

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY:

2 CHRONICLES

2 CHRONICLES

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 1

2Ch 1:1 Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and Yahweh his God was with him, and magnified him exceedingly-

Despite all the unspirituality of this situation, God was willing to work with what He had. He likewise worked through a human kingship system, although it was a rejection of Him; and He was to inhabit the temple, although He never wanted it built in the first place. Solomon, like Saul, was set up with the potential for being the Messianic seed / king; but he failed to use the huge potential given him.

2Ch 1:2 Solomon spoke to all Israel, to the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and to the judges, and to every prince in all Israel, the heads of the fathers' households-

Solomon sought to establish himself as king, so he invited all the leaders of the nation to come to a special sacrifice in Gibeon, a kind of inauguration ceremony. It seems they came to Jerusalem, and then travelled with him to Gibeon (:3) and then returned with him from there to Jerusalem (:13).

2Ch 1:3 So Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for there was the Tent of Meeting of God, which Moses the servant of Yahweh had

made in the wilderness-

Solomon was fully representative of Israel (1 Kings 11:1,5-7 cp. 33; 8:52; and note the ye... the confusion of 1 Kings 9:4-7); his prayer was their prayer (2 Chron. 6:21); his worship was theirs (2 Chron. 1:3,5).

Zadok cared for the tabernacle at Gibeon, which was "the great high place" (1 Chron. 16:39; 1 Kings 3:4), and so it is another example of correlation within the inspired records that he had access to that horn and the oil with which to anoint Solomon (1 Kings 1:39). Solomon had replaced Abiathar with Zadok as chief priest, so perhaps his worship to Gibeon rather than Jerusalem [where Abiathar had officiated] was a nod towards Zadok.

2Ch 1:4 But David had brought the ark of God up from Kiriath Jearim to the place that David had prepared for it; for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem-

The point is that the ark was not in the tabernacle at Gibeon (:3). The force of "But..." could be an implied criticism of this. I suggest on :5 that this was for political reasons, but the reality was that the sanctuary at Gibeon was without God's presence, for the ark was not there. It was spiritually hollow.

2Ch 1:5 Moreover the bronze altar, that Bezalel the son of Uri the son of Hur had made, was there before the tabernacle of Yahweh; and Solomon and the assembly were seeking counsel there-

AV reads differently: "Moreover the brazen altar, that Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the LORD: and Solomon and the congregation sought unto it". This may be read as an aside; at this point, Solomon went to Gibeon and sacrificed at the altar there, but this is as it were in brackets, telling us that in fact later, Solomon was to move the brazen altar from Gibeon to Jerusalem. We note that at this point, the ark is in Zion, but the altar of burnt offering is still at Gibeon (1 Chron. 16:39-42). This seems rather typical of how David perceived the spirit of the law to such an extent that he apparently broke the letter of the law by allowing this situation to continue. For surely he ought to have united the sanctuaries of Gibeon and Zion. Perhaps he allowed it to continue because of the political difficulty in deciding which of the two high priests to appoint as singular high priest (Zadok or Ahimelech). And so he allowed the two sanctuaries to continue, although this was contrary to the law's insistence upon one sanctuary. Hence Solomon sacrificed both at Gibeon and before the ark at Jerusalem. It was only when Ahimelech was deposed by Solomon that he brought the brazen altar from Gibeon to Jerusalem (2 Chron. 1:5 AV). This suggests that David's operation of two sanctuaries was politically motivated.

2Ch 1:6 Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before Yahweh which was at the Tent of Meeting and offered one thousand burnt offerings on it-

Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar-

This was clearly out of step with what David had earlier been taught after his sin with Bathsheba; that God did not want thousands of sacrifices, but rather broken, contrite hearts (Ps. 40:6-8). And Solomon repeats David's failure in this, by again offering such huge numbers of sacrifices. Which, like the temple, God didn't want.

2Ch 1:7 In that night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, Ask what I shall give you- Godly men usually asked or enquired of God on their initiative, as David did (s.w. 1 Sam. 22:10; 23:4; 2 Sam. 5:19). But Solomon had apparently merely offered ritual sacrifices, and had not engaged with God in personal relationship. Now he is encouraged to do so.

I have argued that Ecclesiastes is Solomon's self reflection, a kind of autobiography. It is also a rejection and renunciation of his faith, because he wrote it at the end of his life, when

his heart had been turned aside from God (1 Kings 11:3). I suggest it is this dream which is the reference of Ecc. 5:3: "For as a dream comes with a multitude of cares, so a fool's speech with a multitude of words". If we enquire what reference a "dream" may have to Solomon's historical life, we naturally think of this dream at the start of his life when he was offered whatever he wanted, and he chose wisdom. Several times in Ecclesiastes he appears to regret that choice, as he considers there to be no ultimate advantage to wisdom or going God's way because death ends it all, and God, Solomon thinks, cannot resurrect the dead to judgment (Ecc. 3:22). And so in Ecc. 5:3 Solomon seems to be saying that that dream was simply self induced, an outcome of his "multitude of cares", and the "multitude of words" of wisdom he had written in response to it was but "a fool's speech". Like many who have had the direct involvement of God in their lives in youth, he came to rationalize it as nothing at all Divine, considering his dream had just been some Freudian reflection of his own internal "cares". And this kind of rationalizing of the Divine over time is absolutely true to observed experience in those who turn away from God.

2Ch 1:8 Solomon said to God, You have shown great grace to David my father, and have made me king in his place-

Solomon has it all the wrong way around in saying that Yahweh had showed grace to David because he had walked before Yahweh in truth (1 Kings 3:6), and therefore Solomon had been made king. Solomon totally misunderstood grace. It is a pure gift from God, and not at all granted in response to our righteous walk.

These words are doubtless an allusion to the grace God showed David in his relationship with Solomon's mother, Bathsheba. But Solomon makes no mention of David's great faith in God's grace, and his subsequent appreciation that animal sacrifices were meaningless. These were David's real strong points, but Solomon is obsessed with David's public life of obedience ("according as he walked", 1 Kings 3:6). He evidently saw his father as the epitome of spiritual good, faultless in God's sight. "Mercy" and "truth" both occur in 1 Kings 3:6, and they often refer to the promises. Solomon seems to have seen the promises to David as a reward for David's good life, rather than an expression of God's unwarranted grace. David's reaction was "Who am I...?" to receive such an honour. Solomon's feeling was that David deserved them because of his righteousness. So here is a feature of many parent : child relationships in the Lord. The children love and respect their parents spiritually, but often for the wrong reasons; they actually misunderstand their forefathers' spirituality. This is why their understanding of parental and community expectation is often wrong in the first place.

2Ch 1:9 Now, Yahweh God, let your promise to David my father be established-
 So very often does Solomon speak of "David my father", and that God had made him king "instead of David my father" (e.g. 1 Kings 3:7). Thus he asks Hiram to deal with him just as he had done with David his father (1 Kings 5:2-7; and cp. 1 Kings 5:1 with 2 Sam. 5:11). The number of times these phrases occur in the records is so large that we simply have to recognize that God is pointing something out to us about the relationship between Solomon and David (1 Kings 2:24,26,32,44; 3:6,7,14; 5:3,5; 6:12; 8:15,17,18,20,24,25,26; 9:4; 11:33; 2 Chron. 1:8,9; 2:3,7,14; 6:4,7,8,10,15,16; 7:17). Solomon was raised a believer, and he lived out parental expectation; but in later life, he himself was revealed as having no real faith at all, and he turned away from Yahweh to idolatry. So often in his prayers to God does Solomon make reference to David; for example: "Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit upon his throne" (1 Kings 3:6).

For you have made me king-

Solomon speaks about him being King in Jerusalem (Ecc. 1:1,12; Prov. 1:1) as if this was the ultimate fulfilment of the Davidic promises. Consider the implications of 2 Chron. 1:9: "O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth... give me now wisdom, that I may go out and come in before (i.e. lead) this people". Solomon was asking for wisdom because he thought that he was the Messiah, and he saw wisdom as a Messianic characteristic. He failed to realize that the promises to Abraham and David were only being primarily fulfilled in him (e.g. 1 Kings 4:20); he thought that he was the ultimate fulfilment of them (1 Kings 8:20 states this in so many words). His lack of faith and vision of the future Kingdom lead him to this proud and arrogant conclusion (cp. building up our own 'Kingdom' in this life through our lack of vision of the Kingdom of God).

Over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude-

Solomon assumes that the promises to Abraham of an innumerable seed had been fulfilled in his kingdom, just as he assumes the promises to David of the seed were fulfilled in him. He has no perspective of the future Kingdom of God, nor does he factor in the conditional nature of those promises.

And so Solomon 'had the truth', he knew so deeply the true principles of Yahweh worship and the promises which formed the basis of the covenant. But like us, he scarcely considered the enormity of the gap between the theory he knew and the practice of it in his own heart and living. We too have a tendency to build up masses of Biblical and spiritual knowledge, and to let the mere acquisition of it stop us from practicing it. He flouted the explicit commandments not to get horses from Egypt, not to marry Gentile women, and not to multiply silver and gold (Dt. 17:17,18 cp. 1 Kings 10:21-29). At the end of his days, he recognized that although he had loved the theory of wisdom, the image of a spiritual life, the wisdom of God had never really impacted his soul: "I said, I will be wise (referring back to his request for wisdom in 1 Kings 3); but it was far from me" (Ecc. 7:23). His request for wisdom had only been so that he could do the job of leading Israel, living out the parental expectation of his father, whom he admits in Proverbs 4 had taught him to ask for wisdom. In Prov. 19:12 he speaks as if his own wisdom was like the dew coming down- as if he felt that the mere possession of wisdom made him the Messiah figure which his father had so hoped for him to be in Ps. 72:6). And he says as much in Prov. 29:3: "Whoso loveth wisdom [exactly what Solomon was commended for doing] rejoiceth his father". He saw his wisdom and knowledge as some sort of a reward in themselves: "the prudent are crowned with knowledge" (Prov. 14:18). This is of course true in a sense, as all the Proverbs are. But Solomon surely had the idea that he, who was so renowned for his knowledge, was somehow thereby rewarded by having it. This assumption by Solomon was likely behind each of the many references he makes to the value of wisdom and the blessedness of the man who has it. It is rather like feeling that 'we have the truth' because somehow our correct understanding of doctrines is a reward for our righteousness, and mere possession of doctrinal truth means that we are acceptable to God.

2Ch 1:10 Now give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this your people, that is so great?-

I suggest on Ps. 119:169 that David asked for the word of promise that he would become king to be fulfilled; and in that context he asked for "wisdom / understanding" in how to rule Israel. And this was likewise the prayer of Solomon when he became king; but his motives were less than pure because he was consciously seeking to imitate his father in this request.

Solomon in Proverbs presents wisdom as of great personal benefit, indeed it is "for yourself"; and folly likewise is to your loss. But this presents a somewhat selfish view of

wisdom. Solomon had been granted wisdom not for himself, but because he wanted to know how best to rule God's great people. But once he has the wisdom, he becomes exalted by it, and concludes that wisdom is essentially for the personal benefit of those who have it, "you are wise for yourself" (Prov. 9:12). Whatever truths are revealed to us are so that we might use them to the glory of God with others, and not to merely keep them for our own personal benefit.

2Ch 1:11 God said to Solomon, Because this was in your heart-

Prayer is largely carried out in the mind – how we ‘speak in the heart’ is effectively read as our prayer to God. We find the phrase used about how Abraham’s servant prayed, ‘speaking in his heart’ (Gen. 24:45). Thus our self-talk merges into prayer; Hannah’s “prayer” appears to have been the same (1 Sam. 2:1). Solomon’s prayer for wisdom is described by God as “in your heart” (2 Chron. 1:11). This close link between thought and prayer is developed in the Lord’s teaching in Mk. 11:23,24: “Truly I say unto you, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he says comes to pass; he shall have it. Therefore I say unto you, All things you pray and ask for, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them”. Our self-talk is to be fantasy about the fulfillment of our prayers. Yet how often do we hit ‘send’ on our requests to God, like scribbling off a postcard, and hardly think again about them?

And you have not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of those who hate you-
This was in contrast to David, whose imprecatory Psalms certainly ask for that. And he asked for it at the end of his life, and Solomon operationalized it for David. So God is being very gracious here in commending Solomon for not asking for the lives of those who hate him. And He appears to be indirectly critical of David’s desire for just this.

God may be alluding to how David had asked long life and been given it (Ps. 21:8). This allusion was seeking to show Solomon that he was not to merely live out the image of his father David, but to think independently and forge his own relationship with God. Likewise Solomon had not taken literally the invitation of Ps. 2:8 to Messiah to "ask of Me (s.w. :5) and I will give you the Gentiles". Instead he had asked for wisdom.

Neither yet have asked long life; but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself, that you may judge my people, over whom I have made you king-

Prayer is largely carried out in the mind – how we ‘speak in the heart’ is effectively read as our prayer to God. We find the phrase used about how Abraham’s servant prayed, ‘speaking in his heart’ (Gen. 24:45). Thus our self-talk merges into prayer; Hannah’s “prayer” appears to have been the same (1 Sam. 2:1). Solomon’s prayer for wisdom is described by God as “in your heart”. This close link between thought and prayer is developed in the Lord’s teaching in Mk. 11:23,24: “Truly I say unto you, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he says comes to pass; he shall have it. Therefore I say unto you, All things you pray and ask for, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them”. Our self-talk is to be fantasy about the fulfillment of our prayers. Yet how often do we hit ‘send’ on our requests to God, like scribbling off a postcard, and hardly think again about them?

2Ch 1:12 wisdom and knowledge is granted to you-

1 Kings 3:12 "Behold, I have already given you a wise and an understanding heart; so that there has been none like you before you, neither after you shall any arise like you". Solomon asked God for a wise heart- but he was told that God had already given him this. The process of educating Solomon in wisdom would have started long before; but it was released, as it were, by Solomon’s specific prayer. We likewise are to ask in faith believing that we already have the things we ask for. 1 Kings 3:13: "I have also given you that which you have not

asked". We are not merely reading history here. God's word is living and engages with us in all generations. We too are given exceeding abundantly above all we ask (Eph. 3:20 alludes here)- if we put first the wisdom of achieving God's glory.

I will give you riches, wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had who have been before you; neither shall there any after you have the like-

"Riches" is s.w. Prov. 14:24 "The crown of the wise is their riches, but the folly of fools crowns them with folly".

It was Solomon who was the king and wore the ultimate crown in his society. And he implies that his fantastic riches were a result of his wisdom, and that his pattern should be followed by others. But he fails to remember that his desire for wisdom was recognized by God in that He gave Solomon riches. Those riches were a gift from God, by grace, and not acquired or generated by his own application of wisdom. He therefore misused his possession of wisdom and experience of grace to justify himself, and present himself as a self made man; when he was not that at all.

Solomon knew and warned that a little folly can destroy the man who is in reputation for wisdom and honour (Ecc. 10:1). Solomon had "honour" [s.w.] to an unprecedented extent (1 Kings 3:13). But in the same book he admits that he, the man famed world-wide for wisdom, gave himself to folly (Ecc. 2:3). He knew so well the error and folly of his ways, but he could only preach the lesson but not heed it. He "saw that wisdom exceedeth folly" (Ecc. 2:13)- but so what...

2Ch 1:13 So Solomon came from the high place that was at Gibeon, from before the Tent of Meeting, to Jerusalem; and he reigned over Israel-

It seems the elders of Israel (:1,2) came to Jerusalem, and then travelled with Solomon to Gibeon (:3) and then returned with him from there to Jerusalem (:13).

2Ch 1:14 Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen: and he had one thousand four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, that he placed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem-

1 Kings 4:26 "Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen".

Solomon's enthusiasm for Egyptian horses is clearly chronicled (1 Kings 4:26-28), although this was studied disobedience to Dt. 17:16. There is a powerful point to be made here: we can deceive ourselves that God is blessing us, when actually we are breaching explicit commands. Would Solomon had understood the concept of self-examination.

Solomon had obsessive tendencies. We know that he became addicted to finding pleasure in women, and Ecc. 2 shows him racing down the road of obsession with architecture, alcohol, food, gold etc. The historical narratives so often mention his gold and silver (e.g. 2 Chron. 9:13-21,24,27). This repetition reflects Solomon's obsession. The same fact explains the record's repetition of Solomon's enthusiasm for horses (1 Kings 10:25-29; 4:26,28; 9:19,22; 2 Chron. 1:14,16,17; 8:6,9; 9:24,25,28).

2Ch 1:15 The king made silver and gold to be in Jerusalem as stones-

Yet amassing of gold, silver and horses was explicitly forbidden for the King of Israel (Dt. 17:17). There is a powerful point to be made here: we can deceive ourselves that God is blessing us, when actually we are breaching explicit commands. Would Solomon had understood the concept of self-examination.

And cedars made he to be as abundant as the sycamore trees that are in the lowland-
This could mean that he planted cedars in Israel, perhaps transplanting them from Lebanon;

for his wisdom included being given wisdom about plants. And that wisdom was for the sake of the blessing and wise leadership of God's people Israel.

2Ch 1:16 The horses which Solomon had were brought out of Egypt and from Kue; the king's merchants purchased them from Kue-

Solomon had obsessive tendencies. We know that he became addicted to finding pleasure in women, and Ecc. 2 shows him racing down the road of obsession with architecture, alcohol, food, gold etc. The historical narratives so often mention his gold and silver (e.g. 2 Chron. 9:13-21,24,27). This repetition reflects Solomon's obsession. The same fact explains the record's repetition of Solomon's enthusiasm for horses (1 Kings 10:25-29; 4:26,28; 9:19,22; 2 Chron. 1:14,16,17; 8:6,9; 9:24,25,28). Yet amassing of gold, silver and horses was explicitly forbidden for the King of Israel (Dt. 17:17). There is a powerful point to be made here: we can deceive ourselves that God is blessing us, when actually we are breaching explicit commands. Would Solomon had understood the concept of self-examination.

Solomon started off as a middleman in the horse trade, buying horses from Egypt and selling them to the Hittite and Syrian kings (2 Chron. 1:16,17; 1 Kings 10:25,29); but he was playing with fire, and he soon came to flout the spirit of the command not to buy horses from Egypt. It's rather like the brother who works in a video store starting to watch the blue movies which he handles daily. Solomon would have justified it initially by saying that the horses were not for himself; just as we saw he justified his Egyptian wife by the thought that Joseph also married an Egyptian girl.

2Ch 1:17 They brought out of Egypt a chariot for six hundred pieces of silver, and a horse for one hundred and fifty. They also brought them out for all the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of Syria-

The description of Solomon's trading with Egypt is described with an unusual phrase- he brought forth chariots and horses out of Egypt by his hand (1 Kings 10:29). But the Hebrew phrase 'to bring forth by the hand' is used so very often to describe how God's mighty hand brought forth His people from Egypt- destroying the horses and chariots of Egypt in the process (Ex. 7:4,5; 13:3,14,16; 14:8; 32:11 and so often). This is such a major theme in Biblical history that the inspired choice of words is surely intentional and allusive in 1 Kings 10:29- for Solomon did the very opposite to what God did for His people. Solomon's hand brought forth and glorified the chariots and horses of Egypt, bringing them all the way from Egypt to Canaan. Solomon is thus being subtly set up as an anti-God figure- although apparently, all was well, the promises of blessing were being fulfilled etc.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 2

2Ch 2:1 Now Solomon purposed to build a house for the name of Yahweh, and a house for his kingdom-

"The royal house" of Esther 1:9 is literally "the house of the kingdom", the term used for the temple in 2 Chron. 2:1,12. This extends the impression discussed on Esther 1:7 that we have here a fake, imitation temple of Yahweh. Remember that Chronicles is history written up for the encouragement of the exiles. The perceptive amongst the exiles would have seen the similarity between Solomon's buildings and those of their captors.

Solomon states these words as his own in 1 Kings 5:5. Again this is a spin; because it was David who had purposed to build the temple, and had prepared for it. And again we see Solomon assuming that the promises of 2 Sam. 7 were totally fulfilled in him; whereas being the Messianic son of David was conditional. And the

house to be built was more essentially the house of God's family which God was to build for David rather than any physical temple. But Solomon totally missed all this.

