and into the **Elisha narratives** (2 Kgs 2:1-8:15). The transition is made through Elijah's giving Elisha the double portion of the Spirit and Elijah's rapture into heaven in a chariot of fire (2:1-18). The inauguration of Elisha's ministry (2:19-25) continued to show Yahweh's supremacy over Baal. Elisha purified the bitter water at Jericho making it drinkable and brought about the defeat of Mesha, king of Moab, through his miraculous provision of water in the desert of Edom. Altogether the text refers to Elisha performing twice as many miracles as Elijah. Though less spectacular by some standards, these miracles were effective in demonstrating Yahweh's supremacy over life, death, and agricultural productivity (4:1-6:7).

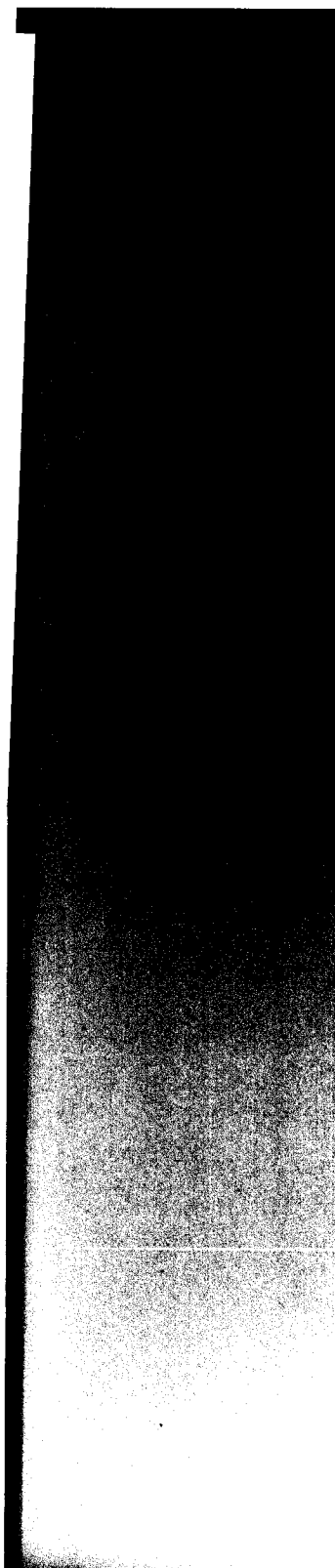
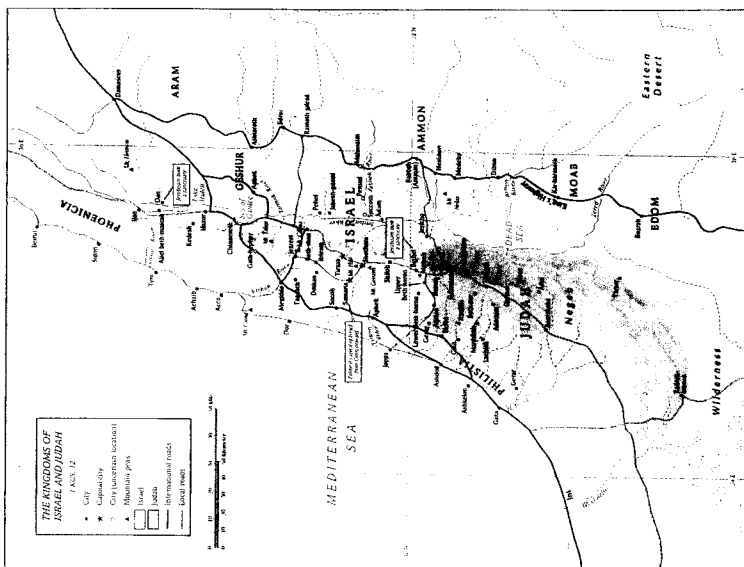
The miraculous healing of leprous **Naaman** of Aram (Syria) shows Yahweh's supremacy and grace to all people, even those outside the covenant community. The story of Naaman is also included as a point of contrast to the rebellious northern kingdom. While Israel failed to respond to Elisha's miraculous ministry, a Gentile did respond to the suggestion of a young Hebrew girl by doing what seemed foolish (5:13). He was so spiritually receptive that he even wanted to erect an altar in his own country in order to worship Yahweh there. His reaction stands in contrast to Gehazi, Elisha's Hebrew servant, who sought to profit from this miracle. Consequently, Gehazi became white as snow with leprosy while Naaman was healed of leprosy.

A potential bright spot emerges in the north through the **reign of Jehu** (chaps. 9-10).<sup>16</sup> After he is anointed as king by Elisha (9:1-10) and accepted as king by his peers (9:11-13), he proceeds to fulfill numerous of Elijah's prophecies by killing Jehoram of Israel, Ahaziah of Judah, and Jezebel (9:14-37). Jehu also kills Ahab's 70 sons and Ahaziah's 42 relatives (10:1-14). Then Jehu aligned himself with Jehonadab who completed the eradication of Ahab's house (10:15-17). Jehu also eradicated all of Israel's Baal worshippers (10:18-28). However, these improvements only represented partial reforms since Jehu permitted some false religion in the land of Israel (10:29-31). Because of this covenant violation, the nation suffered the covenant consequence of the gradual occupation of the Transjordan territories by Israel's hostile neighbors (10:32-36).

The reign of **Jeroboam II** in the north (14:23-29) imitated the same sinful pattern as Jeroboam I (14:24). However, his reign experienced territorial expansion into areas consistent with what was spoken through the prophet Jonah (14:25). Such expansion was something God unilaterally brought to pass due to the unconditional promises given in the Abrahamic covenant (14:27). Thus, the wicked behavior of Jeroboam II could not cancel the Abrahamic covenant, but it also could not bring God's continued blessing on the nation. The northern kingdom lasted as long as it did solely because of God's grace and His honoring of the Abrahamic covenant and not because of covenant fidelity on the part of Israel's kings.

ability to control the rain. God again demonstrated His supremacy over Baal as Elijah prayed for an end to the drought (18:41-46).<sup>17</sup>

The book of 1 Kings next records the **call of Elisha** to succeed Elijah as Israel's next great prophet (19:16-21). In the closing chapters, the young prophet is trained to take over the spiritual leadership of Israel at a time when the kings no longer follow the Lord. First Kings ends with a comparison of the reigns of Jehoshaphat in the south and Ahaziah in the north (22:41-53). Jehoshaphat was the second of Judah's eight good kings. He removed idolatry, developed the trading industry, expelled the Sodomites, and made peace with the northern kingdom. However, he was only a partial reformer (22:43) because his major blunder was to make an alliance with Ahab (22:41-50). In contrast to Jehoshaphat's partially good reign in the south, Ahaziah's reign in the



The brief rule of the other kings from the north mentioned in the following chapters is also included to illustrate the familiar principle that **covenant disobedience** leads to discipline. Zechariah's disobedience led to his assassination at the hands of Shallum (10:30; 15:8–12). Because of Shallum's covenant violation of assassinating Zechariah, he in turn was assassinated by Menahem (15:10–15). Due to Menahem's wickedness associated with his brutality and the promotion of idolatry, he suffered the penalty of having to pay tribute to the Assyrian king Pul or Tiglath-pileser III (2 Kgs 15:19–20). This all set the stage for the final Assyrian deportation in 722 BC.