2Ch 2:2 Solomon counted out seventy thousand men to bear burdens, and eighty thousand men who were stone cutters in the mountains, and three thousand six hundred to oversee them-

1 Kings 5:13-16 reveals that Solomon had 153,000 full time and 90,000 part time male servants. Israel's complaint that Solomon had whipped them implies that he treated them like slaves, with himself as the slave-driver.

600,000 adults came out of Egypt (Ex. 12:37), and assuming the population only rose slightly over the next 550 years, we have the picture of an Israel where almost half the males (i.e. probably the majority of the working population) were pressganged into slavery to a despotic King Solomon.

This huge number of men involved in quarrying and transportation of the stones was because of the obsession with building projects which Solomon admits he had in Ecclesiastes. Just as Solomon's abundance of wives led to having a few thousand mouths to feed, and Israel needed to provide for that; so his obsession with thousands of horses meant that there was a need for a huge amount of fodder for them (1 Kings 4:28). And all Israel had to provide this- all for the sake of Solomon's obsessive desires. That he reigned for as long as he did was truly a sign of God's grace to him for the sake of his father David, and is a tacit reflection of how much God loved David despite all his failures.

The huge amount of labour required- 80,000 men hewing stone alone- was nothing more than Solomon acting like Pharaoh, using taskmasters to trample down / rule over the people to achieve his quotas and enable his building fantasies to become reality. The Hebrew word translated "bear rule over" (Heb. 'to trample down') in 1 Kings 5:16 is that which we find in the Law's prohibition of this in Lev. 25:46: "But over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule over one another with rigour". Solomon knew the Law, and he rambles on in Proverbs about the need to read, love and obey that law. And yet he thought that he could give that one a miss, 'because I am doing God's work and building His house'. And how many a believer has ended up missing the entire point of God's law, the very essence of Christianity, because of their obsession with serving God in a form which is effectively merely serving themselves, excusing their fantasies in the name of doing God service. It's the *process* of Solomon's apostasy which is so instructive; for he justified himself by saying that he was doing God's work. He didn't simply quit on God.

2Ch 2:3 Solomon sent to Hiram the king of Tyre saying, As you dealt with David my father, and sent him cedars to build him a house in which to dwell, so deal with me-

Solomon was obsessed with living out the image of his father. As Hiram had sent messengers to David (2 Sam. 5:11), so Solomon sends to Hiram.

2Ch 2:4 Behold, I am about to build a house for the name of Yahweh my God, to dedicate it to Him, and to burn before Him incense of sweet spices, and for the continual showbread, and for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the Sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the set feasts of Yahweh our God. This is an ordinance forever to Israel-

Solomon reasons as if all these Mosaic rituals required a temple in which to perform them. But the Mosaic laws about the tabernacle required just a tent, and not at all the grandiose religious system which David had become so obsessed with designing. It

could be that Hiram was some kind of proselyte, and therefore all the information about the Mosaic rituals was meaningful to him.

Solomon is alluding [as always] to the words of his father David, in Ps. 135:5: "For I am certain that Yahweh is great and great is our Lord beyond all gods". It is Yahweh who is great. But Solomon turns this into a statement that therefore the temple he builds must be "great" and greater than any temple built to other gods. This explains why the style of the temple is so similar to that of other temples from the time- it's just bigger and more lavish. Solomon reduces the greatness of Yahweh, and His infinite superiority over the other gods, to the simple term of having a greater temple than the other gods. Any purely religious approach to God diminishes His true greatness, which is in His grace. Solomon reduces the unique greatness of Yahweh to the uniqueness of the temple he is going to build Him. A temple Yahweh never wanted anyway. He fails to see Yahweh's greatness as being in terms of His grace and eternal salvation, which He had demonstrated for all time in His salvation of David regarding his affair with Solomon's mother Bathsheba. David made the same mistake in confusing the greatness of his projected temple with the greatness of Yahweh Himself. He says in 1 Chron. 29:11 "To you, Yahweh, belong the utmost greatness, might, distinction, eminence, and splendor- yes all that is in heaven and on earth" but then in 1 Chron. 22:5 "The temple I am about to build for Yahweh must become utterly great, for fame and distinction throughout all lands".

2Ch 2:5 The house which I build is great; for our God is great above all gods-
The deeper our realization of God's greatness, the higher our response. "My utmost for His highest". Thus Solomon built a "great" house for Yahweh, "for great is our God above all gods" (2 Chron. 2:5 AV). Israel prayed to God but without meaning, "though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him" (Hos. 11:7). They theoretically knew Him as "the most High" but in their hearts they failed to exalt Him. And so their prayers remained as empty words. And Solomon missed entirely the response of God to David's original desire to build this temple. God didn't want human works, but rather faith in His gracious desire to build David a house, through the work of His Spirit in human hearts.

2Ch 2:6 But who is able to build Him a house, since heaven and the heaven of heavens can't contain Him? Who am I then, that I should build Him a house, except just to burn incense before Him?-

"Who am I?" is a quotation of David's words about the temple in 1 Chron. 29:14: "But who am I..?". But this in turn had been David's response when God first told him that He didn't want a temple, but rather would build a house for David from his descendants. David totally misrepresented God's response as saying that He did in fact welcome the idea of a grandiose physical temple, and so by repeating his response at the time, he is surely guilty of a false humility. Solomon quotes these words of apparent humility and applies them to himself. But just as we cannot sing words of humility in a Christian song or hymn and thereby be humble, Solomon failed to realize that humility is not a bought or inherited position. It has to come from the heart. And he had no sense of personal sin or possibility of failure, and therefore no humility. Solomon claims that he solely wanted to build a temple in order to offer incense and sacrifice. But the obvious counter to that is that God only asked for an altar roughly made of earth or at best, unhewn stones, in order for man to offer sacrifice. A grandiose temple wasn't required for sacrifice.

2Ch 2:7 Now therefore send me a man talented to work in gold, silver, brass, iron,

purple, crimson and blue, and who knows how to produce engravings, to be with the talented men who are with me in Judah and in Jerusalem, whom David my father provided-

The impression David had given in his closing speech to Israel was that he had provided absolutely every resource, human and material, required to realize his temple plans. But this was evidently not the case, as Solomon has to order more materials and skilled labour to complete it. I noted on 1 Chron. 28,29 the hollowness and exaggeration in David's words at that point.

2Ch 2:8 Send me also cedar trees, fir trees, and algum trees, out of Lebanon; for I know that your servants know how to cut timber in Lebanon. My servants shall be with your servants-

Perhaps this was connected with the Divine wisdom about cedar trees which God had given Solomon (1 Kings 4:33). "Fir" is LXX "pine", which would have created a pleasant smell in the temple.

2Ch 2:9 even to prepare me timber in abundance; for the house which I am about to build shall be great and wonderful-

The greatness and wonder of the house was a big theme with David and Solomon. But God's response to David's initial suggestion of a temple was that He is a humble God, and doesn't like grandiose structures; rather does He wish above all for men to allow Him to work according to His grace in building a house for His glory made out of contrite, responsive hearts. Form eclipsed content for Solomon, religion overtook spirituality, as has happened constantly in the history of God's people. "Great and wonderful" is a Hebrew phrase consistently used about what God does for men by His grace; and not what man can do for God (Job 5:9; 9:10; 37:5; Ps. 86:10; 136:4; Jer. 32:17). In a time of greater humility, David had vowed not to exercise himself in this great and wonderful (s.w. Ps. 131:1). But now, Solomon is seeking to build a great and wonderful place for God, rather than allowing God to build that great and wonderful house of humbled human hearts.

2Ch 2:10 Behold, I will give to your servants, the cutters who cut timber, twenty thousand measures of beaten wheat, and twenty thousand measures of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil-

The different figures in 1 Kings 5:11 cp. 2 Chron. 2:10 could be because part of the amount was for Tyre generally, and part for Hiram's personal household. Twenty measure of pure oil (1 Kings 5:11) appears relatively small; but it is the same word used for the oil of the tabernacle rituals (Ex. 27:20), and as a proselyte Hiram may well have built his own kind of tabernacle system. I suggest on Ez. 28:14 that he indeed did so, but it turned into apostasy.

2Ch 2:11 Then Hiram the king of Tyre answered in a writing which he sent to Solomon, Because Yahweh loves His people, therefore He has made you king over them-

These are identical words as in 1 Kings 10:9, of the queen of Sheba's response. We are given the impression that they became proselytes because they used the Yahweh Name; although polytheists could take the name of other gods, such as Yahweh, without it meaning they had accepted them as their own gods.

2Ch 2:12 Hiram continued, Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel that made heaven

and earth, Who has given to David the king a wise son, endowed with discretion and understanding, that should build a house for Yahweh, and a house for His kingdom- This statement of faith that Yahweh was creator of heaven and earth would imply Hiram truly was a proselyte. For all the other nations had their various theories as to how their gods created heaven and earth. Hiram is repeating what Solomon had told him, in saying that this temple was a "house for Yahweh, and... His Kingdom". God had made it clear that He could not be contained in a house, and His Kingdom "rules over all" and was not so geographically and spatially limited. The temple obsession was really bringing God down to a very human, limited level.

2Ch 2:13 Now I have sent a talented man endowed with understanding, of Hiram my fathers-

This shows that there was more than one Hiram; it was likely a generic kingly name, like Pharaoh. However, we must compare this with 1 Kings 7:13: "King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre". This contrasts with how Solomon's communications with Hiram regarding the temple had been by messenger. But for the matters of building his own house, he wants him present in person. Again we see how more effort was put into Solomon's own house than God's house.

However I suggest that the actual Hiram king of Tyre is not necessarily in view, but a man called Hiram (2 Chron. 4:11), of similar spelling, who is described as a "father" to Hiram the king (2 Chron. 2:13); in the sense in which Joseph was a father to Pharaoh (Gen. 45:8), his leading official. Thus we read in 2 Chron. 4:16 that "the vessels thereof did Hiram his father make for king Solomon". However the point is established that a leading political figure within Tyre, who was known for his craftsmanship, was summoned personally to work on Solomon's own house, whereas this wasn't done for the work of God's house.

Another possibility is that this craftsman was Hiram's own representative, and is therefore spoken of as being "Hiram".

2Ch 2:14 the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan; and his father was a man of Tyre, talented to work in gold, silver, brass, iron, stone, timber, purple, blue, fine linen and crimson, also to engrave any kind of engraving, and to devise any device. Let there be a place appointed to him with your talented men, and with the talented men of my lord David your father-

2 Chron. 2:14 says "Hiram" was "son of a woman of the daughters of Dan", whereas 1 King 7:14 says he was "the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali". Dan may refer to the town called Dan or Laish which was in the territory of Naphtali, but inhabited by Danites (Josh. 18:27; 19:47; Jud. 18:7). Here we see how an apparent discrepancy on a surface level reveals a deep evidence of the way the records do not contradict but dovetail perfectly, as we would expect of a Divinely inspired writing. But this is only apparent to those who respectfully search the entire scriptures, rather than bandying around a surface level contradiction with an eagerness which speaks more of their own fears the Bible is inspired than of deep factual persuasion.

2Ch 2:15 Now therefore the wheat and the barley, the oil and the wine, which my lord has spoken of, let him send to his servants-

Tyre as a small island state had a major problem in obtaining enough food for their affluent population, so these basic food supplies were valuable to them.

2Ch 2:16 and we will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as you shall need. We will

bring it to you in floats by sea to Joppa; and you shall carry it up to Jerusalem-
1 Kings 5 says it was "fir", or LXX "pine", which would have created a pleasant smell throughout the temple.

2Ch 2:17 Solomon numbered all the foreigners who were in the land of Israel, after the numbering with which David his father had numbered them; and they were found one hundred and fifty-three thousand six hundred-

This may connect with the 153 fishes which were caught in Jn. 21:11, representing the ingathering of the Gentiles to the people of God (see note there). But despite the typical significance, Solomon was clearly abusing Gentile labour in order to satisfy his own obsession for architecture and building work. He admits in Ecc. 2 that he had such an obsession, and indulged it in his search for meaning in his own life. But it was at a terrible cost to those thousands of individuals made to serve it. Instead of Israel being a blessing to the Gentiles, Solomon made them a huge disadvantage for Israel's God. See on :18. David claimed to have already prepared all the resources necessary for the building of the temple. So this massive number of men involved in quarrying (:18) was an outcome of Solomon's obsession with architecture and building, rather than a genuine desire to glorify God.

2Ch 2:18 He set seventy thousand of them to bear burdens, and eighty thousand to be stone cutters in the mountains, and three thousand six hundred overseers to set the people to work-

1 Kings 5:16 has "three thousand and three hundred". The word for three in Hebrew, 'sals', can easily be confused with that for "six" ['ss']. The same confusion is found in 2 Chron. 8:10 cp. 1 Kings 9:23. This would appear to be one of the copying errors in these Divinely inspired records.

This levy of labour was evidently one of the reasons which led the next generation to complain that Solomon had chastised the people with whips (1 Kings 12:11; the happiness of the people which the Queen of Sheba observed in 1 Kings 10:8 was therefore just an impression Solomon arranged for her to receive). Yet "this is the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised: in order to build the house of the Lord, and his own house..." (1 Kings 9:15). Solomon justified his zest for power and control by saying it was in order to do the Lord's work, to build His house... and yet had he listened to God's word more carefully, he would have realized that the true house of Yahweh was in fact people... yet Solomon abused people in order to build a visible house for God. And so very often religious people have gone down the same path- devaluing the meaning and value of persons, because they want to be seen as achieving something visible for God, no matter how many people they abuse on the way. The ends simply don't justify the means; Solomon told himself that they did, and he ended up as bad as Saul and Pharaoh, who are alluded to in the records of his levy of slaves from Israel. And yet the 1 Kings record gives the impression of all happily working together to create a great temple for God. When we probe deeper, we find this was far from the case.

David had prophesied that his great son would "have dominion from sea to sea" (Ps. 72:8). 'Have dominion' is the Hebrew word translated 'oversee' here, or 'rule over' in 1 Kings 5:15. David's vision of his Messianic son having a world-wide Kingdom, in which all people blessed him for his grace and beneficence, was abused by Solomon into justifying 'having dominion' over people as his personal slaves; and they certainly didn't bless him for it but rather complained (1 Kings 12:11). It's as if Solomon grabbed the word 'rule over / have dominion', wrenched it out of context,

and used it to justify his actions, giving a quasi-Biblical justification to his pure selfishness. This is where knowledge of God's word can be a dangerous thing; leading people into a stronger self-justification than they would otherwise have had if they were guided by self-recognized greed alone.

This suggests that Solomon made the same mistake as Israel in earlier days- he was a satisficer, he himself married into those tribes, and he wasn't obedient to the clear covenant of the land which was binding upon him. Solomon's motivation for now bringing the Canaanites into servitude was not spiritual. Rather, as with his borrowing of money from Hiram (see on 2 Chron. 8:2), his obsession with his building plans was such that he needed huge amounts of money and resources to carry them through. And so he colonized the Canaanite areas and made them send him slaves to work on his quarrying and building projects (2 Chron. 8:2).

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 3

2Ch 3:1 Then Solomon began to build the house of Yahweh at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where Yahweh appeared to David his father, which he prepared in the place that David had appointed, in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite-
This implies David assumed that the spot where the Angel appeared to him in 2 Sam. 24:17,18 was where he should build the temple. It is another example of David's tendency to wildly over interpret, which led him to a mistaken obsession about building the temple and assuming Solomon to be his Messianic seed. It seems reasonable to conclude that Isaac was offered on or near the hill of Calvary, one of the hills (Heb.) near Jerusalem, in the ancient "land of Moriah" (cp. 2 Chron. 3:1). The name given to the place, Yahweh-Yireh, means 'in this mount I have seen Yahweh'. The events of the death and resurrection of the Lord which Isaac's experience pointed forward to were therefore the prophesied 'seeing' of Yahweh.

2Ch 3:2 He began to build in the second day of the second month, in the fourth year of his reign-

1 Kings says it was in the 480th year after the exodus. If it took Solomon four years to prepare all the materials, the claims of David to have prepared all the materials in advance are surely exaggeration. This is indicative of the obsession he had with the project in his mind; and it was zeal for an image of his own creation, rather than doing God's will. For God was clear that He didn't want the temple built.

2Ch 3:3 Now these are the foundations which Solomon laid for the building of God's house-

Or, "these are the things wherein Solomon was instructed".

The length by cubits after the first measure-

This alludes to the way there were two measurements of a cubit; that of about 17½ inches is called in Dt. 3:11 "the cubit of a man"; and then later the cubit was a measure of about 21½ inches, a handbreadth longer than "the first measure" (Ez. 40:5).

Was sixty cubits and the breadth twenty cubits-

This was twice the size of the tabernacle. Psalm 127 is prefaced with the information that it is a Psalm for Solomon- perhaps given by some nameless prophet (Gad? Nathan?) to warn him of where he was going. Verse 1 reminds him that God must be the builder of any house, or else the builders labour in vain. There is good reason to think that Solomon utterly failed to appreciate this. The records stress time and again

that *Solomon* built the temple (1 Kings 6:2,14; 9:10,25; 10:4; 1 Chron.6:10,32; 2 Chron. 8:1,12; 9:3; Acts 7:47); yet the house referred to in the Davidic promises was to be built by God, through David's Messianic Son, the Lord Jesus. Zechariah prophesied at the time of the rebuilding of the physical temple. It is significant, in this context, that Zech. 6:12 reminds Israel that the true temple of God will be built by the Branch, the Lord Jesus.

2Ch 3:4 The porch that was in front, its length, according to the breadth of the house, was twenty cubits, and the height one hundred and twenty; and he overlaid it within with pure gold-

The height of the porch was 120 cubits, or 180 feet (2 Chron. 3:4). This is out of proportion to the length and breadth. Perhaps what is meant is that the height of each of the four walls has been added together, which would give a height of 30 cubits. See on :11. It's hard to know which kind of cubit is in view. If that of 18 inches, this would be a height of 180 feet; if 21 inches, then 210 feet. This would make the porch a kind of tower, probably in the form of a pyramid. The porch functioned as a kind of gateway to the temple. Layard's excavations of the palace of Khorsabad unearthed a gateway of very similar size and proportion. It's hard to know who copied who, but it could well be that far from these being Divinely given specifications, David and Solomon were imitating the architecture of the surrounding nations.

2Ch 3:5 The greater house he made with a ceiling of fir wood which he overlaid with fine gold, and ornamented it with palm trees and chains-

"Fir" is LXX "pine", which along with the huge amount of cedar would all have been brought from Hiram. Perhaps the reference was to David's imagery of the righteous flourishing like the palm tree (Ps. 92:12). But Solomon had likened his Egyptian lover to a palm (Song 7:7,8), and the palm and open flowers feature in Egyptian architecture. Seeing that Solomon had married an Egyptian, and the Song of Solomon reflects Solomon's deep admiration for things Egyptian, it seems likely that even in the temple, Solomon allowed Gentile influence, although mixing it with the imagery of the cherubim of Yahweh's manifestation. And that was to be a sad theme of this temple until its destruction. There are observable similarities with the decoration of Egyptian holy places. Seeing that Solomon had married an Egyptian, and the Song of Solomon reflects Solomon's deep admiration for things Egyptian, it seems likely that even in the temple, Solomon allowed Gentile influence. And that was to be a theme of this temple until its destruction.

2Ch 3:6 He garnished the house with precious stones for beauty: and the gold was gold of Parvaim-

David boasts in 1 Chron. 29:4 that his gold is "of Ophir", whereas in reality Solomon covered the house with gold "of Parvaim" (2 Chron. 3:6). This suggests that David may not in fact have had in hand all the fantastic personal wealth he boasted of donating for the rendering of the house with gold.

2Ch 3:7 He overlaid also the house, the beams, the thresholds and its walls and its doors, with gold; and engraved cherubim on the walls-

The idea was that the glory and presence of God represented by the cherubim was not only in the most holy place, but extended beyond it. David had often perceived this in his Psalms whilst on the run from Saul. And yet I suggested on :5 that Solomon was influenced by the architecture of the surrounding nations. In this connection, we can

note that there appears a connection with the winged bull of the Assyrian sculptures, called *kirubu* in Akkadian. And perhaps the precursors of this were known in the surrounding nations, and Solomon was imitating them, rather than solely giving glory to Yahweh.

2Ch 3:8 He made the most holy place: its length, according to the breadth of the house, was twenty cubits, and its breadth twenty cubits; and he overlaid it with fine gold, amounting to six hundred talents-

One talent is 26 kilograms (57 pounds). 1 kilogram of gold is currently worth about 40,000 US\$ [2020], meaning the value was around 625 million US\$ in current terms. But in the poor, subsistence farming economy of those times, this sum was far greater in real terms. But this was not even all the gold which came to Solomon in the course of one year (1 Kings 10:14), so it was not particularly generous.

2Ch 3:9 The weight of the nails was fifty shekels of gold. He overlaid the upper rooms with gold-

Gold is hardly the best material for nails or "pegs" (Heb.). This is an example of practical function being overlooked in favour of external image and opulence. That same basic tension is there in all God's people and their organizations. It is the tension between spirituality and religion, form and content. David had prepared iron nails (1 Chron. 22:3 s.w.), but Solomon replaced them with golden nails, in a bid to excel his father in religious opulence.

2Ch 3:10 In the most holy place he made two cherubim of wood; and they overlaid them with gold-

1 Kings 6:23: "Of olive wood, each ten cubits high". "Olive" is s.w. "pine", and may also have been brought from Gentile Hiram- to be worked into God's glory.

2Ch 3:11 The wings of the cherubim were twenty cubits long. The wing of the one was five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house; and the other wing was five cubits, reaching to the wing of the other cherub-

This style of recording dimensions is to be found in :4. The length of the wings of the cherubim is given as 20 cubits, but this was a way of saying that each of the four wings was five cubits long. We have another example in the way that the two pillars are said to be 18 cubits high (1 Kings 7:15), but in 2 Chron. 3:15 they are 35 cubits high. What that means is that there were two cubits of 17.5 cubits high each, summarized as 18 cubits high in 1 Kings 7:15.

2Ch 3:12 The wing of the other cherub was five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house; and the other wing was five cubits, joining to the wing of the other cherub-

This means that the wings of the cherubim touched each other. There was a complete covering over the mercy seat, or top of the ark where the blood of atonement was sprinkled each year, and above that but below the wings of the cherubim the shekinah glory of God was seen. The ark and mercy seat were placed under the cherubic wings (2 Chron. 8:6). It was only a relatively small space.

2Ch 3:13 The wings of these cherubim spread themselves forth twenty cubits. They stood on their feet, and their faces were toward the house-

See on :11. In the tabernacle the wings were "spread out on high" (Ex. 25:20; 27:9), but here their wings touch each other. Although Solomon claims he built everything

according to Divine revelation, we wonder whether in fact he felt free to liberally reinterpret the tabernacle features. And he changes wings uplifted to God's glory to wings which are closed in upon each other; the mercy seat, or cover of the ark, is no longer exposed to Heaven, as it were, but now closed over.

The ark and mercy seat were placed under the cherubic wings (2 Chron. 8:6). The ark was one and a half cubits high (Ex. 25:10) and the cherubim were ten cubits high (1 Kings 6:26). In this relatively small space, the shekinah glory of God was manifest. For God doesn't need much space in which to reveal Himself; which is an abiding principle.

2Ch 3:14 He made the veil of blue, purple, crimson and fine linen, and decorated it with cherubim-

It could be argued that 1 Chron. 6:31,32 implies there were door of olive wood, engraved with cherubim, which divided the holy place and most holy. In this case we wonder whether the veil was draped over that structure, which would have been contrary to the spirit of the tabernacle. The veil represented the flesh of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 10:20), and also the fact that the way into the most holy place, representing God Himself in Heaven, was somehow barred. But when the Lord died, the veil was torn from top [by God] to bottom (Mt. 27:51), and thus the way into direct personal fellowship with God was opened (Heb. 9:8,24; 10:19). This understanding was so radical for Jewish minds. For the high priest could only nervously enter the most holy place briefly, once every year on the day of atonement. But now the believer in Christ can enter into full and permanent fellowship with God Himself. This was all achieved through the Lord's flesh being torn. The fine linen speaks of His righteousness (Rev. 19:8), the blue of His association with God in Heaven, the crimson of His blood, and the purple of His Kingship (Jn. 19:2). All this was worked into the veil, and the overall product of it was glory to God, represented by the image of cherubim superimposed upon all this.

2Ch 3:15 Also he made before the house two pillars of thirty-five cubits high- The two pillars are said to be 18 cubits high (1 Kings 7:15), but in 2 Chron. 3:15 they are 35 cubits high. What that means is that there were two cubits of 17.5 cubits high each, summarized as 18 cubits high in 1 Kings 7:15. We have another example of this kind of reckoning in the way that the height of the porch was 120 cubits, or 180 feet (2 Chron. 3:4). This is out of proportion to the length and breadth. Perhaps what is meant is that the height of each of the four walls has been added together, which would give a height of 30 cubits. This style is to be found in 2 Chron. 3:11, where the length of the wings of the cherubim is given as 20 cubits, but this was a way of saying that each of the four wings was five cubits long.

They were "fashioned" (1 Kings 7:15), or as AV "cast", and reflects Egyptian influence. The paintings of Thebes show this casting being done in Egypt, and it clearly was copied by Solomon. In connection with his wife being Pharaoh's daughter, he likely visited Egypt several times.

The two pillars with their pomegranates and lily-work seem to have matched the open flowers of the temple, and they have ominous connections with Absalom's pillar of self-glorification (2 Sam. 18:18). Worst of all, Solomon's throne seems to have been built with allusion to Yahweh's enthronement upon the praises of Israel in the Most Holy.

And the capital that was on the top of each of them was five cubits-

The capitals were placed on the tops of the pillars, as in 1 Kings 7:16. "Tops" is "heads", and the Hebrew for "capitals" suggests "crown". The height of the capitals is

given as three cubits in 2 Kings 25:17, but five cubits in 2 Chron. 3:15. The difference would be whether the crowns ["capitals"] were measured to the peak of the highest spike of the crown, or the top of the rim of the crown. But the idea is that everywhere in his house, Solomon was glorifying his own kingship; forgetting that it was by grace, and conditional upon his obedience.

2Ch 3:16 He made chains in the oracle, and put them on the tops of the pillars; and he made one hundred pomegranates, and put them on the chains-

I consider that any attempt to find spiritual significance in the pomegranates used in Solomon's building is misplaced, because I don't think he was at all thinking in that way. Rather is this another example of his simply copying what he had seen in Egypt, from where his queen came from. For such pomegranate designs are common in Egyptian architecture of the time, and Egypt was famed for pomegranates (Num. 20:5).

2Ch 3:17 He set up the pillars before the temple, one on the right hand, and the other on the left-

Comparing with 1 Kings, I suggest there were two sets of pillars, one before Solomon's house and another before the temple. But pillars before a temple was a reflection of pagan influence. "The Phoenicians used isolated metal columns as sacred ornaments, so that Hiram would be familiar with such a mode of ornamentation" (Rawlinson). "Whenever in coins or histories we get a representation of a Phoenician temple, it always has a pillar or pillars standing within or before it" (Stanley). It seems that the contact with Tyre had resulted in their religion coming to influence Solomon's design of the temple. And so it happens when we claim to serve God according to the religious ideas of pagans. This is another reason why I query whether in fact he did receive the designs of the temple from God as he claimed.

And called the name of that on the right hand Jachin, and the name of that on the left Boaz-

"Jachin" means "He will establish", and Boaz "in Him [God] is strength", which is the idea in Is. 45:24. They were a statement that God would establish the line of Solomon, and perhaps Boaz is also a reference to his ancestor of that name. But that establishment of the Kingdom was conditional upon Solomon's obedience, according to the promises to David in 2 Sam. 7. But Solomon liked to think that by building these pillars, he had himself established his dynasty, and shown it to be established. Putting the two names together, we have 'He will establish by strength', and this seems to be deconstructed by the restoration prophecy of Zech. 4:6, given after these two pillars had been removed, never to be restored.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 4

2Ch 4:1 Then he made an altar of brass, twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and ten cubits in height-

An altar of 15 feet high and 30 feet square was impractical for use, just as the molten sea / laver was too huge to ever be used. Again we have the impression Solomon was simply into religious showmanship rather than encouraging spirituality. This was far larger than the altar of the tabernacle, which was 5 x 5 x 3. Clearly the idea was that far more animals were going to be offered. And yet David and Solomon were forgetting the lesson taught through the sin with Bathsheba, Solomon's mother; God doesn't want sacrifice, but rather broken, contrite hearts (Ps. 40:6-8). Just as God didn't want a physical house built to Him, but rather wanted

to build a house of people with humble hearts open to the working of His Spirit. The altar was of brass, whereas that of the tabernacle was of common, weak acacia wood (Ex. 27:1,2). This taught that the basis of acceptable sacrifice and approach to God is the recognition of our common weak humanity, and sacrifice is offered to God upon that basis. But Solomon had no recognition of his own moral frailty and humanity, and was convinced that as David's son and the Messianic seed [as he imagined], he was therefore perfect. And it seems David too somehow rationalized his sin with Bathsheba by the end of his life, and lacked grace and humility.

2Ch 4:2 Also he made the molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass; and its height was five cubits; and a line of thirty cubits encircled it-

This gives the circumference of the laver as "thirty cubits", although it was ten cubits broad. Taking 'pi' to be 3.14, it is apparent that the circumference would have been 31.4 cubits; but the Spirit says, summing up, "thirty". Sometimes the Biblical record is vague, other times exact. This reflects how God is not seeking to cover His back against critics. He is of an altogether higher nature than that. There are times when the Spirit uses very approximate numbers rather than exact ("about the space of four hundred and fifty years", Acts 13:20 cp. 1 Kings 6:1). The reference to "seventy" in Judges 9:56 also doesn't seem exact. Seven and a half years (2 Sam. 2:11) becomes "seven years" (1 Kings 2:11); three months and ten days (2 Chron. 36:9) becomes "three months" (2 Kings 24:8). This is not how we are used to history being written; but we are reading the Hebrew genre of history, not our own.

2Ch 4:3 Under it was the likeness of oxen which encircled it for ten cubits, encircling the sea. The oxen were in two rows, cast when it was cast-

There is no record of this huge laver ever being used in practice. The urgent requirement for true cleansing was turned into mere external ritualism, something which was to be seen and admired rather than personally participated in.

2Ch 4:4 It stood on twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, three looking toward the west, three looking toward the south and three looking toward the east. The sea was set on them above, and all their back parts were inward-

This massive laver was therefore a political statement, implying the twelve tribes of Israel were only to be cleansed by this huge laver. I discussed on 1 Kings 4 how Solomon sought to bring all Israel under his personal control. He constantly mixes spiritual appearance with his own unspiritual agendas.

2Ch 4:5 It was a handbreadth thick; and its brim was worked like the brim of a cup, like the flower of a lily. It received and held three thousand baths-

"Shushan" is the Hebrew word for "lily", which was iconically associated with the Jerusalem temple (s.w. 1 Kings 7:19,22,26). Shushan was where the palace of Persia was (Esther 1:2), and sets the scene for the impression discussed on Esther 1:7 that we have there a fake, imitation kingdom and temple of Yahweh. Remember that Chronicles was history written up especially for the exiles. But the spiritually minded exiles would have perceived that Solomon's temple had been designed as a secular architectural masterpiece, similar to the palace of their captors. We several times read of the lily motif in Solomon's building. But the word can as well refer to the lotus. And "the lotus was the religious flower of the Indian and Egyptian religions". So we have a case of Solomon allowing himself to be influenced by the pagan religions of his wives and those he traded with, and importing it into his own version of Yahweh worship.

The size of this laver was unrealistic if it were to be useful. The huge size was therefore for show, and not because Solomon really wished there to be cleansing in practice. Beneath the rim it has "buds", or AV "knops" (1 Kings 7:24). "Buds" is a guess at translation, for the Hebrew word is very obscure, literally "wild gourds", a poisonous plant (s.w. 2 Kings 4:39). It is unlikely this plant is in view. But there are observable similarities with the decoration of Egyptian holy places. Seeing that Solomon had married an Egyptian, and the Song of Solomon reflects Solomon's deep admiration for things Egyptian, it seems likely that even in the temple, Solomon allowed Gentile influence. And that was to be a theme of this temple until its destruction. .

1 Kings 7:26 says it held 2000 baths, perhaps describing the quantity of water actually used, although it had the capacity to hold 3000.

2Ch 4:6 He made also ten basins, and put five on the right hand and five on the left, to wash in them. Such things as related to the burnt offering they washed in them; but the sea was for the priests to wash in-

The massive laver described above was for show, it was too large to realistically be used for ritual cleansing; in practice, the ten smaller lavers would have to be used. But even they were far more than the single laver of the original tabernacle. This was because David and Solomon envisaged offering huge numbers of animals for offerings, requiring far more priests than did the tabernacle system of worship. David and Solomon were forgetting the lesson taught through the sin with Bathsheba, Solomon's mother; God doesn't want sacrifice, but rather broken, contrite hearts (Ps. 40:6-8).

2Ch 4:7 He made the ten lampstands of gold according to the command concerning them; and he set them in the temple, five on the right hand and five on the left-

"The candlestick" or menorah is only ever spoken of in the law of Moses in the singular, but in 1 Chron. 28:15 David had decided there were to be multiple such candlesticks. By doing so, he ignored the symbolism of the one candlestick, such was his obsession with mere religion. "According to the command" may therefore refer to David's command rather than God's. Or perhaps Solomon carefully made each of the ten lampstands according to the specification for the one lampstand.

2Ch 4:8 He made also ten tables, and placed them in the temple, five on the right side and five on the left. He made one hundred basins of gold-

The table of show bread was to be made of acacia wood (Ex. 25:23), but David planned to make it of pure gold, and even worked out the weight of gold required for it (1 Chron. 28:16). And Solomon indeed made it of gold (1 Kings 7:48), leading to it being known as "the pure table" (2 Chron. 13:11). And he made "tables" plural, as he made candlesticks (:7), although the law only required one candlestick. See on :19. Religion had overtaken spirituality, form had eclipsed content. Likewise the "tables of silver" David ordered to be made (1 Chron. 28:16) do not feature in the tabernacle. He was missing the point- that God wanted His holiest symbols made of common, weak things like acacia wood. For His strength and glory is made perfect in weakness. David claims these plans were from God (1 Chron. 28:19), although as discussed on 1 Chron. 28:12, they were in fact from his own mind. The way these things were taken into captivity, with no record of this golden table ever being returned, surely reflects God's judgment upon this kind of religious show. He prefers a humble house church in an inner city room, rather than a gold plated cathedral. The way some exclusive churches speak of 'maintaining a pure table' suggests they have made the same essential mistake as David did.

So many vessels were not required by the tabernacle service. This was a completely different, grandiose religious system of David's own device; and in the end, all these vessels of mere religion were taken off into captivity (2 Kings 25:14-16 emphasizes this).

2Ch 4:9 Furthermore he made the court of the priests, and the great court, and doors for the court, and overlaid their doors with brass-

The "court of the priests" is that of 1 Kings 6:36; 7:12: "He built the inner court with three courses of cut stone, and a course of cedar beams". This would be the "higher court" of Jer. 36:10. Perhaps it was made "higher" by the three layers of stone and the cedar decking placed upon it. Perhaps the idea was that the people in the outer court could see what the priests were doing. We wonder however what exactly was the "middle court" (2 Kings 20:4). The brass doors contrast with the "hangings for the court of fine twined linen" (Ex. 27:9), representing righteousness (Rev. 19:8). Yet brass can represent the flesh. The desire to make the temple solid and permanent meant that the fine symbolism of the tabernacle was crudely overlooked.

2Ch 4:10 He set the sea on the right side of the house eastward, toward the south-

This confirms that the right side was the south. The description is as of a person standing facing the temple from the west side of it. But this was not where the entrance was. Solomon was describing it from his perspective and not that of a worshipper entering the temple from the east.

2Ch 4:11 Hiram made the pots, the shovels and the basins. So Hiram made an end of doing the work that he did for king Solomon in God's house-

This gives the lie to David's confident statements that he had all the human and material resources prepared for the temple. He was in the grip of obsession, and convinced he had empowered and resourced the temple to go ahead. But in reality, Solomon needed more materials and the workmen provided by David, or those he had in mind, were in fact apparently not used in making the finer work for the temple.

2Ch 4:12 the two pillars, and the bowls, and the two capitals which were on the top of the pillars, and the two networks to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the top of the pillars-

We now have a summary of all the work done, as if Solomon itemized it all and boasted in the inventory. This glorification of human works and achievement revealed so much about his lack of true spiritual perception; see on :14.

2Ch 4:13 and the four hundred pomegranates for the two networks; two rows of pomegranates for each network, to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the pillars-

There were 100 in each row (1 Kings 7:20), but on one row there were 96 facing the courts, meaning the other four were at the corners (Jer. 52:23). The internal corroboration between records written hundreds of years apart is impressive, and reflects Divine inspiration of the entire Old Testament.

I consider that any attempt to find spiritual significance in the pomegranates used in Solomon's building is misplaced, because I don't think he was at all thinking in that way. Rather is this another example of his simply copying what he had seen in Egypt, from where his queen came from. For such pomegranate designs are common in Egyptian architecture of the time, and Egypt was famed for pomegranates (Num. 20:5).

2Ch 4:14 He made also the bases, and the basins he made on the bases-

There is much stress upon all the 'making' of things and the "work" done (1 Kings 7:40,51). Solomon had quite missed the lessons learned by his father David [and his mother Bathsheba], that God wants broken, contrite hearts more than works and sacrifices. He wanted to build a house of people, rather than have a house built for Him.

2Ch 4:15 one sea, and the twelve oxen under it-

We wonder whether David and Solomon saw in this huge laver some kind of representation of their power, with all twelve tribes of Israel subservient to them. There was no equivalent of this huge laver in the tabernacle, and in practical terms, the ten smaller lavers would have been used. In 18 out of 21 occurrences, the Hebrew word translated "scaffold" in 2 Chron. 6:13 is translated "laver". The huge podium or "laver" from which Solomon proudly addressed Israel was perhaps basin shaped. This confirms the suggestion here that the laver with the 12 oxen beneath it was really a statement of Solomon's power over the 12 tribes of Israel, with them serving him and being his power base. Spiritual functionality was therefore replaced by a political, religious agenda- as happens so often in the history of God's people.

2Ch 4:16 Hiram his father also made the pots, the shovels, the forks, and all its vessels for king Solomon for the house of Yahweh of bright brass-
The idea is of polished copper.

2Ch 4:17 The king cast them in the plain of the Jordan, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zeredah-

"The king cast them" suggests Solomon's personal involvement with the work. This reflects how he admits in Ecclesiastes that he followed his obsession with building and architecture to a degree not possible for most men. His zeal was therefore more an expression of his own personality type and personal interests, than true love for God.

Zarethan where Solomon cast the lavers for the temple with their pagan motifs (1 Kings 7:46) is called Zaredathah in 2 Chron. 4:17, which is a form of Zeredah (1 Kings 11:26), the birthplace of Jeroboam son of Nebat. It doesn't therefore have good connections. We wonder if the golden calves were cast there too.

2Ch 4:18 Thus Solomon made all these vessels in great abundance; for the weight of the brass could not be estimated-

As noted on :12, Solomon itemized his work and boasted in the inventory. But he gave up weighing all the brass vessels. This glorification of human works and achievement revealed so much about his lack of true spiritual perception.

2Ch 4:19 Solomon made all the vessels that were in God's house, the golden altar also, and the tables with the showbread on them-

This confirms that there was no longer one table for the showbread but in fact ten tables. There were therefore presumably also more loaves of showbread used than stipulated under the Mosaic law for the tabernacle. See on :8. Religion had overtaken spirituality, form had eclipsed content.