The writer again highlights covenant consequences in the reign of **Hoshea**, who was **Israel's last king** (17:1–6). When Hoshea refused to pay tribute to the Assyrian king Shalmaneser V and instead opted to seek refuge with So (Osorkon), the king of Egypt, Shalmaneser V invaded Israel and attacked Samaria. At some point in the three-year siege of Samaria, Shalmaneser died, so his son Sargon II completed the conquest of Israel in 722 BC and deported the people to Halah and Habor on the Gozan River and in some cities of the Medes.

To help his readers understand the fate of the northern kingdom, the writer provides three reasons for the **north's downfall** (17:7–17): (1) They followed other gods (17:7–12). (2) They rejected the ministries of the prophets who sought to enforce the covenant (17:13–14). (3) They rejected the covenant itself (17:15–17). The end result was the Assyrian captivity (17:18). Sadly, Judah failed to learn from the consequences suffered from the northern kingdom since she too would experience captivity at the hands of the Babylonians in 586 BC (17:19–23).

After the deportation the Hebrews remaining in the land were mixed in with deportees from other nations who were moved into the northern region to establish an **Assyrian colony**. Some Hebrew priests were forced to teach alongside unbelieving teachers who taught the new immigrants the Assyrians brought into the land. Thus, a syncretistic form of Judaism emerged pulling the people in the former land of Israel even further away from the covenant. The writer includes this information with the hope that his audience will not embrace such syncretism so they can be restored to a place of covenant blessing (17:24–41).

### III. Southern Kingdom: Until the Babylonian Captivity (2 Kings 18–25)

The third and final major section in the book depicts **Judah's final days** as the remaining Hebrew kingdom (chaps. 18–25). This section also shows the exiles how Judah's rebellion led to her captivity. It would also encourage the exiles by reminding them of God's grace since the southern kingdom lasted 140 years beyond the northern kingdom's destruction.

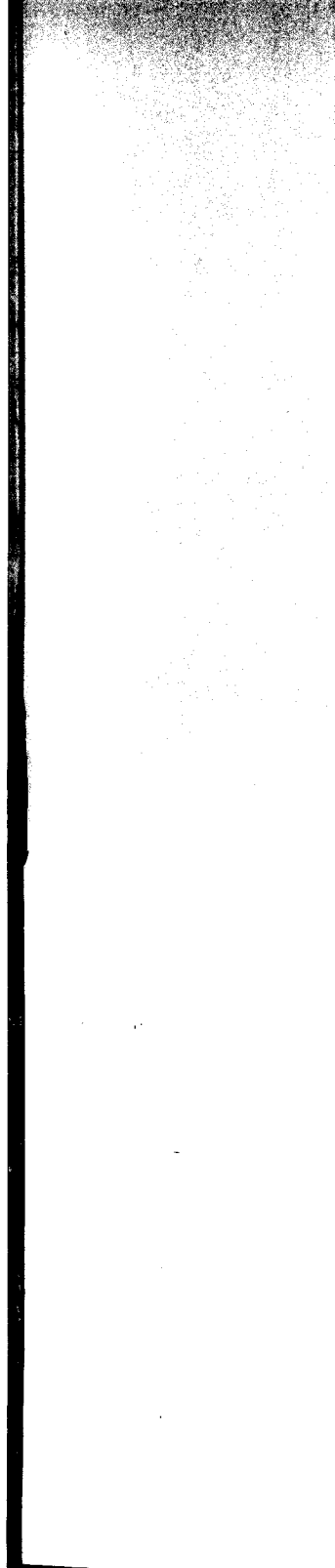
The **reforms of Hezekiah** (18:1–12) allow him to be categorized as one of Judah's best kings. When Assyria under Sennacherib invaded Judah (18:13–37), God miraculously spared Judah (chap. 19) on the basis of what He had promised in the Davidic covenant (19:34). This victory was a major turning point in Judah's survival. While the northern kingdom had fallen to Assyria in 722 BC, Judah survived the Assyrian threat in 701 BC and enjoyed nearly a century of divine protection until the Babylonian invasion in 605 BC.

Unfortunately, **Manasseh's reign** (21:1–18) was so wicked and violent that he scaled Judah's fate. Thus, his reign caused God to predict inevitable judgment and captivity. Therefore, the exiles should suffer from no misconceptions concerning why the events of 586 BC transpired. Amos governed like Manasseh (21:19–26); and as a result of his covenant rebellion, he experienced the consequences of assassination by some conspirators.

**Josiah** represents the last godly king of Judah (chaps. 22–23). Josiah began his reign with an extensive temple renovation (22:1–7), which allowed him to discover a copy of the neglected law of Moses (22:8–20). The fact that the law was not readily accessible prior to Josiah's day reveals how neglectful Judah was during the reign of Manasseh. The rediscovery of the covenant law caused Josiah to lead the nation in covenant renewal (23:1–3) and reform (23:4–25). However, because Judah's covenant rebellion had already gone too far, these reforms were too little and too late to avert inevitable judgment (22:14–20; 23:26–27). In fact, Josiah's premature death at the hands of Pharaoh Neco foreshadows such imminent judgment (23:28–30). The writer includes the reign of Josiah to explain to his readers why conditions in Judah deteriorated so quickly after Josiah's death.

The history of the southern kingdom concludes with the reigns of **Josiah's sons**, who illustrate that covenant rebellion brings unavoidable covenant discipline. Jehoahaz was imprisoned by Pharaoh Neco, and Judah was subjected to paying a tribute to the Egyptian king (23:31–33). Because of Jehoahaz's (23:34–24:7) covenant violations (23:37), bands of Chaldeans, Arameans, Moabites, and Ammonites came against him (24:2). As a consequence, Judah became a vassal of Babylon resulting in the first deportation in 605 BC. Because of Jehoahaz's covenant violations (24:8–16), the second deportation to Babylon in 597 BC transpired (24:10). Finally, Zedekiah (24:17–25:7) rebelled against Babylon and rejected the warnings of the prophet Jeremiah. As a result, Babylon launched its final siege against Jerusalem. Zedekiah was personally captured, deported, imprisoned, and blinded after trying to escape from King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

The closing verses record the **destruction of Jerusalem** in 586 BC (25:8–17), the third deportation (25:18–21), and a brief description about the life of those who remained in Judah under their puppet governor Gedeliah (25:22–26). However, by recording King Jehoahaz's release from prison and exaltation in the thirty-seventh year of the exile (25:27–30), the book ends on a note of optimism that God will still fulfill the Davidic covenant. The future is kept alive by God's divine intervention to spare the Davidic line, thus maintaining the promise of the messianic hope. As a whole, the book of Kings evaluates the nation's royal representatives from a covenant perspective. These evaluative criteria are embedded in each narrative as it traces the story from the glory of the united kingdom under Solomon, its eventual division, and how the kings of the divided kingdom led the people into increasing idolatry culminating in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Despite this downward pattern, from time to time the writer makes clear that God still has a glorious future in store for Judah because of God's covenant promises to the people of Israel.



## THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The history of Israel's kings is recorded and explained from the **prophetic perspective**. The author continually notes the interaction between the prophets and the kings. When the kings listen to the message of God's servants the prophets, they make the right decisions and experience the blessings of God. When the leaders reject the prophet's inspired message, the entire nation suffers. Thus, everything ultimately rises or falls spiritually, socially, militarily, and politically because of leadership. As God's anointed leaders, the kings are held accountable to maintain the standards of God's covenant. Failure to do so ultimately brought the curses of the covenant on both Israel and Judah (Deut 28:15–68).

### For Further Reading

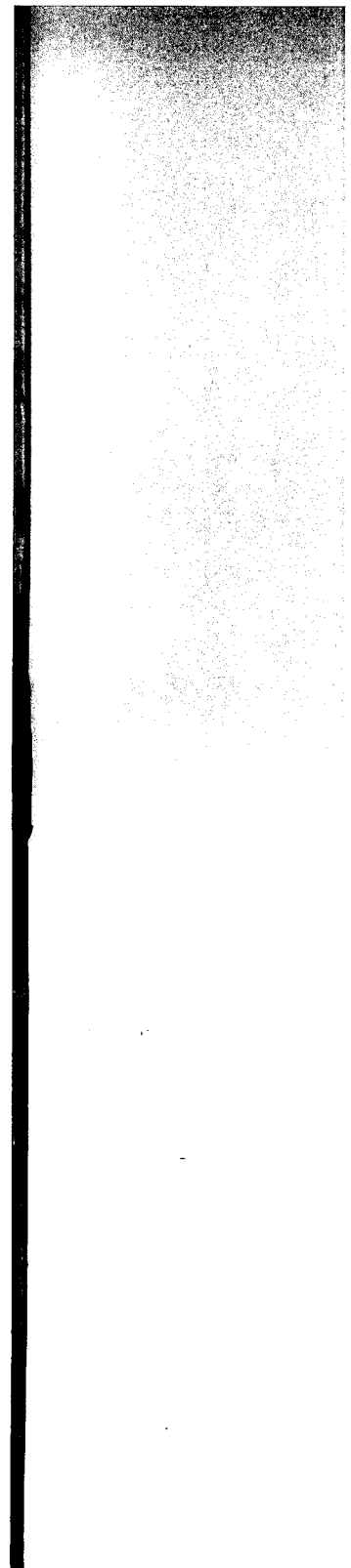
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### Study Questions

1. How does 1–2 Kings express the perspective of the prophets in dealing with the kings of Israel and Judah?
2. What was King Solomon's crowning achievement?
3. How did God use Elijah and Elisha in the lives of the kings?
4. Why did God allow Assyria and Babylon to conquer Israel and Judah?
5. What lessons can we learn about the use and abuse of power and authority from these stories?

## ENDNOTES

1. R. D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, "1 & 2 Kings," in *EBC (MV): 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job*, ed. F. E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 44. The Latin Vulgate title, "Third and Fourth Kings," is followed in most Roman Catholic versions.
2. Chart by Andrew Woods.
3. Edwin R. Thiele, *Chronology of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977).
4. Chart by Andrew Woods.
5. Edwin R. Thiele, "Chronology of the Last Kings of Judah," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 3 (1944): 137–286; idem, *Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*.
6. Based on chart in Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 205.
7. Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 94.
8. *Ibid.*, 94. Copyright ©2002 Thomas Nelson. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.
9. See Leah Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha as Polemics Against Baal Worship* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968).
10. Shalmaneser III of Assyria (859–824 BC) erected a monument known as the Black Obelisk (see p. 35) on which he recorded his various military victories. The monument portrays Jehu paying tribute to Shalmaneser III. This obelisk is useful in dating Jehu's accession and the duration of his reign (843–841 BC). *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 131–32.



## 1-2 CHRONICLES

### Priestly Perspective

The books of 1-2 Chronicles tell the story of Israel's history in a **parallel account** to the books of 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings. While many of the details are similar, the chronicler includes specific items that were especially of interest to the priestly community. His major focus is the temple, its worship leaders, and religious services.

The Hebrew title is *Divre Hayyamim*, which means "the words of the days." This phrase is like saying an account of the events of the times. This title was adopted since it communicates the book's content: the events which happened in the days of the Davidic kings of Judah. The LXX entitles the book *paralipomenon*, which means "of things omitted." Thus, the LXX title suggests the erroneous notion that Chronicles exists for the purpose of filling in missing details not found in Samuel or Kings.<sup>1</sup> Jerome's Latin Vulgate entitles the book *Chronicon Liber* or "the Book of Chronicles." Thus, the English title "Chronicles" was first introduced by the Vulgate. Through the use of this title, Jerome was referring to "a chronicle of the whole divine history."<sup>2</sup>

Because Chronicles is an **anonymous work**, most scholars refer to the author as "the Chronicler." Most also agree that both books were written by the same author on account of tradition as well as commonality in style, flavor, viewpoint, themes, and literary patterns. Tradition supports the notion that Ezra and Nehemiah were the book's authors. According to the Babylonian Talmud, "Ezra wrote the book that bears his name [that is, Ezra-Nehemiah] and the genealogies of the Book of Chronicles up to his own time. . . . Who then finished it [the book of Chronicles]?" Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah (*Baba Baitra* 15a).<sup>3</sup> The writer displays the style and interest of a Levitical scribe. The writer consistently acknowledges his sources, focuses on the temple priesthood, and traces the line of David through Judah. Such a description fits Ezra who was also a Levitical scribe (Ezra 7:1-6).