2Ch 4:20 and the lampstands with their lamps, to burn before the oracle according to the commandment, of pure gold-

"The candlestick" or menorah is only ever spoken of in the law of Moses in the singular, but in 1 Chron. 28:15 David had decided there were to be multiple such candlesticks. By doing so, he ignored the symbolism of the one candlestick, such was his obsession with mere

religion. "According to the command" may therefore refer to David's command rather than God's. Or perhaps Solomon carefully made each of the ten lampstands according to the specification for the one lampstand.

2Ch 4:21 and the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs, of gold (perfect gold)-

Pure gold as a soft metal was not the right metal for tongs, but the concern was clearly religious show and opulence, rather than functionality in the true service of God. The "flowers" may refer to the "knops" of 1 Kings 7:24 and elsewhere, called "buds" in the NEV. "Buds" is a guess at translation, for the Hebrew word is very obscure, literally "wild gourds", a poisonous plant (s.w. 2 Kings 4:39). It is unlikely this plant is in view. But there are observable similarities with the decoration of Egyptian holy places. Seeing that Solomon had married an Egyptian, and the Song of Solomon reflects Solomon's deep admiration for things Egyptian, it seems likely that even in the temple, Solomon allowed Gentile influence. And that was to be a theme of this temple until its destruction. .

2Ch 4:22 and the snuffers, basins, spoons and fire pans, of pure gold. As for the entry of the house, the inner doors of it for the most holy place, and the doors of the main hall of the temple were of gold-

The inventory here is similar in style to that of the vessels of the tabernacle on Ex. 25-30. It seems Solomon wished to present what he had done in terms of building a new tabernacle, with himself thereby presented as Moses. And yet we have seen hints throughout the record that he built it with pagan influences throughout it.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 5

2Ch 5:1 Thus all the work that Solomon did for the house of Yahweh was finished. Solomon brought in the things that David his father had dedicated, even the silver and the gold, and all the vessels, and put them in the treasuries of the house of God-

There is much stress upon all the "work" done (:40,51). Solomon had quite missed the lessons learned by his father David [and his mother Bathsheba], that God wants broken, contrite hearts more than works and sacrifices.

These vessels were those taken in 2 Sam. 8:10. They were devoted to God's service by David and then Solomon dedicated them to the temple. The same phrase "of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass" is used of the vessels taken from Egypt and dedicated to the tabernacle (Ex. 11:2; 12:35; Josh. 6:19; 2 Sam. 8:10; 1 Kings 7:51). The generosity of others in Biblical history, their right perspective on the wealth taken from this world, was to inspire other believers in later history. And this is how the body of Christ should function today, with members inspiring others to spirituality.

The promises God makes involve a solemn commitment by Him to us- the serious, binding nature of His oath to us is easy to forget. God swore to David "by my holiness" (Ps. 89:35). The Hebrew for "holiness" is the very same word translated "dedication". David's response to God's dedication to him was to dedicate [s.w.] all the silver and gold which he had won from this world, to the service of God's house (1 Chron. 26:26; 2 Chron. 5:1). Our response to God's dedication to us should be a like dedication of what we have to Him. Covenant relationship with God requires much of both Him and us. The case of David is a nice illustration of the meaning of grace. David wanted to *do* something for God- build Him a house, spending his wealth to do so. God replied that no, He wanted to build *David* a house. And He started to, in the promises He gave David. And David's response to that grace is to

still *do* something- to dedicate his wealth to God's house, as God had dedicated Himself to David's house. This is just how grace and works should be related in our experience.

Ex. 40:33 is perhaps the clearest basis for the words of Jn. 17:4. This describes how Moses "reared up" the tabernacle, representing us (2 Cor. 6:16); "So Moses finished the work" God had given him to do. Dt. 31:24 likewise speaks of Moses finishing the work. The Hebrew for "reared up" is also used in the context of resurrection and glorification / exaltation. As our Lord sensed His final, ultimate achievement of the Father's glory in His own character, He could look ahead to our resurrection and glorification. He adopted God's timeless perspective, and died with the vision of our certain glorification in the Kingdom. This fits in with the way Psalms 22 and 69 (which evidently portray the thoughts of our dying Lord) conclude with visions of Christ's "seed" being glorified in the Kingdom. There are a number of passages which also speak of the temple (also representative of the ecclesia) being a *work* which was *finished* (e.g. 2 Chron. 5:1). In His moment of agonized triumph as He died, the Lord Jesus saw us as if we were perfect.

2Ch 5:2 Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the princes of the fathers' households of the children of Israel, to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of Yahweh out of the city of David, which is Zion-

Solomon imitated David's bringing up of the ark to Zion (2 Sam. 6:2). He lived out his father's faith and devotion, but only on an external level. He in due course was to turn away from Yahweh to idols, and descend into the nihilism of Ecclesiastes. "The city of David which is Zion" refers not to Jerusalem but to David's palace or citadel which was within Jerusalem. The ark had been as it were in David's back yard, and was now brought probably a short distance into the temple. David had earlier claimed that Yahweh had chosen Zion as His dwelling place. But it seems that Solomon now readjusts that, because the ark is now brought from that place into the temple he had built.

2Ch 5:3 And all the men of Israel assembled themselves to the king at the feast, which was in the seventh month-

This would have been the feast of tabernacles, which began on the 15th day of the seventh month and lasted seven days (Lev. 23:34). The building finished in the eighth month of Solomon's 11th year of reigning (1 Kings 6:37), so he waited almost a year before this ceremony of dedication. Perhaps for some reason he wanted to combine it specifically with the feast of tabernacles. The irony is that the feast of tabernacles alludes to how God dwelt in a tent / tabernacle. David had offered to build God a house, but God's reply had been that He preferred dwelling in a tent to any house built by human hands. Now Solomon has built Him a house- and dedicates it on the feast of tents / tabernacles.

The feast of tabernacles coincided with the second week of Solomon's two week dedication feast. But the feast of tabernacles was only five days after the day of atonement. It seems Solomon was so obsessed with dedicating the temple that he omitted to celebrate the day of atonement, and this would reflect his general lack of awareness of grace and the problem of sin.

1 Kings 6:37 says that the actual building was finished in the eighth month of the eleventh year. The seventh month must have been in the year following. Indeed the LXX in :1 suggests this dedication took place at the end of the 20 years required to build the entire palace-temple complex. This delay in dedicating the temple again reflects how Solomon was unconcerned with being practically useful to God's people. The hint seems to be in 2 Chron. 7:11 that the dedication of the temple and the completion of Solomon's house was at the same time: "Thus Solomon finished the house of Yahweh, and the king's house. He successfully completed all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of Yahweh, and in his

own house". This was after twenty years. Clearly Solomon saw his temple-palace complex as one building. The fact he waited so long to dedicate the temple shows it was all mere religion from his side, he had no genuine desire for the temple to be used by his people to draw closer to God.

2Ch 5:4 All the elders of Israel came. The Levites took up the ark-

2 Chron. 5:4 says that the Levites took up the ark, whereas 1 Kings 8:3 says that the priests did. Both were true; for Levites weren't allowed into the most holy place (Num. 4:20). So the Levites did carry it, according to the law; but the priests carried it into the most holy place. Here we see how an apparent discrepancy on a surface level reveals a deep evidence of the way the records do not contradict but dovetail perfectly, as we would expect of a Divinely inspired writing. But this is only apparent to those who respectfully search the entire scriptures, rather than bandying around a surface level contradiction with an eagerness which speaks more of their own fears the Bible is inspired than of deep factual persuasion.

2Ch 5:5 and they brought up the ark, and the Tent of Meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the Tent; these the priests the Levites brought up-

The priests took these things on the final part of their journey, into the most holy place; as the Levites were forbidden from doing so (Num. 4:20). But the Levites took them the first part of their journey; see on :4. We note the irony- God had clearly stated He preferred to live in a tent and not in a building. And Solomon now arranges for the tent to be taken into the building he had made, contrary to God's wishes. There is no further mention of the tent within the temple, so we assume this was a purely symbolic act and the tent was destroyed. He thereby went directly against God's statements about His preference for a tent over a temple.

2Ch 5:6 King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled to him, were before the ark, sacrificing sheep and cattle, that could not be counted nor numbered for multitude-

He offered huge numbers of sacrifices when the ark was brought into the temple (1 Kings 8:63), just as David had sacrificed as the ark was brought to Zion (2 Sam. 6:13). Yet he failed to feel and know the truth of David's conclusion that God doesn't essentially want sacrifice (Ps. 40:6). David had been forced to learn that lesson through the shame of his sin with Bathsheba- Solomon was so sure of his own righteousness that he never was driven to see the inadequacy of animal sacrifice in itself, and the need in the end for the direct receipt of God's grace.

Solomon offered sacrifices "that could not be told nor numbered for multitude". This is evidently to be connected with the language of the promises to Abraham about the multiplication of the seed of Israel. It could be that Solomon thought that his generosity in giving of his wealth was what had brought about the fulfilment of these promises- he almost forced God to fulfil them, at least in his own mind, by his generosity.

2Ch 5:7 The priests brought in the ark of the covenant of Yahweh to its place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubim-

See on :5,8.

2Ch 5:8 For the cherubim spread forth their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim covered the ark and its poles-

In the tabernacle the wings were "spread out on high" (Ex. 25:20; 27:9), but here their wings

touch each other. Although Solomon claims he built everything according to Divine revelation, we wonder whether in fact he felt free to liberally reinterpret the tabernacle features. And he changes wings uplifted to God's glory to wings which are closed in upon each other; the mercy seat, or cover of the ark, is no longer exposed to Heaven, as it were, but now closed over.

2Ch 5:9 The poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the ark before the oracle; but they were not seen outside-

This may reflect a design fault in the lengths of the staves. Although we are assured that a person looking from the outer sanctuary would not have seen them even when the entrance to the holy place was open. This kind of design fault would not have been present if indeed, as Solomon claimed, the specifications were given by God. I suggest this was just his claim, and he built the temple according to his own desire to have a go at architecture and building- which he admits in Ecclesiastes had been his passion and obsession, for a time. See on :64 for another possible design fault.

It is there to this day-

This indicates that this record was written some time before the exile ["to this day"]. But other parts of the history suggest it was written after the exile. This means that some parts were rewritten or edited, under Divine inspiration, but others weren't.

2Ch 5:10 There was nothing in the ark except the two tables which Moses put in it at Horeb, when Yahweh made a covenant with the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt-

Inside the ark was intended to be "the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded" (Heb. 9:4; Ex. 16:34; Num. 17:10). They had apparently been lost; so although they remained with the symbols of the covenant, they were lacking in the things which spoke of new spiritual life and the resurrection.

2Ch 5:11 The priests came out of the holy place, (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, and didn't keep their divisions-

These divisions are the courses of the priests (1 Chron. 24). but the work was so great, as there were so many sacrifices, that the division on duty that day or week couldn't cope, so all the priestly divisions sanctified themselves and did the work. This may be a hint that David's careful plans had some design faults within them, as noted on :9. Because they were all of man and not God.

2Ch 5:12 also the Levites who were the singers, all of them, even Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and their brothers, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals and stringed instruments and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them one hundred twenty priests sounding with trumpets)-

Clearly in imitation of David's praise when the ark was brought to Zion in 2 Sam. 6:5. As noted on :2, Solomon lived out his father's faith and devotion, but only on an external level. He in due course was to turn away from Yahweh to idols, and descend into the nihilism of Ecclesiastes. For personal faith is not the same as living out parental expectation.

It could be argued that standing "at" the east end may mean facing toward the east. In this case they were looking toward Solomon to impress him, and turning their backs on the sanctuary, which is the huge sin of Ez. 8:16.

2Ch 5:13 The trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking Yahweh; and they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised Yahweh, saying, For He is good; for His loving kindness endures forever! Then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of Yahweh-

Ex. 40:34,35 uses the same terms for God's acceptance of and dwelling in the tabernacle. For all the pagan undertones in the temple, and Solomon's unspirituality, God was eager to still dwell within this structure; even though it was not what He wanted. Just as He had used the human kingship, when it was deeply offensive to Him. Later the Chronicles record states that fire came down from Heaven and consumed the sacrifices- and yet their huge number was of itself a reflection of Solomon's refusal to accept what his parents had once learnt, that God doesn't want huge numbers of sacrifices but just a broken contrite heart. Yet God still accepts this lower level of spirituality, even misunderstanding of His grace. Just as He works with His people today who likewise forget or misunderstand His grace.

2Ch 5:14 so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of Yahweh filled God's house-

This was as at the erection of the tabernacle. The idea was that Yahweh's glory was far above the mere religion of the temple system. His glory was not just between the cherubim over the ark, but everywhere in His house. This was as if to downplay the importance attached to the ark. The allusion is to Lev. 16:3, where God says that "I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat". But the cloud was now filling the entire house. God came to Moses "in a thick cloud" (Ex. 19:9; 20:21) but now all the people were being treated as if they were Moses. The promise of 2 Samuel 7 was that God's Name would be in a new house of people; and his glory and His Name are closely connected. By doing this, God was seeking to nudge the people away from Solomon's religious approach towards a spiritual one. The record in 2 Chron. 5-7 describes praise, the interruption of the glory filling the temple, and then resumed praise. God as it were interrupted their religious ritual with a powerful reminder of His glory. We marvel that God did miraculously respond to such a prayer, full of misplaced ideals, willful misunderstandings of God's word by Solomon and his repetition and further spinning of David's similar willful misunderstandings, pride, political overtones of centralizing all spiritual power beneath Solomon in his palace-temple complex... and so forth. Just as God sees all this in the hearts, lives, thinking, churches... of His people. Yet still His presence is there, however reluctantly, however much His reservations, anger and displeasure with it all... yet still He so thirsts for relationship with man. And He as it were ran a risk by accepting the temple and sending His glory into it- the risk that He would appear to be thereby in agreement with Solomon's various misunderstandings and wrong attitudes. Any Divine acceptance of man has to run that risk. But it is only a risk for the superficial; because the Solomon record is clearly written in such a way as to beg comparison with other scriptures. The comparisons indicate so powerfully how wrong he was.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 6

2Ch 6:1 Then Solomon said, Yahweh has said that He would dwell in the thick darkness-

I noted on 1 Kings 6 and 7 that Solomon's temple had plenty of windows allowing natural light, as if to suggest God had now re-thought this dwelling darkness. Solomon like David (see on 2 Chron. 3:1; 2 Sam. 16:10) came to assume things about God in order to justify his passion for building a temple. He claims that God "said that He would dwell in the thick darkness", perhaps alluding to the darkness of the most holy place in which there was no natural light; but actually there's no record God ever said that. What He said was that He would dwell in the hearts of men and not in a house.

What we say to the Lord Jesus in His ear in the bedroom in the darkness, will be openly spoken by Christ at the judgment (Lk. 12:2,3). God dwells in darkness (Ex. 20:21; 1 Kings 8:12). Speaking in the bedroom in secret with the knowledge we will be openly rewarded is the language of prayer (Mt. 6:6). Our private relationship with the Lord now, praying to Him in our bedroom, meditating about Him there, will then be spoken out loud.

2Ch 6:2 But I have built You a house of habitation, and a place for You to dwell in forever-

Solomon totally misses the point of God's response to David's desire to build Him a house; God would build David a house, involving Him dwelling in the "place" of the humble human heart. And "forever" was conditional upon the obedience of David's son / seed. But here Solomon effectively dictates to God that those promises are now fulfilled in him- because he has built a temple for God.

Ps. 127 is "For Solomon" (v.2 "beloved" = Heb. Jedidah), and warns him that his labour for the temple will be in vain unless *God* builds it. The Psalm basically says that God will build Solomon a house in the sense of a family centred in the beloved seed who would die ["sleep"] to enable it; and therefore Solomon should not be so sweating himself day and night to build God a house / temple. This is the very message which God had given David earlier. David and Solomon evidently shelved their knowledge of the fact that Heaven is God's dwelling place. It would seem that Solomon particularly was guilty of a false humility; there is a gross contradiction within his words of 2 Chron. 6:2,18: "I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling *for ever*... But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built?". This is one of several hints that Solomon felt that the full fulfilment of the Davidic promises was to be found in him (cp. 2 Chron. 6:10). He failed to look forward to the spirit of Christ, instead becoming obsessed with the achievement of his own works. He was largely encouraged in this by David, who seems to have felt that Solomon was the Messiah figure the promises spoke about. Thus Ps.72 is dedicated to Solomon, and yet it speaks clearly of the messianic Kingdom. In the same way as David came to misquote and misapply the promises God made to him, Solomon did likewise. God told David that He did not want a physical house, because He had never commanded this to be done at any time in the past. Solomon misquotes this in 2 Chron. 6:5,6 to mean that God had never asked for a physical house in the past, but now he had asked David's son to build such a house in Jerusalem.

2Ch 6:3 The king turned his face-

From God to the people. The rest of this chapter is therefore Solomon praying facing the people rather than God. He was effectively praying to himself, praying to be seen of men. The Lord's criticism of such prayers seems to have in mind Solomon's example here. I suggest that here we have another example of the record making implicit criticism of Solomon rather than being specific, at least not until 1 Kings 11. Solomon was praying with his back to the sanctuary, and this is exactly what was condemned later in Ez. 8:16. The record there seems to allude to Solomon's position: "At the inner court of Yahweh's house... there, at the door of Yahweh's temple, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, with their backs toward Yahweh's temple, and their faces toward the east".

And blessed all the assembly of Israel; and all the assembly of Israel stood-
This blessing of Israel suggests Solomon was acting as the high priest, although he was not of the tribe of Levi. David had done this kind of thing, but from careful reflection upon the spirit of the law, whose letter he says in Ps. 119 he studied constantly. And David came to this sense through careful reflection upon God's grace to him, and through the experience of Uzzah's death as a result of taking 'living the spirit of the law' too far. Solomon's blessing of the people seems to be in his subsequent statements that the temple would bring them blessing. He ignored the connections between blessing and forgiveness by grace which his father had been forced to, after his sin with Solomon's mother ["blessed are they whose sins are forgiven... blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute iniquity"]. He sees the 'blessing' of external religion rather than internal peace with God by grace.

2Ch 6:4 He said, Blessed be Yahweh the God of Israel, Who spoke with His mouth to David my father and has with His hands fulfilled it saying-

As discussed above, the promises to David were not at all totally fulfilled at that point, just because Solomon had built a temple. They were conditional upon Solomon's obedience to the law, which from a young man he had not shown. We think of his marriage to Rehoboam's Ammonitess mother, and to Pharaoh's daughter .

As we will see on :5,6, what Solomon claims God said was not what He said; Solomon twists God's words. And that highlights the blasphemy of his claim here that God actually spoke the words Solomon claimed "with His mouth". God did not say those words.

2Ch 6:5 Since the day that I brought forth My people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house in, that My name might be there; neither chose I any man to be prince over My people Israel-

This is a typical misrepresentation of God's word. What God had said through Nathan was that He had not chosen anywhere for a temple to be built, but had lived as it were a mobile life in the tent of the tabernacle. And therefore, God would build David a house in the sense of a family of believers sharing David's faith.

2Ch 6:6 But I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name might be there; and have chosen David to be over My people Israel-

Solomon claims that God said: "I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there". God had chosen no resting place, although it would have been politically convenient for Solomon if the city of Jerusalem as a city was where God had chosen to dwell. And so he kept thinking that way until he persuaded himself that in fact this was what God had said. David had charged Solomon with the words which God had spoken to him about Solomon: "If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul" (1 Kings 2:4). But Solomon subtly changes this when he reminds God of how He had supposedly told David: "There shall not fail thee a man to sit on the throne of Israel; so that they children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me" (1 Kings 8:25). Two things become apparent here:

- The conditionality of the promise to David about Solomon is totally overlooked. "If thy children..." becomes "so that...", with the implication that David would always have descendants on the throne who would walk obediently before God. The possibility of personal failure had been removed by Solomon from his own perception of God.

- God's desire that Solomon should "walk before me in truth" was changed to "walk before me as thou [David] hast walked before me". This defined walking before God personally as having the relationship with God which your father had. And so often we have made the same mistake. The call to personally follow the Lord has become displaced by a following Him through others.

Notice how Solomon says these words to God Himself. Solomon had persuaded himself that this truly was what God had asked of David and himself, and so he comes out with these words to God.