Both the books of Chronicles and Ezra focus on items that are significant from a **priestly perspective**. These items include genealogical lists, rituals, obedience to the law, temple worship, and the priesthood. The emphasis on the restoration of temple worship not only dominates Chronicles, but it also dominates the first half of Ezra. Interestingly, the opening and conclusion of the two books are nearly identical (2 Chr 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-3a). According to the Apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees, Nehemiah compiled a library with the sources necessary for his contemporary Ezra to compose Chronicles (2 Macc 2:13-15).<sup>4</sup>

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### BACKGROUND

Chronicles covers the **history of the world** from a Jewish perspective. It was written after 538 BC since it concludes with Cyrus's first year and his first decree after conquering Babylon (2 Chr 36:22-23). If Ezra is the book's primary author, then it cannot be written after 445 BC since that is the date of the last recorded event of his life (Neh 8:1-12). If tradition is accurate and Nehemiah is a contributing author, then the book was not written after 432 BC since this is the date of the last recorded event of his life (Neh 13:6). However, Zerubbabel's genealogy pushes the book even later since it records individuals who must have lived well into postexilic times (1 Chr 3:17-24); therefore, the final version may date as late as 400 BC.<sup>5</sup>

The recipients of the book were without a Davidic king and currently under **Persian domination**. Questions in their minds would no doubt be whether God was going to fulfill the Davidic covenant and if they still were connected to this covenant? Furthermore, these beleaguered returnees saw their own rebuilt temple as paltry in comparison to the former grandeur of Solomon's temple (Ezra 3:12; Hagg 2:3). Thus, they were in desperate need of encouragement after the 70 years of captivity had expired.<sup>6</sup>

### Outline

- I. Genealogies: From Adam to Zerubbabel (1 Chronicles 1-9)
  - A. Adam to Jacob (1 Chronicles 1)
  - B. Judah to Zerubbabel's Grandsons (1 Chronicles 2-3)
  - C. The Twelve Tribes (1 Chronicles 4-9)
- II. David's Reign: Preparation for the Temple (1 Chronicles 10-29)
  - A. David's Ascension (1 Chronicles 10-12)
  - B. David Brings the Ark to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 13-16)
  - C. Davidic Covenant (1 Chronicles 17-20)
  - D. David's Temple Preparations (1 Chronicles 21-29)
- III. Solomon's Reign: Building the Temple (2 Chronicles 1-9)
  - A. Solomon's Wisdom (2 Chronicles 1)
  - B. Solomon's Temple (2 Chronicles 2-7)
  - C. Solomon's Prosperous Reign (2 Chronicles 8-9)
- IV. Judah's Kings: Apostasy and Decline (2 Chronicles 10-36)
  - A. Division of the Kingdom (2 Chronicles 10-13)
  - B. Kings of Judah (2 Chronicles 14-36)

### MESSAGE

In order to exhort the Jewish returnees to unite and resume temple worship, the writer reminds them of their genealogical connection with God's past purposes in general and with the Davidic covenant in particular (1 Chronicles 1-9). To this end the writer also features David's priority of pursuing temple worship (1 Chronicles 10-29), Solomon's priority in building the temple (2 Chronicles 1-9), and the revivals and reforms of those southern kings who pursued true worship of God as well as

the apostasy of those southern kings who did not (2 Chronicles 10:36). Rather than continuing the history begun in Samuel and Kings, the author of Chronicles writes a **parallel history** to reveal the primacy of national worship. The distinctive purposes behind Samuel and Kings in comparison to the purposes behind Chronicles are captured on the following chart.

SAMUEL AND KINGS	CHRONICLES
Divided kingdom	Southern kingdom only
Political history	Religious history
Prophetic authorship	Priestly authorship
Prophetic perspective	Levitical perspective
Moral concerns	Spiritual concerns
Written soon after the events	Written long after the events
Negative view	Positive view
Covenant rebellion and judgment	Hope for the future
Man's failings	God's faithfulness
Kings and prophets	Temple and priests
Throne	Temple
Inclusion of kings' sins	Omission of kings' sins
Disobedience	Revival and reform
Many wars	Fewer wars
National history	Davidic line
Classified with the Former Prophets	Classified with the writings
Excludes genealogies	Includes genealogies

### I. Genealogies: From Adam to Zerubbabel (1 Chronicles 1-9)

In the book's first major section (chaps. 1-9), the writer establishes the genealogical ancestry of the returnees to stimulate them toward resuming faithful worship in the rebuilt temple. He shows the returnees their genealogical connection to **God's redemptive purposes** in general and the Davidic covenant in particular. Knowledge of their Davidic lineage would have encouraged the returnees since they may have questioned their relationship to the Davidic Covenant because they had no present reigning Davidic king.

#### A. Adam to Jacob (1 Chronicles 1)

The writer begins this section by tracing the genealogical connection between **Adam and Israel** (chap. 1). First, he notes the connection between the first man Adam and the first Hebrew Abraham (1:1-27). He traces Adam to Shem (1:1-4; Gen 4:25-26) and Shem to Abraham (1:24-27; Gen 5:1-32; 11:10-26) probably because

of the promises given to Shem (Gen 9:26). Second, he notes the connection between Abraham and Jacob, who was later called Israel (1:28-54). The Chronicler makes this linkage clear by calling the latter Israel rather than Jacob (1:34). Thus, the writer motivates the returnees to remember their spiritual and national heritage by skillfully connecting God's agenda for them all the way back to God's purposes in creation.

#### B. Judah to Zerubbabel's Grandsons (1 Chronicles 2-3)

The author next notes the genealogical link between **Jacob's son Judah** and the returnees (chaps. 2-3). He shows how Jacob is connected to David (chap. 2) and how David through Solomon is connected to Zerubbabel's descendants (chap. 3). The returnees connection to Judah is significant since the prophesied Messiah would come from that tribe (Gen 49:10). Thus, the returnees should remember their great forefathers and remain true to God's purposes for His people since they are genealogically connected to them and the Davidic line.

#### C. The Twelve Tribes (1 Chronicles 4-9)

Next the writer focuses on the genealogies of all of Israel's 12 tribes (chaps. 4-8). He records all of the tribes in order to show the **solidarity of the nation**. Although all of the tribes are mentioned, this section seems to focus mostly on Benjamin, Judah, and Levi. Benjamin and Judah merit special attention since most of the postexilic community came from these two tribes. Levi also warrants special attention because of the role the priests play in temple worship.

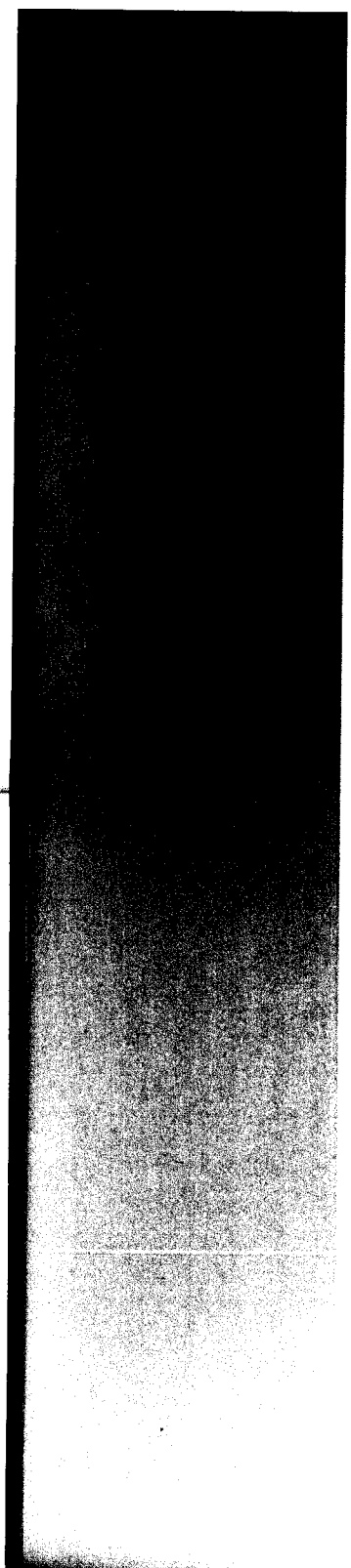
The chronicler next records the genealogies of the **Transjordan tribes** (chap. 5). Thus, the writer mentions Reuben (5:1-10), Gad (5:11-17), and East Manasseh (5:23-26). Next, the chronicler devotes an entire chapter to the **tribe of Levi** (chap. 6). Such disproportionate treatment is explainable in terms of Levi's prominent role in temple worship by clarifying the roles the priests and the Levites play in temple worship. The **tribe of Benjamin** is mentioned last (chap. 8). The tribes of Judah and Benjamin bracket this genealogical summary (chap. 4-8) because they epitomize God's elective purposes through Judah (Gen 49:10).

### II. David's Reign: Preparation for the Temple (1 Chronicles 10-29)

In the book's second major section (chaps. 10-29), the author traces **David's prosperous reign** and his priority of pursuing genuine worship. The author records these events so that his audience will learn from his positive example and resume temple worship. Thus, many of the sinful and negative events surrounding David's life in the books of Samuel are omitted. The writer deems these as inconsistent with his primary purpose of promoting a resumption of temple worship among the returnees.

#### A. David's Ascension (1 Chronicles 10-12)

The Chronicler begins this section by briefly mentioning **Saul's death** (chap. 10) in order to transition from Saul as the nation's first king to the writer's primary focus, David the king after God's heart. **David's flight** from Saul (1 Samuel 16-31) as well



as Saul's reign (1 Samuel 8:15) are omitted so the writer can move directly to David. However, despite the scant space the Chronicler devotes to Saul's reign, he does mention that religious apostasy was the cause of Saul's death (10:13–14). The writer notes how "all" the nation gathered as "all" the elders came to anoint David as king at Hebron (1:1–3).

**The greatness of David** is further seen in the diversity of groups that united and rallied behind him when he assumed the throne (chap. 12). Even Saul's tribe of Benjamin followed David (12:1–7; 16–18). Other Israelite groups that rallied behind David's cause include the Gadites (12:8–15), Manasseh (12:19–22), Simeon, Levi, Ephraim, Issachar, Zebulun, Naphtali, Dan, Asher, and the Transjordan tribes (12:23–27). Thus, the chapter appropriately concludes with a unified description of David's reign (12:38–40).

### B. David Brings the Ark to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 13–16)

While the book of 2 Samuel devotes only a single chapter to David's bringing the ark to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6), the Chronicler devotes four entire chapters to this subject (chaps. 13–16). Such an extensive treatment is given in order to explain David's **high priority for worship**. His diligence is seen in his preparation of both the Levites (15:1–15) and the singers (15:16–24) for this event. When he eventually brought the ark to Jerusalem, David refused to allow Michal's jealousy to detract him from expressing worship (15:25–29). The significance of national worship is seen in the Chronicler's description of the inauguration of the ark's service at Jerusalem, accompanied by sacrifices and worship (16:1–6), the rehearsal of various psalms (16:7–36; Pss 96:1–13; 105:1–15; 106:1, 47–48), and the appointment of the personnel to minister at the tabernacle (16:37–43).

### C. Davidic Covenant (1 Chronicles 17–20)

The writer also includes information about the **Davidic covenant** since it reveals David's heart for worship. He sought to build a house for God so that he could worship Him; therefore, the returnees should follow David's lead and continue temple worship.

The Chronicler spends the next three chapters (chaps. 18–20) recording David's various **military victories** over the Philistines, Moabites, Hamath, Edom,

Ammon, and the Arameans. This section also appropriately observes that these victories affirmed the Davidic rule over all of the land of Israel (18:14–17). Conspicuously missing from this section is David's sin with Bathsheba (20:1). Those events that detract from this literary progress, such as David's adultery and other sins, are dealt with tersely or omitted altogether. The Chronicler omits this event since his purpose is to use David as an example of godly worship. Thus, the writer focuses on David's preparations for the temple.

### D. David's Temple Preparations (1 Chronicles 21–29)

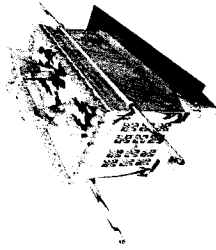
The writer seeks to use David's temple preparations to encourage the returnees to realize how important temple worship is (22:2–19), and he includes the events surrounding David's census sin because the conclusion of these events is David's purchase of the **temple site** from Ornan the Jebusite (21:1–22:1). This purchase happened because God told David to erect an altar at this threshing floor in order to stop the plague of pestilence that resulted from his numbering of the troops. David could not go to sacrifice at Gibeon where the tabernacle and altar of burnt offering were located because of the presence of a destroying angel, so God encouraged David to build an altar at this place. Later Solomon would erect the temple on this plot of real estate where David built this altar.

David would not be given the privilege of actually constructing the temple since he was a man of war. His son Solomon would actually build the temple because he was a man of peace. However, the Chronicler identifies David's concern for worship by recording his numerous preparations for the temple's construction and the organization of people who would serve at the temple (22:2–27; 34). Six entire chapters are devoted to these **temple preparations**, including David's instructions to Solomon to build the temple (22:2–19), gathering material for the temple (22:2–5), promising Solomon blessings if he builds the temple (22:6–13), and exhorting Israel's leaders to cooperate with Solomon in pursuing this objective (22:17–19). The next five chapters record the personnel that David set in place for the future operation of the temple (chaps. 23–27), including Solomon (23:1), the Levites (23:2–32), the priests (chap. 24), the musicians (chap. 25), the temple servants (chap. 26), and the civil servants whose duties impacted temple activity (chap. 27).