Solomon frequently references the exodus from Egypt with the implication that the completion of the temple meant that their journeys were over (1 Kings 8:16,21,51,53). But there is no Divine word to this effect. When they entered Canaan, there was no special ceremony to celebrate the end of their journeys. There are allusions to the wilderness journeys throughout the Bible, suggesting God sees His people like Abraham, on a journey that will only end in the establishment of His Kingdom on earth at the last day. Solomon claims God spoke of how "I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house that My name might be there". But what He said was that He was always a God on the move. That is why Ex. 20:24 speaks as if God would have various places where He put His Name: "In every place where I record My name I will come down to you and I will bless you".

The implication is that God "chose no city" for a temple apart from Jerusalem. But this is Solomon's twisting of God's words to David. He stated that He would not need a temple because His manner had always been that He "moved around in a tent and in a tabernacle" (2 Sam. 7:6). He would appoint a place not for the ark but for His people- in the future Messianic Kingdom which His begotten Son would establish: "I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place" (2 Sam. 7:10). And the One chosen to be over His 'house' or people would be David's future Messianic son, God's begotten Son, to be born well after David had died.

2Ch 6:7 Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel-

This much was true, but it is sandwiched between various untruths and misrepresentations. But he misses the point of God's response, that His Name, His personality and character, dwells in persons and not buildings. The house God promised to build David would manifest Yahweh's Name in the sense of His characteristics, the fruit of the Spirit, as the NT would put it. For God's Name in this sense cannot be in a physical building or city.

2Ch 6:8 But Yahweh said to David my father, Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for My name, you did well that it was in your heart-

This is not recorded in the historical account, and given Solomon's tendency to misrepresent God's word we wonder whether this was said by God at all. Because God's response had been that He didn't want a house. He wanted to build a non physical house for David. Those reasons He gave for declining David's offer are not at all in the spirit of what God is now reported to have said.

2Ch 6:9 Nevertheless you shall not build the house; but your son who shall come forth out of your body, he shall build the house for My name-

As noted above, this would have been contrary to the spirit of the reasons God gave for declining David's offer. He had explained that He had never asked for any permanent sanctuary to be built for Him, and tent life was His style, as He doesn't live

in buildings but in hearts. And instead of building a house for Yahweh, David was instead to focus upon the wonderful grace of Yahweh's plan to turn his Messianic seed and all "in him" into an eternal spiritual house for His abode. Yet Solomon presents God as having been in eager agreement with the idea, but simply had some reservations about David doing it, and instead asked Solomon to build it. That would have been a contradiction of the reasoning God gave for saying He didn't want a physical house built for Him.

2Ch 6:10 Yahweh has performed His word that He spoke; for I have risen up in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as Yahweh promised, and have built the house for the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel-

The establishment of the promises to David was to be conditional upon David's son walking in God's ways. But now Solomon wrongly presents the promises to David as having come to total fulfilment in him, just because he had built a temple for God.

Solomon speaks about him being King in Jerusalem (Ecc. 1:1,12; Prov. 1:1) as if this was the ultimate fulfilment of the Davidic promises. Consider the implications of 2 Chron. 1:9: "O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth... give me now wisdom, that I may go out and come in before (i.e. lead) this people". Solomon was asking for wisdom because he thought that he was the Messiah, and he saw wisdom as a Messianic characteristic. He failed to realize that the promises to Abraham and David were only being primarily fulfilled in him (e.g. 1 Kings 4:20); he thought that he was the ultimate fulfilment of them (1 Kings 8:20 states this in so many words). His lack of faith and vision of the future Kingdom lead him to this proud and arrogant conclusion (cp. building up our own 'Kingdom' in this life through our lack of vision of the Kingdom of God).

2Ch 6:11 Therein I have set the ark, in which is the covenant of Yahweh, which He made with the children of Israel-

By saying this, Solomon was careful to omit mentioning that the pit of manna and Aaron's rod were now no longer within the ark. "There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb ... the ark, in which is the covenant of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:9,21). Those tablets, on which were the ten commandments, were the covenant. The old covenant is therefore the ten commandments, including the Sabbath- and this has been replaced by the new covenant, which does not require Sabbath keeping.

He reasons as if he has built a place for the ark, which was as it were homeless. But the ark was designed to be kept in the tabernacle, a tent. There was no need for a temple for it. And the ark didn't remain permanently in the temple; for many years later Josiah commanded "the Levites... Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel built" (2 Chron. 35:3). And God emphasizes that in the restoration and the true Messianic kingdom, the ark will no longer be important: "people will no longer talk about my ark. They will no longer think about it or remember it; they will not even need it, nor will they make another one. When that time comes, Jerusalem will be called 'The Throne of the LORD,' and all nations will gather there to worship me" (Jer. 3:16,17). God's plans for a rebuilt temple in Ez. 40-48 make no mention of an ark, nor is the ark listed in the inventory of things taken into captivity in Babylon (2 Kings 25:13-17; Ezra 1:7-11).

2Ch 6:12 He stood before the altar of Yahweh in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread forth his hands-

Solomon was hardly praying in his closet! It seems the Lord was alluding to Solomon

in Mt. 6:6, interpreting what he does here in a very negative light, and a reflection of Solomon's pride rather than his spirituality.

2Ch 6:13 (for Solomon had made a bronze scaffold, five cubits long, five cubits broad and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court; and on it he stood, and kneeled down on his knees before all the assembly of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven)-

18 out of 21 occurrences, the Hebrew word translated "scaffold" is translated "laver". The huge podium was perhaps basin shaped. This confirms the suggestion on 2 Chron. 4:15 that the laver with the 12 oxen beneath it was really a statement of Solomon's power over the 12 tribes of Israel, with them serving him and being his power base.

2Ch 6:14 He said, Yahweh, the God of Israel, there is no God like You, in heaven or on earth; You Who keep covenant and loving kindness with Your servants who walk before You with all their heart-

David spoke of *seeking and praising God's grace* with his "whole heart" (Ps. 9:1; 119:58; 138:1). Solomon uses the phrase, but speaks of *being obedient* with the "whole heart" (1 Kings 8:23; 2 Chron. 6:14) and applying the "whole heart" to the intellectual search for God (Ecc. 1:13; 8:9). There is a difference. The idea of whole hearted devotion to God was picked up by Solomon, but instead of giving the whole heart to the praise of God's grace, he instead advocated giving the whole heart to ritualistic obedience and intellectual search for God. This has been the trap fallen into by many Protestant groups whose obsession with "truth" has obscured the wonder of God's grace.

2Ch 6:15 Who has kept with Your servant David my father that which You promised him: yes, You spoke with Your mouth, and have fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is this day-

Again we note the blasphemy of Solomon claiming God had spoken things with His mouth about Solomon and his temple, which He never said. Solomon misses the conditional nature of God keeping covenant grace with His people; He kept it if they were obedient (Dt. 7:9,12), which David was not. Yet God still kept His word with David. That was by grace, but the grace of it is missed by Solomon.

He failed to meditate upon the promises beyond what they seemed to offer him in the here and now; and the result was that he felt they were *totally* fulfilled in him (1 Kings 8:20,24). He dogmatically declared to Shimei: "And King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the Lord for ever" (1 Kings 2:45). And in all this, of course, we see our warning.

2Ch 6:16 Now therefore, Yahweh the God of Israel, keep with Your servant David my father that which You promised him saying, There shall not fail you a man in My sight to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children take heed to their way, to walk in My law as you have walked before Me-

This is a twist on what God actually promised David. He spoke of a singular seed, to be born after David "slept with [his] fathers". The phrase "man to be ruler in Israel" is applied to Messiah individually in Mic. 5:2 ("But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, being small among the clans of Judah, out of you one will come forth to Me the man that is to be the ruler in Israel"). But Solomon has expanded this into "your children".

He overlooks the condition as being that he personally must be obedient. But he just slightly twists this, to make the conditionality dependent upon Israel's obedience rather than his personal obedience. The promises to David originally focused upon one individual, whom the New Testament interprets as the Lord Jesus. But David in Ps. 89:30; 132:12 and Solomon here and in 1 Kings 8:25 chose to understand the "seed" as the Davidic dynasty down the generations. This loss of focus upon the future Lord Jesus was what led David and Solomon to focus instead upon their own dynasty, rather than upon the future individual son of David who would reign eternally upon David's throne. His personal immortality came to be interpreted as the eternal continuance of the Davidic dynasty as kings of Israel throughout future generations.

Notice how Solomon says these words to God Himself. Solomon had persuaded himself that this truly was what God had asked of David and himself, and so he comes out with these words to God.

2Ch 6:17 Now therefore, Yahweh the God of Israel, let Your word be verified which You spoke to Your servant David-

Solomon keeps saying that his zealous work for the temple was the result of God's promise to David having fulfillment in him (1 Kings 8:24-26), and to some extent this was true. David earnestly prayed for Solomon to be the Messianic King (e.g. Ps. 72), and therefore David asked for Solomon to be given a truly wise heart (1 Chron. 29:19). These prayers were answered in a very limited sense- in that Solomon was given great wisdom, and his Kingdom was one of the greatest types of Christ's future Kingdom. Our prayers for others really can have an effect upon them, otherwise there would be no point in the concept of praying for others. But of course each individual has an element of spiritual freewill; we can't force others to be spiritual by our prayers; yet on the other hand, our prayers can influence their spirituality. David's prayers for Solomon is the classic example of this.

Those prayers were heard most definitely, in that God helped Solomon marvellously, giving him every opportunity to develop a superb spirituality; but he failed to have the genuine personal desire to be like this in his heart, in his heart he was back in Egypt, and therefore ultimately David's desire for Solomon to be the wondrous Messianic King of his dreams had to go unfulfilled.

2Ch 6:18 But will God indeed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens can't contain You; how much less this house which I have built!-

It was exactly because of this that God didn't want a physical house built for Him. Yet Solomon has misrepresented God as saying He *did* want such a house. So these words are fake humility from Solomon, seeking to cover his proud obsession with building projects beneath an appearance of humility.

This statement of Solomon's is not in fact quite as humble as it may seem- for his argument is that God lives in Heaven, but Heaven cannot contain Him. And so he has built a house for God, but even that cannot contain Him. He totally misses God's redefinition of a "house" as a family of people manifesting His Name, made possible through the work of His future begotten Son.

2Ch 6:19 Yet have respect for the prayer of Your servant and to his supplication, Yahweh my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which Your servant prays before You-

I noted on :3 that Solomon is praying all this facing the people, to be seen of men.

This prayer would have been better said facing toward God. His showmanship is apparent.

2Ch 6:20 that Your eyes may be open toward this house day and night, even toward the place where you have said that You would put Your name; to listen to the prayer which Your servant shall pray toward this place-

God never said that. It is Solomon's twist of the word of promise to David, that if his son / seed were obedient, then "He shall build an house for My Name". But that house was to be built up from persons, and had no reference to any physical building; indeed, the very opposite. God's eyes are open upon His children wherever they are, as David had learned whilst far from the sanctuary and on the run from Saul. Nehemiah felt God's eyes were open upon him even when the temple was in ruins (Neh. 1:6).

"The place" of God's Name was never intended to be a physical building. Solomon is forcing his own interpretation of Dt. 12:10,11 as referring to the temple he had built: "When you go over the Jordan, and dwell in the land which Yahweh your God causes you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you, so that you dwell in safety, then to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose, to cause His name to dwell there, you must bring all that I command you". The Hebrew *maqom* translated 'place' can mean simply a locality, yet Solomon likes to insist that it means a 'place' as in a building. Yet *maqom* in its 400 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible usually refers simply to a locality and not some 'holy place'. And God has used the term in describing the situation which would come about through David's future son who would be God's begotten son: "I will appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be moved no more. Neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, as at the first" (1 Chron. 17:9). That future appointed "place" was not the temple; for God in this context says He doesn't want a temple, but will instead give His future people a "place" in eternity through the great Son. It is this "place" which the Lord has in view when He says that His death on the cross is "to prepare a place for you" (Jn. 14:2,3). "I will appoint a place" is the same Hebrew as in God's 'appointing a place' for the innocent murderer to flee to for refuge (Ex. 21:13), and that "place" was a city of refuge not a temple. And again, that "place" is understood in the New Testament as the Lord Jesus. The place appointed was one where Yahweh's Name would be placed (Dt. 12:21; 14:24 etc.). It is far too literalistic to assume that the letters YHWH would be placed in a physical place. Surely we are to understand the Name as His characteristics, to be placed supremely in the "place" of His Son, through whom a family / house of people would arise bearing that Name.

2Ch 6:21 Listen to the petitions of Your servant and of Your people Israel when they shall pray toward this place. Yes, hear from Your dwelling place, even from heaven; and when You hear, forgive-

The temple and ark are sometimes referred to as the heavens (2 Sam. 15:25 cp. 1 Kings 8:30; 2 Chron. 30:27; Ps. 20:2,6; 11:4; Heb. 7:26). The church is the new temple, and is therefore at times referred to as the heavenlies in the New Testament. But Solomon was not reasoning on this level at this point. Rather was he claiming that the temple building would somehow make prayer more powerful before God. But that is simply untrue; no physical building can act as some kind of mediator between God and man. This is not to say that the faithful did not later pray toward the temple; for both Daniel and Jonah did. But it was not because they thought the temple somehow

gave their prayers more power and standing before God because of its existence. For in Daniel's time, and perhaps Jonah's, the temple was in ruins.

Or we can simply see this as Divine accommodation to man. There was no need to pray towards the temple neither did it add anything to the efficacy of prayer. But Jonah and Daniel did it and God accepted that. Just as He may accept some who reverence a cross and place it above their bed, even though that may not be God's ideal intention.

2Ch 6:22 If a man sin against his neighbour, and an oath is laid on him to cause him to swear, and he comes and swears before your altar in this house-

The following verses contain seven possible cases of sin for which the temple could bring forgiveness; and seven cases of possible Divine judgment. The number seven suggests Solomon saw all sin and all possible judgment as being dealt with through the temple. Whereas his parents ought to have learnt for all time that forgiveness doesn't depend upon ritual but God's grace alone and the contrite hearts of sinners.

The rabbis interpret this verse as specifically concerning a man who is suspected of sinning against his neighbour through adultery with the man's wife. Solomon is asking God to judge the man if guilty and swearing by the temple was to be some kind of way of forcing truth to come out. Given the background of Solomon's parents, we marvel at how Solomon just didn't "get" the huge grace shown to his father. Who had not been judged according to his just deserts in this matter.

God's awareness of who was telling the truth was not, however, predicated upon the altar being situated within a physical building. God's presence and omniscience was not somehow from then on conditional upon the temple.

2Ch 6:23 then hear from heaven, and do, and judge your servants, bringing retribution to the wicked, to bring his way on his own head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness-

"Hear in heaven" is repeated throughout these seven possible cases of sin and judgment. Solomon seemed to think that Yahweh would hear in Heaven because of the temple. He thereby introduces a level between God and man- the temple. This is a classic case of religion rather than personal spirituality. In Prov. 24:24 and other Proverbs, Solomon teaches that this is how men should judge, lest they be cursed. He says that God condemns the wicked but justifies the righteous, and so should we. But by having this position, he shows his total lack of appreciation of God's grace to his father David. For David was worthy of condemnation, but by grace, he the wicked was justified, counted righteous, when he was not (Ps. 32:2 cp. Rom. 4:4-6). This lack of appreciation of grace arose from how it seems Solomon totally whitewashed the sin of his father David with his mother Bathsheba. And it resulted in his lack of grace, and failure throughout Proverbs to appreciate that human behaviour is nuanced, and is not simply divided between spotlessly righteous behaviour and terrible sinfulness.

2Ch 6:24 If Your people Israel be struck down before the enemy because they have sinned against You, and shall turn again and confess Your name, and pray and make supplication before You in this house-

Again, Solomon devalues the power of prayerful repentance and confession of God's Name; for he implies that this is made somehow more powerful through praying to the God "in this house". But Solomon is as it were bringing God down from heaven to earth by suggesting He is somehow located "in this house". Whereas He is in heaven, as he contradictorily admits in :25. It was because of this mindset that there was such

a collapse of faith in Judah when they saw the temple in ruins. It meant, according to Solomon's logic, the death of God.

Who God is, as expressed in His Name, is an imperative to prepare ourselves to meet Him in judgment. The confession of the Name is paralleled with repentance here. If Israel sin and repent "and confess Your Name", they will be forgiven. But instead of "confess thy name" we expect "confess their sins: the point being that to confess the name is effectively to confess sins. The name is the characteristics of Yahweh. The more we meditate upon them, the more we will naturally be lead to a confession of our sins, the deeper we will sense the gap between those principles and our own character. Likewise in 2 Chron. 12:6 the statement that "the Lord is righteous" is effectively a confession of sin. And thus we are not to bear or take the Name of Yahweh called upon us at baptism in vain- the reality of the implications of the name are not to be lost upon us.

2Ch 6:25 then hear from heaven, and forgive the sin of your people Israel, and bring them again to the land which You gave to them and to their fathers-

See on :24. The restoration to their land was to be because they, or those who remained in the land, would pray to God in the temple (:24). Solomon is hereby assuming that even if Israel sin and go into captivity, the temple will be an eternal house for God which will always be there. He is so very wrong. The temple was not eternal and was destroyed; but the exiles could still pray to God, quite independently of the existence of the temple. The destruction of the temple was for multiple reasons, but perhaps one of them was to rid God's people of these wrong ideas about God's presence in the temple building. And God answers this idea that the temple was to be eternal in 1 Kings 9:7,8.

2Ch 6:26 When the sky is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You; if they pray toward this place, and confess Your name and turn from their sin, when You afflict them-

Solomon inserts parts of his father's Bathsheba psalms in his prayers for how all Israel could be forgiven if they "confess thy name... when thou afflictest them... saying, We have sinned... forgive thy people... and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed" (1 Kings 8:35,47,50 = Ps. 32:5 etc.). On the basis of David's pattern, all God's people can find forgiveness, if they make a like confession. Indeed, this has long been recognized by Jewish commentators; and many of the Psalms understood by them as relevant to the Nazi holocaust are Bathsheba Psalms. "Out of the depths" they cried like David; and at the entrance to Bergen-Belsen it stands written: "My sorrow is continually before me" (Ps. 38:17), in recognition of having received punishment for sin [note how these kind of plaques contain no trace of hatred or calling for Divine retribution upon the persecutors].

But Solomon, as ever, is mixing truth with error. Because the turning again to God was not dependent upon praying towards the temple building. It was to be destroyed, and the direction of their prayers was to be towards "the God of heaven" and not some ghost in a ruined temple. This phrase "the God of heaven" or similar is often found in the restoration histories, indicating that God's people had been forced to learn this lesson.

2Ch 6:27 then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants and of Your people Israel, when You teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land, which You have given to Your people for an inheritance-

The reference to rain was appropriate in the immediate context because as explained on 2 Chron. 5:3, Solomon was speaking in the seventh month of Ethanim, literally, the rain month, and likely the latter rains were pouring down at this time as he was speaking. His implication would be that this rain was part of the promised blessing for obedience because of the temple. Perhaps this was why, as noted on :2, Solomon had purposefully arranged the dedication festival at this time.

2Ch 6:28 If there is famine in the land, if there is plague, blight or mildew, locust or caterpillar; if their enemies besiege them in the land of their cities; whatever plague or whatever sickness there is-

These things clearly allude to the curses for breaking the covenant in Dt. 28. But those curses were to be lifted by repentance and renewed faithfulness to the covenant, and their lifting was not predicated upon the existence of the physical temple and praying in it or towards it.

2Ch 6:29 whatever prayer and supplication be made by any man, or by all Your people Israel who shall know every man his own plague and his own sorrow of heart, and shall spread forth his hands toward this house-

As Pharaoh's heart was plagued (Ex. 9:14), so was Israel's (1 Kings 8:38); as Egypt was a reed, so were Israel (1 Kings 14:15). As Pharaoh-hophra was given into the hand of his enemies, so would Israel be (Jer. 44:30). She would be "Condemned with the world...". But the phrase 'spread forth hands' is used often in the Bible, but followed by 'to the Lord'. Solomon is praying with hands spread forth towards heaven; but he is confusing prayer towards God with prayer towards the temple. He is drawing an inappropriate parallel between God and the temple.