The book of 1 Chronicles concludes with David's final address to the government officials (28:1–29; 22) and the **transfer of power** from David to Solomon (29:22–30). Conspicuously absent from these verses is the struggle for power that went on throughout the process of Solomon's accession as recorded in the early chapters of

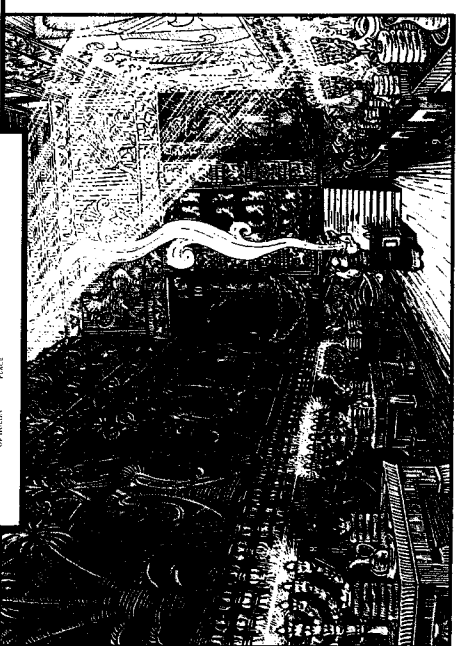
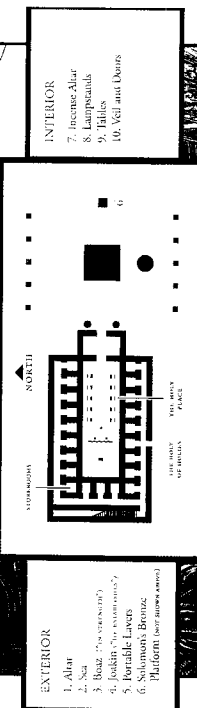
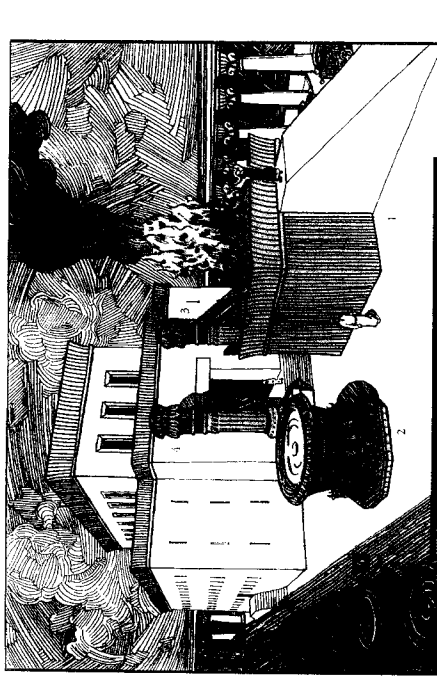


A view of the excavations of the City of David.



Artist rendition of the Ark of the Covenant.

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE, Exterior View (Illustration)



SOLOMON'S TEMPLE, Interior View (Illustration)

the book of 1 Kings. The writer omits this struggle since it detracts from his purpose of featuring the prosperous, worship-centered reigns of both David and Solomon as a means of encouraging the returnees to devote themselves to temple worship.

### III. Solomon's Reign: Building the Temple (2 Chronicles 1-9)

The next major focus in the book is **Solomon's construction of the temple** (chaps. 1-9). This theme fits into the writer's argument in three important ways. First, it reveals Solomon's commitment to faithful worship that the writer hopes his audience will imitate. Second it shows how Israel became the greatest nation on the face of the earth as Solomon made worship in the temple his top priority. Because the writer seeks to emphasize the greatness of Solomon's reign, many of his sins are omitted such as his idolatry, pagan wives, and effort to kill Jeroboam. Third, this section emphasizes God's sovereignty in bringing to pass many of the promises in the Davidic covenant.

#### A. Solomon's Wisdom (2 Chronicles 1)

This section begins with Solomon offering sacrifices on Moses' bronze altar in Gibeon (1:1-5). This action is included because it shows the solidarity between God's covenant purposes for Solomon and God's covenant program as expressed through Moses. The writer notes that Solomon became the **wisest man that ever lived** since God was pleased to grant his request for wisdom (1:6-13). Thus, the book as a whole relates wisdom with an appetite for worship. The chapter concludes by describing Solomon's prosperous reign (1:14-17).

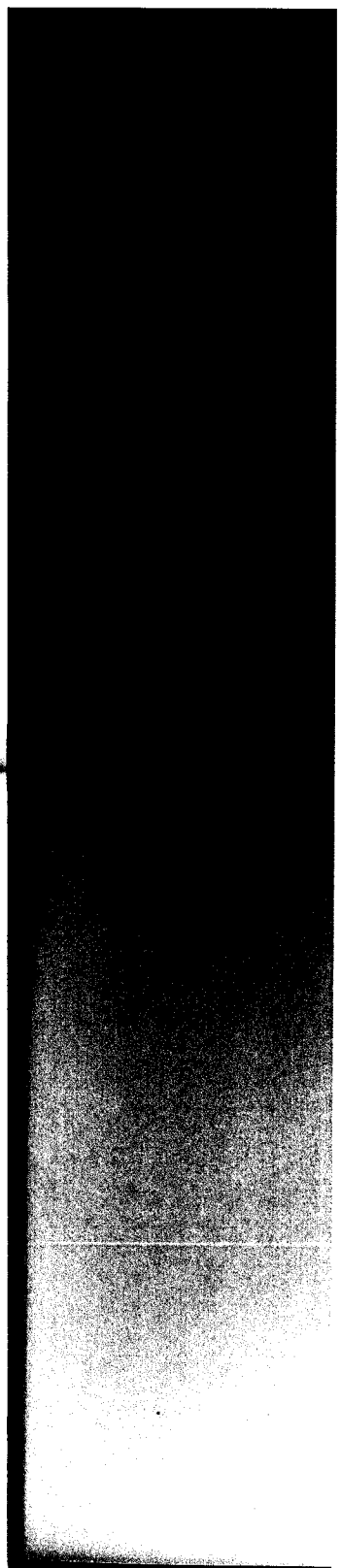
#### B. Solomon's Temple (2 Chronicles 2-7)

Second Chronicles devotes six chapters to Solomon's construction and dedication of the temple on **Mount Moriah** (chaps. 2-7). Solomon's heart for worship is seen in the elaborate preparations he made for the coming temple (chap. 2). Solomon's desire for worship is evidenced in how he did not allow his previous prosperity to quench his appetite for achieving his primary goal, which was the temple's construction. No expense was spared as Solomon hired Hiram, the king of Tyre, to provide materials and manpower for the project.

Solomon's heart for worship is also seen in his **transfer of the ark** from David's tabernacle at Zion to the interior of the temple (chap. 5). The ark represented God's presence among His people. Thus, the transfer of the ark to the temple demonstrated Solomon's commitment to the God of Israel. The Chronicler includes Solomon's dedicatory prayer (chap. 6) since it highlights the centrality of God's presence at the temple. According to this prayer, from this point onward, God would hear the prayers offered in this place, which is why the Temple Mount is still sacred to the Jewish people today, even though there is currently no Jewish temple on that site.

#### C. Solomon's Prosperous Reign (2 Chronicles 8-9)

The Chronicler reminds the reader how Solomon's pursuit of worship contributed to the **greatness of his empire**. The greatness of his empire is made clear based on the



silk, he built (8:1-6), his many subjects (8:7-11), the number of sacrifices presented (8:12-13), his organization of the priestly and Levitical hierarchy (8:14-16), and his navy at Ezion-geber (8:17-18). He also observes the extent of Solomon's fame, climbing in the queen of Sheba's journey to Jerusalem to sit at Solomon's feet in hopes of learning from his wisdom (9:1-12).

#### IV. Judah's Kings: Apostasy and Decline (2 Chronicles 10-36)

In the book's final section (chaps. 10-36), the writer focuses on the **decline of Judah**. Here he emphasizes the blessings on those reforming kings that prioritized worship as well as the withdrawal of divine blessings from those kings that apostatized from temple worship. The reforming kings include Asa (chaps. 14-16), Jehoshaphat (chaps. 17-20), Josiah (chap. 24), Hezekiah (chaps. 29-32), and Josiah (chaps. 34-36). In fact, "about 70 percent of chapters 10-36 deals with eight good kings, leaving only 30 percent to cover the twelve evil rulers."<sup>26</sup> This disproportionate treatment shows that the writer sought to encourage the returnees toward resuming temple worship by pointing to the positive example of the good reforming kings.

##### A. Division of the Kingdom (2 Chronicles 10-13)

Solomon's son Rehoboam's excessive taxation resulted in the split of the northern kingdom of Israel from the southern kingdom of Judah. Since no mercy was shown concerning forced labor from the 10 tribes of Israel, Israel's leader Jeroboam rejected any political and religious association with the house of David. The selfish reactions by both kings reveal the **sinful origin** of the northern kingdom (10-11:4). This partially explains why the Chronicler no longer refers to the northern kingdom except in only a tangential way. Moreover, Rehoboam's covenant violation led to an invasion by Shishak of Egypt who took the temple treasures (12:1-8). Here the author notes the connection between temple defilement and covenant violation. However, the author also observes how Rehoboam's repentance caused Judah to be spared. But in the next chapter the reader discovers that God fought for Judah against Jeroboam because he violated the covenant, rebelled against the Davidic dynasty, and forsook the temple (chap. 13).

##### B. Kings of Judah (2 Chronicles 14-36)

Because of the author's desire to use **spiritual reforms** as a positive example for his audience to imitate, he devotes three chapters to describing the reign of Asa (chaps. 14-16) and four chapters to describe the reign of Jehoshaphat (chaps. 17-20). These are followed by the apostasy of Jehoram, Ahaziah, and the wicked queen Athaliah, who attempted to eliminate David's seed (and thus the Messianic line) by killing all the royal family except the infant Joash (chaps. 21-23). The Chronicler highlights the sovereignty of God in sparing the life of Joash and keeping the promise to the Davidic covenant.

Next the author deals with **the struggles** of the kings of Judah, who started well but did not always finish well. Amaziah began well but was eventually assassinated (chap. 25). Uzziah had a long successful reign but ultimately defiled the temple by usurping priestly prerogatives and died a leper (chap. 26). Jotham also began well but

failed in the end (chap. 27). God initially protected Ahaz, but he eventually defiled the temple by using its treasures to bribe the Assyrians for protection (chap. 28).

Because of the author's desire to use the **reforms of Hezekiah** as a positive example for his audience to imitate, he devoted four chapters to his reign (chaps. 29-32). Hezekiah's reforms include the restoration of temple worship (chap. 29), the implementation of the Passover (chap. 30), the eradication of idolatry (31:1), and the establishment of the priests and the Levites in their proper roles (31:2-19). Because of Hezekiah's commitment to God's house, his courage, and his faith (32:5-8), Hezekiah experienced prosperity during his reign (31:20-21), which manifested itself in his defeat of Sennacherib in 701 BC and his resulting international fame (32:1-23).

The author reinforces the lesson that **temple defilement** results in a forfeiture of blessings through the reigns of Manasseh (33:1-20) and Amon (33:21-25). After defiling the temple with pagan images, Manasseh was deported to Babylon by the king of Assyria (Esarhaddon in 681-669 BC or Ashurbanipal in 668-627 BC). However, after he humbled himself and repented, he was able to return to Jerusalem where he pursued orthodox worship. The Chronicler includes Manasseh's captivity, conversion, and return despite the fact that these events are omitted from the book of 2 Kings. Next he deals with the reign of Amon (33:21-25) who defiled the temple just like Manasseh. As a result, his servants conspired against him resulting in his assassination. The people of the land then came and killed Amon's assassins and enthroned Josiah.

The chronicler devotes two chapters toward discussing the religious reforms that took place during Josiah's reign (chaps. 34-35). **Josiah's reforms** took on even greater dimensions when the law (Deuteronomy 28) was discovered, resulting in even more reforms (34:14-33), including the implementation of the celebration of the Passover (35:1-19). The writer's skillful connection of Josiah's reforms to the rediscovered law establishes that Josiah was acting consistently with God's previously articulated covenant principles.

The writer concludes his survey of Judah's kings by surveying the four remaining wicked kings of the southern kingdom (36:1-14). Following Josiah's death, the people of the land enthroned Josiah's son Jehoahaz. However, Pharaoh Neco deposed him

#### Hebrew Highlight

**Kneel. Hebrew כָּרַע (bārak).** The Hebrew word *Barak* means "to kneel down, to bless God as an act of adoration." This word is found many times throughout the pages of the Old Testament (Pss 18:46; 34:1; 95:6; 96:2; 103:1-2). It is used in 1 Chr 29:20 regarding how David led the assembly in worshipping and paying homage to the Lord. The word captures a central theme of the books of Chronicles since the thrust of these books is to stimulate the post-exilic community toward orthodox and heartfelt worship. As believers, we must take seriously our calling to worship the true and living God. He is worthy of our praise and adoration since He is both the Creator (Rev 4:11) and the Redeemer (Rev 5:9) of all things.