Solomon, the man with every available pleasure, laments that his days are full of sorrow and grief and he can't sleep peacefully at night (Ecc. 2:23). Yet Solomon had prayed that when God's people were in grief and sorrow because of their sins, they could pray to God using his temple, and be forgiven and have their grief assuaged. Yet in Ecc. 2:23, Solomon laments that all his days are spent in grief and sorrows (s.w.). The way out of the depression with which he ended his days was repentance and acceptance of God's free grace and forgiveness. But he refused to do this, and turned his heart away from Yahweh.

We are forgiven on account of the fact we truly sorrow for our sins, knowing them as our own sore and our own grief (2 Chron. 6:29,30). The Lord carried our sorrows, i.e. our sins. It is only *these* sins, for which we have sorrowed, that He carried. *This* is why we need to appreciate that sin is serious.

2Ch 6:30 then hear from heaven Your dwelling place and forgive, and render to each man according to all his ways, whose heart You know; (for You, even You only, know the hearts of the children of men;)-

This reference to God dwelling in heaven makes a nonsense of the idea of building a house for God to inhabit on earth. And this was exactly why God had not wanted David to build the temple. So Solomon is here merely giving lip service to these ideas.

Descriptions of God's dwelling place clearly indicate that He has a personal location: "God is in heaven" (Ecc. 5:2); "He has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth" (Ps. 102:19,20); "Hear in heaven your dwelling place". Yet more specifically than this, we read that God has a

“throne” (2 Chron. 9:8; Ps. 11:4; Is. 6:1; 66:1). Such language is hard to apply to an undefined essence which exists somewhere in heavenly realms.

Rabshakeh confirmed the threatened destruction of Jerusalem with a letter which Hezekiah took “before the Lord”. His first response was not to turn to Egypt; he’d learnt the wrongness of that. He went to the house of the Lord. Whilst we are always in God’s presence, there is surely a sense in which coming into His presence through prayer is drawing yet closer to Him. And so it was with the special presence of YHWH in the temple at that time. Hezekiah was aware that YHWH ‘dwells between the cherubim’ (2 Kings 19:15). Presumably standing before the ark, Hezekiah “spread out” the letter (2 Kings 19:14). The Hebrew word translated ‘spread out’ is the same as that usually used about how the wings of the cherubim were ‘spread out’ over the ark (Ex. 25:20; 37:9). It’s also the word used in Solomon’s prophecy of how repentant people would spread out their hands in the temple at the time of the punishment for their sins, and receive forgiveness and help: “Whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by all your people Israel, each knowing his own affliction and his own sorrow and stretching out his hands in this house, then hear from heaven your dwelling place and forgive” (2 Chron. 6:29,30). And Hezekiah would also have been only too aware of Isaiah’s judgment against Judah of a few years earlier: “When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen” (Is. 1:15). But Hezekiah summoned his faith in God’s forgiveness, and spread out his hands as he spread out the letter. He showed his deep repentance, and his faith in forgiveness to such an extent that he was bold enough to ask God for deliverance. Faith in forgiveness of our sins is perhaps one of the hardest things to believe in- strangely enough, seeing that God delights in forgiveness.

2Ch 6:31 that they may fear You, to walk in Your ways, so long as they live in the land which You gave to our fathers-

This is repeating the idea of Ps. 130:4: "There is forgiveness with You, that You mayest be feared". Solomon reasons that the experience of forgiveness [on behalf of his temple] will make the people fear Yahweh. And that is so; if we realize the awesome nature of forgiveness, we will fear / respect the God who grants it on a scale and of a nature so beyond our forgiveness of others. "All the days that they live in the land" could hint that Solomon wrongly thought that the people would live eternally in the land, because he was the Messianic king and the temple had now been built.

2Ch 6:32 Moreover concerning the foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel, when he shall come from a far country for Your great name's sake and because of Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm; when they shall come and pray toward this house-

The acceptance of the Gentile within the community of Israel was not simply predicated upon the existence of the temple. Ruth was the classic case of coming out of a Gentile country for the sake of Yahweh's Name. And her acceptance was not at all predicated upon any temple building, because there was none in existence at her time. There seems implicit in the reasoning here that the fame of Yahweh's temple would spread to the surrounding nations, and some would wish to come and worship in it. But proselytes were not to be attracted to Yahweh because of any physical temple, but because of who He is- the things implicit in His Name. No matter how cool and slick the external presentation, this is not what legitimately converts people to the true God.

2Ch 6:33 then hear from heaven, even from Your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to You for; that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as does Your people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by Your name-

As discussed on :32, God's response to Gentile proselytes, and their turning to Him, is not predicated upon the existence of a physical building. Solomon asks God to answer prayers of Gentiles made toward the temple so that the Gentiles would know that Yahweh's Name was really there- in "this house which I have built". The agenda of Solomon's pride is evident. God had told David that He didn't need a temple for His Name because His intention was that David's descendant, Messiah, would create a house of people who would bear God's Name, His characteristics, the fruits of His Spirit.

His prayer speaks as if the heavens where God lived were actually the temple; he bid men pray towards the temple where God lived, rather than to God in Heaven. Theoretically he recognized the magnitude of God (2 Chron.6:18); yet the vastness of God, both in power and Spirituality, meant little to him; it failed to humble him as it should have done. It is a feature of human nature to be able to perceive truth and yet act the very opposite. His enthusiasm for his own works lead him to lose a true relationship with God. The idea of salvation by grace became lost on him, loving response to God's forgiveness was not on his agenda, true humility was unnecessary for him, given his certainty that he was King as God intended. He reasoned that God would hear his prayers because they were uttered in the temple of his own hands, rather than because of any personal faith (1 Kings 8:52). Indeed, Solomon legalistically demands that God maintain [as in a court of law] the legal cause or "right" of His people if they pray towards the temple (1 Kings 8:45,49). Legalism and faith are opposed to each other, and Solomon's usage and conception of the temple was legalistic rather than faith based. When dedicating the temple, Solomon asks God to incline the hearts of Israel to be obedient to His commandments (1 Kings 8:57); and whilst God can and does do this, Solomon's implication seems to be that any disobedience would therefore effectively be God's fault for not making His people obedient. He failed to see the need for personal election to obey God's ways.

God said that He accepted the temple not so much as a place to dwell in (as Solomon assumed it was) but as a place facilitating sacrifice, prayer etc., for the glorification of His Name through these things; He emphasized that He dwelt amongst *His people* (1 Kings 6:13; 2 Chron. 7:12-16). There are several other places where God's response to Solomon's words seems to be corrective rather than affirmatory. Thus Solomon says that God will hear the prayers of His people because *the temple* is called by God's Name; but God's response is that "my people, which are called by my name" would pray to Him themselves and be heard, quite apart from the temple (2 Chron. 6:33 cp. 7:14). He sees them as bearing His Name rather than the temple building, as Solomon perceived it. God goes on to parallel the temple and His people in 2 Chron. 7:21,22, saying that if He punishes the temple He will punish the people. Solomon seems to have thought that the temple would still stand favourably in God's eyes even if the people were punished. The record records that the temple was "perfected" whereas Solomon's heart wasn't perfect [s.w.] (1 Kings 11:4 cp. 2 Chron. 8:16).

2Ch 6:34 If Your people go out to battle against their enemies, by whatever way You shall send them, and they pray to You toward this city which You have chosen, and the

house which I have built for your name-

Solomon is alluding to Dt. 20:1, but Israel were told that when they went out to battle (s.w.), they were to remember that Yahweh was present with them. Solomon has distorted this idea, by suggesting that Yahweh's presence was specifically in the temple, and the people were to pray towards it there. When in reality, His presence was with His people on the battle front and in their hearts.

Under the old covenant, victory against enemies was predicated upon obedience to and faith in the covenant; whereas here Solomon suggests that mere prayer to the temple will as it were do the trick. Again and again, we see form eclipsing content, the religious displacing the spiritual.

Literally, if they pray with their face toward... the house. The hypocrisy was that Solomon was praying facing Israel and with his face away from the temple. But he reasons that prayer must be made facing towards the temple.

2Ch 6:35 then hear from heaven their prayer and their supplication, and uphold their case-

"Maintain their cause" is the same phrase translated "do judgment / justice". But Israel were to do justice (Lev. 18:4 and often, as David did, 2 Sam. 8:15), and in response, Yahweh would do justice for them (Dt. 10:18). But Solomon overlooks this conditional aspect in Israel's relationship with God, as he did in his own life. He thought that merely praying to a temple would somehow obligate God to 'do judgment' for His people. This is the mentality of mere religion, and not of relationship with God.

2Ch 6:36 If they sin against You (for there is no man who sins not) and You are angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captive to a land far off or near-

Solomon often emphasized the importance of keeping ones' heart (Prov. 2:10-16; 3:5,6; 4:23-5:5; 6:23-26); he had foreseen that the essential sin of God's people was "the plague of his own heart" (1 Kings 8:46), and he imagined how for this sin God's people would later pray towards the temple. And yet his wives turned away *his* heart, for all this awareness that the heart must be kept. It was as if the more he knew the truth of something, the more he wanted to do the very opposite. And this is exactly true of our natures. Perhaps with Solomon he reasoned that in *his* case, foreign wives wouldn't turn away *his* heart. Just as our flesh thinks 'Yes, but it can't happen to *me*'. Perhaps too he reasoned that if the temple somehow could bring forgiveness for the plague of the heart, his heart was incorruptible because of the temple.

2Ch 6:37 yet if they shall repent themselves in the land where they are carried captive, and turn again, and make supplication to You in the land of their captivity saying, We have sinned, we have done perversely, and have dealt wickedly-

Again, Solomon assumes that even if Israel were to go into captivity, the temple would still stand, and prayer toward it would bring the restoration. But the temple was destroyed, so that they would be forced to quit this kind of religious tokenism and turn to God in Heaven with their hearts and souls. Daniel prayed these words (Dan. 9:5), but there was no temple then standing to add efficacy to them. And they were prayed in Ps. 106:6 before any temple stood.

2Ch 6:38 if they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity to where they have carried them captive, and pray toward their land

which You gave to their fathers and to the city which You have chosen, and toward the house which I have built for Your name-

The old covenant clearly taught that all Israel would be exiled from their land if they broke the covenant. Solomon's dedication of the temple seemed to assume that only the wicked would be exiled from the land, and the temple would stand eternally; to express repentance in exile, they just needed to pray towards it. But all Israel were sent into exile, and his temple was razed to the ground. But Solomon's belief that "The upright will dwell in the land; the perfect will eternally remain in it" (Prov. 2:21) meant that he totally refused to accept the extent of judgment predicted in the curses of Dt. 28. All Israel would be exiled from their land. He liked to assume that his Kingdom would eternally endure; because of his lack of faith in the nature of the future Kingdom, and his mistaken imagination that he was the eternal Messianic king. He refused to recognize that his father David in Ps. 72 had wrongly imagined that he would be that eternal king, and disregarded the conditionality of the promises made to him. And God answers this idea that the temple was to be eternal in 1 Kings 9:7,8.

Daniel understood that after 70 years Jerusalem must be restored; but he earnestly prayed for their forgiveness *so that* this would happen (Dan. 9:2 cp. 19). Perhaps he opened his window and prayed towards Jerusalem exactly because he wanted to fulfil 2 Chron. 6:37,38: "If they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn, and pray unto thee... toward their land... and toward the city which thou hast chosen". He knew that repentance was a precondition for the promised restoration to occur.

2Ch 6:39 then hear from heaven, even from Your dwelling place, their prayer and their petitions, and uphold their case and forgive Your people who have sinned against You-

When exiled from Absalom, David had prayed toward God's "holy hill" of Zion, and had been regathered there (Ps. 3:4). David had fled Jerusalem and the "holy hill" of the temple mount, which was now under Absalom's control. But he believes Yahweh is still there, present as it were in the temple, and answering his prayer. He perhaps alludes to the promises that if Israel sinned and were exiled, they could always pray to God and hope for regathering to His holy hill (Dt. 30:1-4; Neh. 1:9). Solomon now develops these thoughts further, in teaching that Israel in their dispersion were to pray to God toward Jerusalem, His "holy hill" of Zion (1 Kings 8:48,49). We see therefore how Solomon would have reflected upon his father David's experience; David had prayed towards God's "holy hill" when in exile from it, and had been heard. Solomon may well have been in David's retinue at the time, and would have experienced the wonder of return to Zion because of his father's prayer towards God in Zion.

1 Kings 8:50 adds: "and forgive Your people who have sinned against You, and all their transgressions in which they have transgressed against You; and give them compassion before those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them". God's giving of compassion to His people depended upon their holiness before Him (s.w. Dt. 13:17). But Solomon implies that it will be predicated upon the temple he had built. Form was replacing content, external religion was trumping true spirituality, physical symbolism was obscuring true repentance. The irony is that when Judah were in exile God gave them this compassion in the eyes of their captors. But they were not very penitent, nor was there any temple standing for them to pray towards. This fairly obvious observation is surely to highlight the bankruptcy of Solomon's thoughts here. He has no understanding of grace.

2Ch 6:40 Now, my God, let, I beg You, Your eyes be open, and let Your ears be attentive, to the prayer that is made in this place-

God's eyes are open upon His children wherever they are, as David had learned whilst far from the sanctuary and on the run from Saul. Nehemiah felt God's eyes were open upon him even when the temple was in ruins (Neh. 1:6). "Attentive" is the word used by Nehemiah in Neh. 1:11 "Lord, I beg You, let Your ear be attentive now to the prayer of Your servant". "Attentive" is s.w. 2 Chron. 6:40; 7:15, where we read of God being "attentive" to prayers offered in the temple. But Nehemiah was praying in exile, not in the temple. The desperation of the situation made him learn a lesson- that God wasn't only accessible in the temple. This may sound obvious to us, but it wasn't for those used to the temple cult. The lesson is that God uses punishments for sin, hard situations, to break our paradigms and lead us to a greater spirituality- if we will follow. S.w. also Neh. 9:34- Israel weren't "attentive" to God's word, but in their time of need they hoped He would be "attentive" to their word of prayer. And He was. His grace isn't 'measure for measure'; He treats us out of proportion to our attentiveness to Him. We must show the same grace.

2Ch 6:41 Now therefore arise, Yahweh God, into Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength-

The same root word for "Noah" is found here, where the ark of God 'rested' or 'Noah-ed' in the tabernacle. When the ark 'rested' on Ararat ['holy hill'] the same word is used (Gen. 8:4). A case can be made that Ararat was in fact Mount Zion, where the ark was later to 'rest' in the temple. The 'resting' of the ark was therefore the fulfilment of God's intention in Noah- God's salvation is described as a "promised rest" (Heb. 4:10,11), and it was prefigured in the final resting of the ark. Thus the final salvation of God is to be understood in terms of God 'resting' with us, in us, within His ark. He labours and struggles too... for us. And those struggles will only be at rest when we are saved in the last day; a Father's eternal struggle for His children. The 'rest' spoken of in Noah's name was thus a rest for God. Noah's going out of the ark into a cleansed, pristine world was therefore symbolic of our going forth into the Kingdom at Christ's return.

Solomon liked to think that the building of the temple meant that this was the promised time of "rest" for Israel. But the whole point made of the response made to David's temple project was that He is not a God at rest and neither are His people. The people suffered under Solomon's taskmasters building his treasure cities just as they did under Pharaoh; they hardly found rest under his reign let alone through the building of a temple on the backs of their labour and taxation sacrifices. The people were drafted into labour gangs, whereas the building of the tabernacle and resourcing of it was purely voluntary (Ex. 25). And God's Name was to be in a house of people, for a Name / personality / characteristics cannot dwell in a house of stone and cedar and gold.

It was this misunderstanding that led the Jews to lament how the destruction of the temple had actually destroyed the dwelling place of God's Name: "They have burned Your sanctuary to the ground, they have profaned the dwelling place of Your Name" (Ps. 74:7). The truth was that God's Name dwelt in the hearts and personalities of His true people. And it was God who destroyed the physical temple to try to get them to realize this (Lam. 2:6,7).

Solomon likes to think that he has given rest to Israel, and this is reflected in the ark entering a resting place. But the record is clear that Solomon did not have total

"rest". Damascus was taken from him and he never regained it; he was surrounded by 'adversaries', his people were restless and groaning under his abusive taxing of them for labour and harvests... And he is forcing his own interpretation of Dt. 12:10,11 as referring to the temple he had built: "When you go over the Jordan, and dwell in the land which Yahweh your God causes you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you, so that you dwell in safety, then to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose, to cause His name to dwell there, you must bring all that I command you". The Hebrew *maqom* translated 'place' can mean simply a locality, yet Solomon likes to insist that it means a 'place' as in a building. Yet *maqom* in its 400 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible usually refers simply to a locality and not some 'holy place'. And God has used the term in describing the situation which would come about through David's future son who would be God's begotten son: "I will appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be moved no more. Neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, as at the first" (1 Chron. 17:9). That future appointed "place" was not the temple; for God in this context says He doesn't want a temple, but will instead give His future people a "place" in eternity through the great Son. It is this "place" which the Lord has in view when He says that His death on the cross is "to prepare a place for you" (Jn. 14:2,3). "I will appoint a place" is the same Hebrew as in God's 'appointing a place' for the innocent murderer to flee to for refuge (Ex. 21:13), and that "place" was a city of refuge not a temple. And again, that "place" is understood in the New Testament as the Lord Jesus. The place appointed was one where Yahweh's Name would be placed (Dt. 12:21; 14:24 etc.). It is far too literalistic to assume that the letters YHWH would be placed in a physical place. Surely we are to understand the Name as His characteristics, to be placed supremely in the "place" of His Son, through whom a family / house of people would arise bearing that Name. God's response to David's plan to build a temple had been to state that through His Son, He would "plant" Israel never to be moved again, and this language is repeated about the Lord in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Is. 66:1,2 is crystal clear that God's Name can never "rest" in a physical place, but in humbled hearts after the pattern of David after his sin with Bathsheba: "And what place shall be My rest? For all these things has My hand made, and so all these things came to be, says Yahweh: but to this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a broken spirit, and who trembles at My word". However, there are references to God's Name dwelling in Zion in the Kingdom age. It will be then "the place of the name of Yahweh of Armies, Mount Zion" (Is. 18:7), "for Yahweh dwells in Zion" (Joel 3:21), in that His Name is supremely in the Lord Jesus who will rule from Zion. Isaiah uses the term in his personal speech, perhaps reflecting his own misadjusted perspective that somehow Yahweh was physically dwelling in Zion: "I and the children whom Yahweh has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from Yahweh of Armies, who dwells in Mount Zion" (Is. 8:18).

Let Your priests, Yahweh God, be clothed with salvation, and let Your saints rejoice in goodness-

Solomon prayed to God in the terms and language of his father (2 Chron. 6:41,42 cp. Ps. 132:1,8,9). He was familiar with his father's Psalms- after all, all Israel sung them. It must have been like being the son of a world-famous singer. The words were even in Solomon's subconscious it seems, for when he tells his son "Give not sleep to thine eyes nor slumber to thine eyelids" (Prov. 6:4) he is alluding unconsciously, it seems (in that it is out of context) to David's promise not to give sleep to his eyes until he had found a resting place for the ark (Ps. 132:4). Verses 41 and 42 are quoting from

Ps. 132. But there is a slight change. Ps. 132:9 has "Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness / justice". This is replaced with "salvation". One of the marvels of salvation by grace, as Paul brings out in Romans, is that it is achieved with justice and integrity on God's part. He upends all human views of justice, whereby there has to be measure for measure and sin must be punished with death. Or we could argue that Solomon likes to imagine that instead of the appeal for the priests to be just, rather does he imagine them as now 'saved' and immortalized. When they weren't.

2Ch 6:42 Yahweh God, don't turn away the face of Your anointed. Remember Your graces to David Your servant-

Solomon's zealous organization of the temple worship was an exact fulfillment of the order laid down by his father David (1 Kings 7:51; 2 Chron. 7:6; 8:14). Solomon wanted God to bless the temple as a sign of His pleasure with David his father (e.g. 2 Chron. 6:42). Solomon's personal enthusiasm for service to God became subsumed by the huge psychological spiritual dominance of his parents. His zeal for the temple was almost purely a result of living out his father's expectation; he almost admits as much in 1 Kings 8:20: "I am risen up in the room of David my father... and have (therefore, in the context) built an house for the name of the Lord".

Ps. 132:10,11 makes a play on the phrase "turn away": "For Your servant David's sake, don't *turn away* the face of Your anointed one. Yahweh has sworn to David in truth, He will *not turn away* from it: I will set the fruit of your body on your throne", literally "from the fruit of your womb". Solomon is asking God not to turn away from him because God had promised never to turn from His promise that from David's body / womb would come an eternal king. But that promise was to be fulfilled through a descendant born after David slept with his fathers, who would also be God's begotten son- through a woman in David's line. Hence the otherwise strange term "from the fruit of your womb". Solomon was twisting God's words yet again, and then on that basis pleading for God to never turn from Him because he was David's son. And it was this wrong assumption that resulted in Solomon himself turning away from Yahweh to idols; for the Divine comment is that his foreign wives turned his heart away from Yahweh.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 7

2Ch 7:1 Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of Yahweh filled the house-

Fire coming down from Heaven (e.g. 2 Chron. 7:1) to consume acceptable sacrifices probably refers to the Angels being made a flame of fire (Ps. 104:4) to consume the sacrifice. In 2 Chron. 7:1 this would be by the Angel dwelling in the temple. The same scenario was probably seen in Eden, when the Angel cherubim consumed the sacrifices. God accepted the temple. Even though this wasn't His ideal path with man, just as He accepted a human kingship. He works with man on a sub optimal level, just as the Lord Jesus would have accepted the one talent man putting his talent into a bank to get interest which was forbidden under the law. There are different levels of service, resulting in one star differing from another in glory; for different people make different amounts from God's truth, the seed on the good ground brings forth different levels of fruit. The Lord's sacrifice achieved salvation "to the uttermost", "that great salvation". And we likewise should naturally seek the highest level and not be minimalists.

2Ch 7:2 The priests could not enter into the house of Yahweh, because the glory of Yahweh filled Yahweh's house-

This was as at the erection of the tabernacle. The idea was that Yahweh's glory was far above the mere religion of the temple system. The glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle when it was erected (Ex. 40:34), as it would later fill the temple (2 Chron. 7:1). But it was God's intention that His glory should fill all the earth; the same words are used in Num. 14:21. The apparently intense manifestation of Himself in a specific place was only a foretaste of what He wished to bring about in "all the earth". And yet Judaism misread this as meaning that His glory was there alone in a specific holy place. They failed to perceive that it was merely a localized foretaste of His intention to make this a universal experience, and the tearing down of the veil at the Lord's death was evidence enough of the progression of this plan. When exiled from the sanctuary, David in his Psalms often perceives that God's glory fills and shall fill all the earth (Ps. 72:19; Hab. 2:14).

2Ch 7:3 All the children of Israel looked on, when the fire came down, and the glory of Yahweh was on the house; and they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshipped and gave thanks to Yahweh saying, For He is good; for His grace endures for ever-

Comparing with 1 Kings 8, it seems that the cloud of glory had already come down, and now fire came down to consume the sacrifices. The grace of it was that God was counting them righteous, sanctifying them, and coming to live amongst an unclean people. They sacrificed in response to that grace (:4). And this is to be our response, as the temple in which He now dwells by His Spirit.

2Ch 7:4 Then the king and all the people offered sacrifice before Yahweh-

We again see the connection between Solomon and "all Israel", whom he considered to be as perfect as he was; see on 1 Kings 8:61. Kings says that these were peace offerings. The peace offering was to be eaten the same day it was killed, and nothing of it was to be left until the morning (Lev. 7:15). There is no way Solomon could have personally eaten this massive amount of meat, and so again we see his interest being merely in external religion rather than personal spirituality. And a peace offering was a personal statement between the offerer and God, celebrating their peace with God. There is no way Solomon could legitimately do this for the people.

2Ch 7:5 King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand head of cattle, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated God's house-

The usual pattern of sacrifice was sin offering (obtaining forgiveness), burnt offering (promising complete dedication to God) and then peace offering, celebrating the resultant peace with God then experienced. But Solomon has no sense of personal sin, and considered himself dedicated to Yahweh by reason of being David's son. And so he only offers the peace offerings. The huge numbers of sacrifices were not at all what God wanted. But unlike David, he had not been brought to realize that God wants broken, repentant hearts and not offerings (Ps. 51:16). Mic. 6:7 perhaps references Solomon's huge numbers of offerings, again commenting that God doesn't want them; just as He didn't want a physical temple. And yet God went along with Solomon, as He does with us so often, even on the basis of our misplaced idealism. For His glory appeared within the temple and He in that sense agreed to dwell there, just as He

agreed to work through a human kingship, even though it meant a degree of rejection of Him as Israel's king.

22,000 oxen are 16.5 million pounds of steak, worth about 90 million US dollars in 2024. And 12 million pounds of mutton. Slaying these animals would have created a literal river of blood.

2Ch 7:6 The priests stood, according to their positions, the Levites also with instruments of music of Yahweh, which David the king had made to give thanks to Yahweh, when David praised by their ministry saying, For His grace endures forever. The priests sounded trumpets before them; and all Israel stood-

Compare Neh. 12:9 "Also Bakbukiah and Unno, their brothers, were over against them". This is the same Hebrew in 2 Chron. 7:6, "The priests sounded trumpets before them", the idea perhaps being that they answered the Levites in choral praise (see Neh. 12:24).

There is a link between the name Yahweh, and praise- because the Name epitomizes the characteristics of God. Halle-lu-YAH is saying that for the sake of the Name Yah, *therefore* praise Him. David sat down and designed musical instruments because of the Name (2 Chron. 7:6). The Psalms often make the link explicit, e.g. "...give thanks unto Your holy name, and to triumph in Your praise" (Ps. 106:47). The Name and praise are paralleled.

Solomon's zealous organization of the temple worship was an exact fulfillment of the order laid down by his father David (1 Kings 7:51; 2 Chron. 7:6; 8:14). Solomon wanted God to bless the temple as a sign of His pleasure with David his father (e.g. 2 Chron. 6:42). Solomon's personal enthusiasm for service to God became subsumed by the huge psychological spiritual dominance of his parents. His zeal for the temple was almost purely a result of living out his father's expectation; he almost admits as much in 1 Kings 8:20: "I am risen up in the room of David my father... and have (therefore, in the context) built an house for the name of the Lord".

2Ch 7:7 Moreover Solomon made the middle of the court holy that was before the house of Yahweh; for there he offered the burnt offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt offering, and the meal offering, and the fat-

The huge numbers of animals required more altars, which were presumably placed in the middle court. Although we wonder on what basis Solomon as a non-Levite had the right to declare the court holy. We also wonder as to whether the huge laver, and the ten smaller lavers, were only built with a view to this opening dedication. For the huge laver was too large for normal usage, and there was surely no need for 10 lavers when the tabernacle had only had one. We wonder whether this sudden erection of more altars was also as it were a design fault, and indicates that what he was doing was not according to God's command, but rather his flawed human initiative. See on :8 for another possible design fault.

2Ch 7:8 So Solomon held the feast at that time seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly, from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt-

The dedication coincided with the seven day feast of tabernacles (see on 2 Chron. 5:3), and to that was added this seven day feast of dedication (:9). God's law is not a chain, a leash, for man is not a dog. Legalism teaches minimalism. But God's law is rather a springboard to deeper dedication. Rather like Boaz redeeming Ruth and allowing gleaners to glean not at the edge of the fields but in the middle of them, among the ears of grain. There were representatives from the very borders of the land

promised to Abraham, implying these areas had been settled by Israelites; or perhaps those who attended from those places were Gentile proselytes.

2Ch 7:9 On the eighth day they held a solemn assembly; for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days-

As explained on 2 Chron. 5:3, the dedication of the temple had been made to coincide with the feast of tabernacles. The dedication of the temple is called here "the dedication of the altar". As discussed on 1 Kings 9:3, God was willing to accept the temple as a "house of sacrifice", as an altar; but didn't necessarily go along with all the other projections Solomon placed upon the temple. There is reason to think that some kind of altar remained operative on the temple site after the temple was destroyed. Perhaps this is why Chronicles, written for the exiles, calls the temple "the altar".

The dedication coincided with the seven day feast of tabernacles (see on 1 Kings 8:1), and to that was added this seven day feast of dedication. There were representatives from the very borders of the land promised to Abraham, implying these areas had been settled by Israelites; or perhaps those who attended from those places were Gentile proselytes. However if "the feast" was the latter seven days, then we observe that the day of Atonement wasn't kept, as this was only a few days before the feast of tabernacles. Indeed they ate and drank joyfully on Yom Kippur when they should have been afflicting their souls for their sins. Again we see Solomon assuming that personal confession of sin could be eclipsed by focus upon merely external religion.

2Ch 7:10 On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people away to their tents, joyful and glad of heart for the grace that Yahweh had shown to David, and to Solomon, and to Israel His people-

Israel's blessing was dependent on Solomon's obedience (1 Kings 6:12,13); their joy was because of the honour God had given Solomon (2 Chron. 7:10). The blessing of others can be dependent upon a third party (e.g. Mk. 2:5). 1 Kings 8:66: "For all the goodness that Yahweh had shown to David His servant, and to Israel His people". The people rejoiced that the promises to David had been fulfilled in the temple and in the prosperity of the nation. But they had only uncritically accepted Solomon's narrative. For this was not at all the fulfilment of the promises to David. They "blessed the king" because they assumed it was Solomon who had brought about this fulfilment; and that was exactly what he thought. And they had bought into that false narrative.

2Ch 7:11 Thus Solomon finished the house of Yahweh, and the king's house. He successfully completed all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of Yahweh, and in his own house-

The hint seems to be in 2 Chron. 7:11 that the dedication of the temple and the completion of Solomon's house was at the same time. This was after twenty years. Clearly Solomon saw his temple-palace complex as one building. The fact he waited so long to dedicate the temple shows it was all mere religion from his side, he had no genuine desire for the temple to be used by his people to draw closer to God. The way the record of Solomon's house follows straight on from that of God's house (1 Kings 6,7) seems to highlight the similarity between them. The house of Yahweh and Solomon's house are often spoke of together (e.g. 2 Chron. 7:11; 8:1; 9:11). The Temple was smaller than Solomon's house' he took nearly twice as long to build it.

Clearly he spent more effort at housing his own glory than he did housing God's. The comparisons are intended to show this. They are listed on 2 Chron. 9:11.

His building of the temple was "all that came into his heart", or "all *Solomon's* desire which he was pleased to do" (1 Kings 9:1). He later admits in Ecc. 2 that he did these building projects from a desire to indulge his fantasies about architecture and building. At this point, he served God in ways that were convenient to him and reinforced his own natural interests. There is a semantic connection between the Hebrew words for "desire" and "pleased" - the point of which is to emphasize that Solomon's work for God was only an expression of his own zest for self-fulfilment; he served God in ways which only confirmed his own natural inclinations. Appreciating the spirit and blood of Christ, his own weakness, the grace of God, and the subsequent desire to live a life of self sacrifice, of carrying a cross in ways we wouldn't naturally chose- this was all foreign to Solomon. And is it so foreign to us? Solomon's materialism and self-fulfilment are sure warnings to our age.

2Ch 7:12 Yahweh appeared to Solomon by night and said to him, I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place to Myself for a house of sacrifice-

Clearly God was aware that Solomon was going wrong, refusing to realize the conditional nature of the promises made to David about his son, and not personally applying the wisdom given to him in the first vision. So God's response to Solomon's arrogant, mistaken prayer of 1 Kings 8 was in fact to appear to him and warn him that he needed to be obedient, or else the promises would not in fact apply to him. The clear implication was that Solomon's statements in his prayer that the promises were fulfilled in him... were wrong.

God said that He accepted the temple not so much as a place to dwell in (as Solomon assumed it was) but as a place facilitating sacrifice, prayer etc., for the glorification of His Name through these things; He emphasized that He dwelt amongst *His people* (1 Kings 6:13; 2 Chron. 7:12-16). There are several other places where God's response to Solomon's words seems to be corrective rather than affirmatory. See on :14.

Chronicles is clear that the temple was not God's original intention. But He went along with David and Solomon's insistence on building it, just as He does with so many misplaced ideals. "Shall you build me a house for me to live in?" (2 Sam. 7:5) is turned by Chronicles into the indicative, "You shall not build me the house to live in" (1 Chron. 17:4). "I declare to you YHWH shall build a house for you" (1 Chron. 17:10). This grace was as it were unwanted by David and Solomon; they insisted upon doing the works, and glorying in them. And God in the end gives man what he really wants, as in the Father giving so much to the prodigal son, surely knowing what he would do. And if our heart desire is for the Kingdom, He will grant it.

2Ch 7:13 If I shut up the sky so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send plague among My people-

These things clearly allude to the curses for breaking the covenant in Dt. 28. But those curses were to be lifted by repentance and renewed faithfulness to the covenant, and their lifting was not predicated upon the existence of the physical temple and praying in it or towards it. This is now made clear by God in :14.

2Ch 7:14 if My people who are called by My name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land-

We could argue that the people called by God's Name were not all the people of Israel, but only those who had His Name on their hearts, the faithful minority. And indeed at the exile, it was the prayers of this group [Daniel etc.] that led to God's restoration of the people. God says that the people were to "seek / search for My face"- not pray towards Jerusalem or a temple, but go through the struggle of searching for God after sin. They were to seek personal encounter and relationship with God- His face. They were to "humble themselves", literally 'bow the knee' before Him- not turn their bodies in the direction of Jerusalem. They should "turn from their wicked ways" and not turn their bodies towards the temple.

Solomon says that God will hear the prayers of His people because *the temple* is called by God's Name; but God's response is that "my people, which are called by my name" would pray to Him themselves and be heard, quite apart from the temple (2 Chron. 6:33 cp. 7:14). He sees them as bearing His Name rather than the temple building, as Solomon perceived it. See on :12 for another example of God now correcting Solomon's assumptions.

Solomon had asked that God forgive His people for their sins if they prayed in or toward the temple: "If Your people Israel be struck down before the enemy because they have sinned against You, and shall turn again and confess Your name, and pray and make supplication before You *in this house*; then hear from heaven, and forgive the sin of your people Israel... because they have sinned against You; if they pray *toward this place*, and confess Your name and turn from their sin, when You afflict them; then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants... [hear] their prayer from this place" (2 Chron. 6:24-27,40). But God is careful to respond that He will forgive them if they pray- and carefully omits reference to the temple, "in this house". Solomon says 'If they do [ABC] and then [DEF] happens and they pray *in / towards this place*, then please do [GHI]'. God responds according to the same rubric, repeating what Solomon says, but carefully omitting the central point- if they pray in / towards the temple. The omission is glaring. And it is tantamount to ignoring what was for Solomon the central object of his prayer- to legitimize the temple as the source of efficacy for prayer. His 'religion' was replaced by God's focus on personal spirituality and His response to that.

Jonah learnt this- in the belly of a great fish, he needed forgiveness. He had no access to the temple and didn't know which direction to pray towards. Rather like a navigation system telling you at night to "head north" when you have no idea of where north is. He says that he prayed towards the temple, following Solomon's words rather than God's correction of them. But the grace of it all is that God heard him anyway.

There soon follows a worked example of this. 2 Chron. 12:6,7 records that Rehoboam, Solomon's son, was attacked by Shishak of Egypt: "Then the princes of Israel and the king *humbled themselves*; and they said, Yahweh is righteous. When Yahweh saw that they *humbled themselves*, the word of Yahweh came to Shemaiah, saying, They have *humbled themselves*. I will not destroy them; but I will grant them some deliverance. My wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak". The allusion is to God's words in 2 Chron. 7:14, which is His reply to Solomon's claim that if Israel prayed to the temple, then God would save them in battle. He says simply that if Israel humble themselves in battle [He makes no mention of the temple], then He will save them. And the situation with Shishak was an example of that. We note that even at that stage, God had in mind to destroy the temple and Zion / Jerusalem. Solomon and David's dogmatism that it would last eternally are thus shown to be misplaced right from the start of the temple's 430 year

history [the same period of time as Israel were in Egypt, Ex. 12:40,41; Gal. 3:17]. Ezekiel foretold 430 years of judgment upon Israel and Judah (Ez. 4:1-6).

2Ch 7:15 Now My eyes shall be open and My ears sensitive to the prayer that is made in this place-

"Now" may have the idea of 'For now'. For now, at that time, God would hear the prayers made in the temple- if Solomon remained obedient, and until He destroyed the temple.

"Sensitive / attentive" is the word used by Nehemiah in Neh. 1:11 "Lord, I beg You, let Your ear be attentive now to the prayer of Your servant". "Attentive" is s.w. 2 Chron. 6:40; 7:15, where we read of God being "attentive" to prayers offered in the temple. But Nehemiah was praying in exile, not in the temple. The desperation of the situation made him learn a lesson- that God wasn't only accessible in the temple. This may sound obvious to us, but it wasn't for those used to the temple cult. The lesson is that God uses punishments for sin, hard situations, to break our paradigms and lead us to a greater spirituality- if we will follow. S.w. also Neh. 9:34- Israel weren't "attentive" to God's word, but in their time of need they hoped He would be "attentive" to their word of prayer. And He was. His grace isn't 'measure for measure'; He treats us out of proportion to our attentiveness to Him. We must show the same grace.

2Ch 7:16 For now have I chosen and made this house holy, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart shall be there perpetually-

I would translate and paraphrase 1 Kings 9:3-6 as follows: "I have hallowed this house, which you have built in order that I would put My Name there for ever. My eyes and heart will be there all the days that you walk before Me as David your father walked... [If you swerve Me with totally perfect obedience to Me] then I will establish you [as the Messianic son I promised to David]... but if you turn from following Me [which God foreknew Solomon would] then... [I will destroy this place and My Name and presence won't be there any more]". Remember that God said these words furiously angry that Solomon had built the temple; Jeremiah records that God was furiously angry with it from the day it was built until the day He tore it down.

God's Name was there for ever in the sense that naming something with your name means ownership. God agreed to accept Jerusalem as His special place, despite His position that He is a God on the move. 2 Chron. 7 could imply that God was willing to go along with it as part of His plan to lead the people towards His Kingdom in the future, when He would eternally dwell there: "I have chosen and sanctified this house that my name may be there for ever". "That" doesn't mean His Name was there for ever from that point. Because He destroyed the dwelling place of His Name, as later lamented. Or we can allow :7 to explain this. If Solomon turned away from God, then the Name would not dwell there for ever. If he was perfectly obedient, as God's envisaged future Son would be, then it would. Solomon's response should have been that he could not be perfectly obedient, and his focus should have been on the promised future seed who would have an eternal Kingdom.

Solomon prayed that God's eyes [in Heaven] might be open toward the house; God responds that His eyes and heart are there in the house. The distance Solomon presupposes between earth and heaven is hereby deconstructed by God's reply.

It has been argued that the Hebrew *olahm*, "forever", really means 'a period'. But I am unpersuaded of that argument in every case. Rather I would think that the context in this case requires that we understand God to be saying that He would indeed dwell in the temple "forever", and His particular sensitivity would be found in that place, His eyes and heart. But as He makes clear in 1 Kings 9:4-7, that was all conditional upon obedience. This highlights the tragedy- that eternity was at stake. So much depends upon human freewill decisions; for that is how much He respects us and our freedom of choice.

God's Name, eyes and heart were not for ever focused upon the physical temple. In :20 He states that He can cast the temple out of His sight and special awareness. The temple was destroyed, and the possibility of that is mentioned in :21. But He also says here that His intense presence and sensitivity will always be there. One resolution of this is to recall that God's response to the desire to build the house / temple was to say that He would build a house / temple for David. And that temple was His Son and all in Him. For both the Lord Jesus and all in Him are described as God's temple. The Divine promise here remains true- through His definition of the temple. His special awareness and sensitivity is not now focused upon a small plot of land in Jerusalem, but upon us. Whoever touches us, touches the apple of His eye. His presence and involvement in the temple could only be because He had chosen and "made this house holy", He had sanctified it, counted it as holy / righteous. And this is exactly what Paul says He has done to us His people- elected / chosen us, unto sanctification by Him. The ideas of choosing and sanctification run together in Paul's thought. We are the temple. "God has from the beginning *chosen* you to salvation through *sanctification* of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13). "According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy/ sanctified" (Eph. 1:4). Peter likewise: "Elect [chosen] according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit" (1 Pet. 1:2). And the Lord Himself: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained / sanctified you" (Jn. 15:16).