### The Problem of Biased Historiography

Some contend that Chronicles represents a biased historical account. This contention is leveled on the basis of the book's omissions (e.g., David's adultery with Bathsheba) and additions (e.g., Manasseh's repentance). However, these omissions notwithstanding, it should be recognized that the book still often portrays David unfavorably. Examples include his mishandling of the ark (1 Chr 13:9-14), his polygamy (1 Chr 14:3-7), and his premature request to build a temple for God (1 Chronicles 17). Furthermore, these additions and omissions can be explained in terms of the Chronicler selectively using history that is consistent with his unique purpose in writing. His readers already would be familiar with the parallel accounts written by the prophets in the books of Samuel and Kings. As a priestly author, the Chronicler focuses on the relation of the kings of Judah to the temple of God.

and enthroned Jehoahaz's older brother Eliakim whom he renamed Jehoiakim. The writer includes the remaining three kings because each of their covenant rebellions led to defilement of the temple. Jehoiakim's (36:5-8) and Jehoiachin's (36:9-10) rebellions led to military defeat and the Babylonian defilement of the temple. Zedekiah's rebellion actually led to Jewish defilement of the temple (36:11-14). Thus, the writer closes his treatment of Judah's kings by associating covenant rebellion with temple defilement, which finally resulted in the deportation to Babylon and the destruction of Solomon's temple (36:15-21).



Southwestern corner of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Fortunately the book ends on the optimistic note of Cyrus's decree to rebuild the temple (36:22-23). God's call for proper worship continues from the Babylonian era into the Persian era. Thus, the people in Jerusalem should recognize that their calling to worship is part of God's sovereign design as they resume worshipping the Lord in the rebuilt postexilic temple. English Bible readers should note that these verses conclude the Hebrew canon with the words: "let him go up" (11b, *ya' al*). This is still the desire of religious Jews today to make *aliya* and "go up" to Jerusalem.

### THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

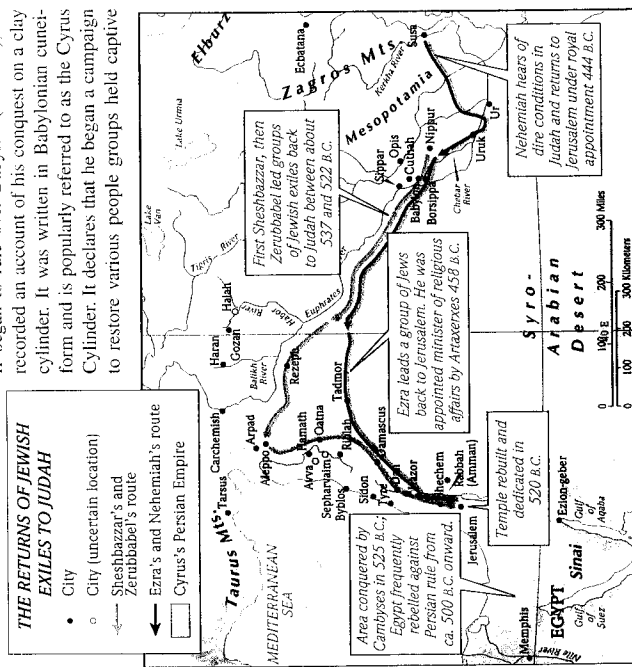
The major theological theme of Chronicles is the importance of true worship. This emphasis explains why the word "heart" is found 32 times in the book. Therefore, the book focuses on those institutions of Judaism that have worship as their focus. These institutions include the priesthood, Levites, the ark, and the temple. The temple is of particular interest to the writer. "As a chronicle of the temple, the book surveys its conception (David), construction and consecration (Solomon), corruption and cleansing (the kings of Judah), and conflagration (Nebuchadnezzar)."<sup>70</sup> The book also focuses on the Davidic covenant and emphasizes the reforms and joyous worship of the Davidic kings. The book is full of references to their reforms, victories, prayers, and prosperous reigns. Not only does Chronicles omit key events covered in Samuel and Kings, but the book also adds key events not covered by those books.<sup>71</sup> Thus, Wilkinson and Boa suggest that "what Deuteronomy is to the rest of the Pentateuch and John is to the synoptic Gospels, Chronicles is to Israel's history in Samuel and Kings."<sup>72</sup> In other words, it complements and completes the earlier accounts.

### For Further Study

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## EZRA Rebuilding the Temple

The book of Ezra describes the **resettlement** of the Hebrew people after their 70-year exile in Babylon. The book is named for Ezra, the priest who led a second contingent of Jews back to the Promised Land. Shortly after the Persian king Cyrus II began to rule over Babylon (539 BC), he recorded an account of his conquest on a clay cylinder. It was written in Babylonian cuneiform and is popularly referred to as the Cyrus Cylinder. It declares that he began a campaign to restore various people groups held captive



### Study Questions

1. How does Chronicles differ from the books of Samuel and Kings?
2. Why do many believe that Ezra may have been the author of the Chronicles?
3. What significant roles do David and Solomon play in the history of the Chronicles?
4. How does the author use themes of devotion and apostasy to challenge his postexilic readers?
5. What lessons can we learn from these books about the importance of worship in our own lives?

### ENDNOTES

1. R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969); reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 1152; Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 169.
2. Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 216.
3. C. Dyer and E. Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer* (Nashville: Word, 2001), 293.
4. Other positions on the authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah are possible. H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1977), xxii; H. G. M. Williamson, *Israel in the Book of Chronicles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 5–70; S. Japhet, "The Supposed Common Authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah Investigated Anew," VT 18 (1968): 332–72; R. L. Braun, *I Chronicles*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1979), 52–54; and J. A. Thompson, *I, 2 Chronicles*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 1994), 29, all argue that the author of Ezra-Nehemiah is not the Chronicler.
5. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1153.
6. The 70 years of discipline transpired either in between 605 BC (first deportation) and 535 BC (the people arrived back in the land) or 586 BC (third deportation) and 515 BC (the rebuilding of the temple). Whichever scheme one follows, Kings (550 BC) was written during this time of discipline while Chronicles (400 BC) was written afterward.
7. Adapted from Bruce H. Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 102. Copyright ©2005, Thomas Nelson. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.
8. Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 111–12.
9. *Ibid.*, 111.
10. For a list of some of these omissions and deletions, see J. Carl Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 91–92.
11. Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 102.