2Ch 7:17 As for you, if you will walk before Me as David your father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances-

This was a hard act to follow, for David was chosen as being a man after God's own heart. Solomon considered that he was acceptable with God just because of his father, whereas God wanted him to personally attain his father's spirituality. We note in passing God's high estimation of David, despite David's serious but out of character failings. God constantly warned Solomon about the conditionality of the promises, before the building started (2 Sam. 7:14), during it (1 Kings 6:11-13) and immediately after completing it (1 Kings 9:2-9). Solomon reinterprets this conditional promise in Prov. 20:7: "A righteous man walks in integrity; blessed are his children after him". Solomon has here his own agenda of self justification in view. The man who 'walked in integrity' is without doubt David (s.w. 1 Kings 9:4; Ps. 26:1,11; 101:2). Solomon assumed that because his father had walked in integrity, then he as his child would automatically be blessed. But he was choosing to misunderstand the conditional nature of the promises to him in 1 Kings 9:4; if he walked himself in integrity "as David your father walked", then he would be the prophetically blessed son of David.

Solomon's prophetic sonship of David was conditional upon him preserving or observing Yahweh's ways (1 Kings 2:4; 1 Chron. 22:13; 2 Chron. 7:17); but he didn't preserve or observe them (1 Kings 11:10,11); despite David praying that Solomon

would be given a heart to observe them (1 Chron. 29:19). We can pray for God to work upon the hearts of others, but He will not force people against their own deepest will and heart position. Solomon stresses overmuch how God would keep or preserve the righteous (Prov. 2:8; 3:26), without recognizing the conditional aspect of this. Why did Solomon go wrong? His Proverbs are true enough, but he stresses that obedience to *his* wisdom and teaching would preserve his hearers (Prov. 4:4; 6:22; 7:1; 8:32; 15:5), preservation was through following the example of the wise (Prov. 2:20); rather than stressing obedience to *God's* ways, and replacing David his father's simple love of God with a love of academic wisdom: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him" (Ps. 145:20).

2Ch 7:18 then I will establish the throne of your kingdom, according as I covenanted with David your father saying, There shall not fail you a man to be ruler in Israel- This is the same quotation made in Ps. 132:12. But God is picking up on Solomon's claims in 1 Kings 8:24 that God had already fulfilled this. He is pointing out that this promise was conditional, and Solomon had overlooked that. The promise of "a man" suggests one individual; but Solomon was wrong in assuming this referred to himself. He could potentially have been the Messiah, just as various individuals could have been. Indeed the Old Testament is littered with failed Messiahs- all building up to the wonderful climax of the one true Messiah.

David and Solomon had twisted what God actually promised David. He spoke of a singular seed, to be born after David "slept with [his] fathers". The phrase "man to be ruler in Israel" is applied to Messiah individually in Mic. 5:2 ("But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, being small among the clans of Judah, out of you one will come forth to Me the man that is to be the ruler in Israel"). But Solomon has expanded this into "your children" (2 Chron. 6:16), in line with how David had wanted to interpret God's words as not referring to Messiah, God's begotten Son, but to an unbroken line of kings ruling on his throne. God now seems to agree, reluctantly, to this desire. He says that if Solomon is perfectly obedient (:17), and if the subsequent kings are, then He can also interpret His words of promise as meaning that "There shall not fail you a man to be ruler in Israel". But of course they were not perfectly obedient, the Davidic line of kings ended, and God Himself overthrew Zion. God by all means tried to go along with their desired path of fulfilment, and this is repeated later in 2 Chron. 23:3 ["Let him reign, as the Lord spoke concerning the sons of David"] and 2 Chron. 21:7: "Yet the Lord would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant which he had made with David, and since he had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons for ever". That promise was however conditional upon their following His ways perfectly. The eternal lamp for David was to be fulfilled in the Messianic King, God's begotten Son. We see in all this how God will go along with human misunderstanding, in a desperate if reluctant bid to retain relationship with man. This is not to be taken as a minimizing of His requirements nor of His word. But we do marvel at the extent to which He is willing to compromise with man. And so we see Christian people with all manner of stubborn, even intentional misunderstandings, still being used by God and God retaining relationship with them. Just as He sent the shekinah into the temple- when so much in the temple was not of His will and indeed He had stated that He did not want a temple. Despite God's reasoning in 2 Samuel 7 as to why He didn't want a temple, He still gave the exiles the plans for a temple in Ez. 40-48, again amending and adjusting the terms of His encounter with man according to what He knew man wanted. Although still man refused to obey those plans in that the exiles didn't build that temple. Just as He worked through a kingship,

which He made clear through Samuel He did not want. He gave them a king in His anger and took him away in His wrath; He was angry with the temple from the day it was built until the day He destroyed it. This 'going along' with the idea of an unbroken line of kings and His physical presence in Zion was what led to the huge disillusionment of Lamentations and other passages- when God Himself ended the line of kings and furiously ripped Zion apart. He was thereby seeking to revert His people to His promise of a future Kingdom and Messiah as the fulfilment of the covenant with David. Which was in essence the same as His covenant with Abraham and the fathers.

2Ch 7:19 But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them-

This is what Solomon did finally do, and already at this stage he had married Gentile women, whom the law of Moses had warned would lead his heart away from Yahweh to "other gods". But that apparently inevitable process could still be arrested- if Solomon responded in humility to this appeal. We wait with eager ears to hear Solomon's response when the appeal ends in :22. But there is silence; see on :22. This verse is addressed to Solomon personally. If he fell away, then Israel would suffer and the temple would be destroyed (:20). This is the nature of sin- that it affects others. Men can to some degree be saved by third parties (Mk. 2:5) but they can also suffer and lose relationship with God because of third party behaviour. This highlights the huge importance and significance of how we live life. For no man is an island, no man lives or dies unto himself. Despite the claims of the individualistic, postmodern culture in which we live.

2Ch 7:20 then I will pluck them up by the roots out of My land which I have given them; and this house, which I have made holy for My name, I will cast out of My sight, and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples-

Solomon had wrongly reasoned in 2 Chron. 6 that the grandeur of the temple would attract Gentiles to become proselytes to Yahweh. But God warns him that the very opposite could happen, and the ruined temple would become the biggest possible disadvertisement for Yahweh and His people. Solomon had prayed, and in that prayer taught Israel, that if they sinned even in captivity, then all they had to do was pray towards the temple and they would be forgiven. He saw in that building some kind of atonement for sins. He lost sight of the importance of the blood that made atonement; he replaced the blood of Christ with a work of his own hands. God's response to the dedication of the temple here corrects what Solomon has just said. He says that if Israel sin then He will cast the temple too out of His sight; which is rather different to how Solomon instructed the people to gain forgiveness for the sake of the temple if they were in dispersion. He saw the temple as a talisman- the need for real, meaningful change and repentance and spiritual mindedness to enable the dwelling of God went unperceived. He failed to perceive the real possibility of the eternal potential he and Israel could miss. They really could be cast out of God's sight in condemnation. Jonah recognized "I am cast out of Your sight" (Jon. 2:4), the very language of condemnation used at his time (2 Kings 17:20; 21:2; 23:27; Jer. 7:15).

2Ch 7:21 This house, which is so high, everyone who passes by it shall be astonished, and shall say, 'Why has Yahweh done thus to this land, and to this house?'

God parallels the temple and His people in 2 Chron. 7:21,22, saying that if He punishes the temple He will punish the people. Solomon seems to have thought that

the temple would still stand favourably in God's eyes even if the people were punished. The record records that the temple was "perfected" whereas Solomon's heart wasn't perfect [s.w.] (1 Kings 11:4 cp. 2 Chron. 8:16).

This is God's commentary upon the implications in Solomon's prayer that the temple and God's presence within it was to be eternal. Solomon had willfully misinterpreted the promises to David to mean that the temple was the fulfilment of the promise that the seed would build an eternal house. That house David had built was not the house in view, and could easily be destroyed and even become a curse rather than a blessing- if Solomon were disobedient.

2Ch 7:22 They shall answer, 'Because they abandoned Yahweh, the God of their fathers, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and took other gods, worshipped them, and served them. Therefore He has brought all this evil on them'- We wait with eager ears to hear Solomon's response when the appeal ends; but there is silence. Solomon had blanked out from his perception any idea that he might fail or was less than perfect. His narrative was that he was the son of David, and the promises about David's son were now fulfilled in him. And he refused to allow anything, not even an appeal from God, disturb that internal narrative.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 8

2Ch 8:1 It happened at the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the house of Yahweh and his own house-

The way the record of Solomon's house follows straight on from that of God's house (1 Kings 6,7) seems to highlight the similarity between them. The house of Yahweh and Solomon's house are often spoke of together (e.g. 2 Chron. 7:11; 8:1; 9:11). The Temple was smaller than Solomon's house' he took nearly twice as long to build it. Clearly he spent more effort at housing his own glory than he did housing God's. The comparisons are intended to show this. They are listed on 2 Chron. 9:11.

Psalms 127 is prefaced with the information that it is a Psalm for Solomon- perhaps given by some nameless prophet (Gad? Nathan?) to warn him of where he was going. Verse 1 reminds him that God must be the builder of any house, or else the builders labour in vain. There is good reason to think that Solomon utterly failed to appreciate this. The records stress time and again that *Solomon* built the temple (1 Kings 6:2,14; 9:10,25; 10:4; 1 Chron. 6:10,32; 2 Chron. 8:1,12; 9:3; Acts 7:47); yet the house referred to in the Davidic promises was to be built by God, through David's Messianic Son, the Lord Jesus. Zechariah prophesied at the time of the rebuilding of the physical temple. It is significant, in this context, that Zech. 6:12 reminds Israel that the true temple of God will be built by the Branch, the Lord Jesus.

The question is whether all these building projects happened chronologically, one after another, or whether they in fact were all going on at the same time. If chronologically, we would expect a note to that effect at this point. Instead we are left to conclude that the building of the temple, of his own house, of "the house of the forest of Lebanon" and the "house for Pharaoh's daughter (whom Solomon had taken as wife)" (:8) all happened at the same time. We could conclude that he was distracted from building God's house by his other building projects, and that's why the building of the temple took seven years. This may appear to be contradicted by the statements in 1 Kings 9:10 and 2 Chron. 8:1: "It happened at the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of Yahweh and the king's house...". However the context of those verses goes on to state that Solomon had given twenty

cities to Hiram in return for his labour and materials for the building of the houses. So we could legitimately read those passages as meaning that at the end of the twenty year period over which the two houses had been built and twenty cities given to Hiram... that Hiram became dissatisfied. The recurrence of the number twenty could hint that he was paid one city a year for twenty years.

2Ch 8:2 that the cities which Hiram had given to Solomon, Solomon built them, and caused the children of Israel to dwell there-

The record of this is explained in 1 Kings 9:14 as being in the context of how "Hiram sent to the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold". It seems Solomon became so obsessed with his building projects that he borrowed this money to finance them, and then tried to pay off the debt by giving Hiram the worthless cities of Cabul which were not at all any recompense. We see therefore that all was not quite as opulent and prosperous in Solomon's kingdom as may appear. Solomon had given Hiram these 20 cities in Galilee (1 Kings 9:11), but Hiram had returned them to Solomon. The gift of Israelite cities to a Gentile was not what a true king of Israel should have done, who valued the promises of Israel's eternal inheritance of the promised land. Solomon had come to see all God's promises as fulfilled in him and his amazing city and temple in Jerusalem. And so he devalued the rest of the promises, especially their future, eternal dimension. These cities were inhabited by Canaanites whom Israel hadn't subdued at the time of this 'gift' (2 Sam. 24:7; 2 Chron. 8:2), and so Solomon was giving to Hiram a bunch of problems. These cities were not really under Solomon's authority anyway, he had not subdued the Canaanites there, so passing them to Hiram was giving him a noose around his neck rather than a true present. He called them "Cabul" (1 Kings 9:13). "Cabul" can mean 'pawned', and the idea may be that although in some sense they did belong to Solomon, effectively they didn't because they were inhabited by Canaanites. Hence Hiram returned them to Solomon, with all the damage in relationship that goes with returning a rejected gift. Hence we read here that after this Solomon colonized the cities and sent Israelites to live there. But this was not particularly in obedience to the Divine commands to subjugate the Canaanites, but rather than Solomon was desperate for huge amounts of slave labour with which to fulfil his building projects (see on 1 Kings 9:21). .

2Ch 8:3 Solomon went to Hamath Zobah, and prevailed against it-

1 Kings 11:4,6 clearly states God's opinion that Solomon was not like David: "his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father... (he) went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father". This double stress, bearing in mind inspiration's economic use of words, is really making a point. Yet the records of Solomon seem to be framed to show that externally, Solomon was indeed following David; he was obsessed with living out parental expectation, and perhaps the expectation of his society, rather than forging his own relationship with God. 2 Chron. 8 is a passage which especially makes this point, in that it describes the actions of Solomon in the very language which is used earlier about David.

2 Chron. 8:3 "Solomon went to Hamath Zobah" = 2 Sam. 8:3 "David smote also Hadadezer the son of Rehob king of Zobah"; 2 Chron. 8:3 "and prevailed" = Same word 1 Sam. 17:30; 2 Chron. 8:8 Those "whom the children of Israel consumed not, did Solomon make to pay tribute" = 2 Sam. 8:6 "David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts"; 2 Chron. 8:14 "He appointed according to the ordinance of David his father, the courses of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their charges... for so had David

commanded” = 1 Chron. 24:1; 2 Chron. 9:15,16 = 2 Sam.8:7 “David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem”.

Yet notice too how both David and Solomon dealt with the matter of chariots and horses. Solomon’s weakness for horses was perhaps traceable to David’s. Solomon unashamedly amassed horses and chariots, in direct disobedience to Divine command (Dt. 17:16). When David his father had captured 1000 chariots and horses, he hamstrung 900 of them and retained 100 of them (2 Sam. 8:4). He had a conscience about the matter, but thought that 90% obedience wasn’t bad. And the hamstrung horses were likely used for agricultural work and especially for breeding- breeding yet more chariot horses. David’s 90% obedience lead to his son’s 100% disobedience in this matter of chariot horses.

2Ch 8:4 He built Tadmor in the wilderness, and all the storage cities which he built in Hamath-

Israel was at its largest extent in Solomon's Kingdom; lost land was restored, and the borders re-established (2 Chron. 9:26; 8:4 cp. Josh. 16:3,5); it was also at its political strongest; nations submitted to Solomon (1 Kings 4:20); Israel was the chief of the nations (1 Kings 4:21). Baalath was in Dan near Gezer (Josh. 19:44), and was built and then populated by Israelites for defensive reasons. Tadmor (AV) is now an oasis in the Syrian desert, on the caravan route from Damascus to the Euphrates. There was no point in building it as a city unless it was to be inhabited by Israelites. But this would have been unpopular, as it meant uprooting Israelites out of their homes and tribal areas and sending them to live in remote outpost. This would have meant Solomon again despised the tribal allotments, which to God were significant. He did the same in his arrangement of the tax administration of the nation, as explained on 1 Kings 4.

2Ch 8:5 Also he built Beth Horon the upper, and Beth Horon the lower, fortified cities, with walls, gates, and bars-

Solomon loved building and architecture (Ecc. 2:4-6; 2 Chron. 8:4-6), therefore his building of God's temple was something he revelled in. But when it came to obeying the clear commands concerning not multiplying horses or wives, Solomon simply disregarded them. Likewise Israel were so sad to lose the temple because “Our holy and our beautiful house... is burned... and all our pleasant things are laid waste” (Is. 64:11). It was God’s house, not theirs. They only mourned for the loss of it insofar as it was a reflection of what they revelled in anyway, as an expression of themselves, rather than a means of worshipping God. By contrast, Paul says that the proof that he had been given a command to preach the Gospel was in the fact that he preached against his own will; he says that if he did it willingly, i.e. because it coincided with his own will, then he had his reward in this life (this is a paraphrase of 1 Cor. 9:17 and context).

2Ch 8:6 and Baalath, and all the storage cities that Solomon had, and all the cities for his chariots, and the cities for his horsemen, and all that Solomon desired to build for his pleasure in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion-

The building of store cities by slave labour is exactly what Pharaoh did to the Israelites (Ex. 1:11). The impression is given that he followed Egypt in this way, as well as marrying Pharaoh's daughter and incorporating Egyptian stylism into the temple building, as noted on 1 Kings 8. His love of horses and chariots likewise reflects his love of Egypt, despite it being forbidden for Israel's king in Deuteronomy.

Solomon's lack of sensitivity to God's word led him to be tragically insensitive to people; in short, he showed no love. The way Solomon raised a "levy" or tribute from Israel, whereby the men of Israel had to serve him one month out of three and 'bear burdens', with 3,300 taskmasters over them (1 Kings 5:13-15), who 'bore rule' over (Heb. 'trampled down') the people (1 Kings 5:16)... is all reminiscent of Samuel's warning about the kind of King which Israel would have. And the language also recalls their bondage in Egypt; note that the levy was also in order to build treasure cities for Solomon, just as Pharaoh did. The Hebrew word for "levy" in 1 Kings 5:13 strictly means 'a burden causing to faint', and is rendered "taskmaster" in the record of Israel's suffering in Egypt (Ex. 1:11). One even wonders if Solomon's father-in-law- who also happened to be a Pharaoh of Egypt- influenced him (consciously or unconsciously) to act like the Exodus Pharaoh.

Solomon figuratively chastised the people with whips in the form of the excessive tax he raised in order to build store cities (1 Kings 9:15,19), in which to store all his accumulation. Surely this is behind the Lord's parable of the rich fool, devoid of wisdom in practice, who built ever bigger barns because of his lack of understanding about the future Kingdom. The Hebrew for "*store* cities" (2 Chron. 8:6) is also translated "to heap up", strengthening the connection with the rich fool (Lk. 12:15-28). That parable stresses the self-centeredness of the fool- just circle all the occurrences of the word "I". A similar over-use of personal pronouns in Ecc. 2:4-8 makes the same point. Ecc. 2:26 records how Solomon reflected that the sinner "heaped up" treasures- using the same word as for his "*store* cities". He saw his error, but wasn't bothered to do anything about it.

Solomon *loved* building (Ecc. 2:4-6)- he built cities and buildings because it was "the desire of Solomon which he desired" (1 Kings 9:19 AVmg.), i.e. one of his dominant desires. So when we read that it was the desire of Solomon to build the temple (1 Kings 9:1,11), he was merely serving God in a way that naturally appealed to him anyway. And when he had finished that desire when the temple was completed (1 Kings 9:1), he was in the same position as when in Ecclesiastes he describes how he indulged every desire up to the very end, and then was left with the emptiness of vanity.

The fortification of Lebanon was because of the threat from Rezin in Damascus (1 Kings 11:24).

2Ch 8:7 As for all the people who were left of the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of Israel- Of the seven nations earlier listed as inhabiting Canaan, only these five had apparently survived. Two had been absorbed into the Israelite population or destroyed. They were clearly distinct from the "children of Israel". Instead of trying to absorb them into Israel or destroy them, Solomon was so desperate for workers that he capitalized on that situation and demanded they provide him with slaves for his building works, as opposed to the Israelite labour which was classified as 'servants' (:9).

2Ch 8:8 of their children who were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel didn't consume, of them Solomon conscripted forced labour to this day-

This suggests that Solomon made the same mistake as Israel in earlier days- he was a satisficer, he himself married into those tribes, and he wasn't obedient to the clear covenant of the land which was binding upon him. Solomon's motivation for now bringing the Canaanites into servitude was not spiritual. Rather, as with his borrowing of money from Hiram (see on :2), his obsession with his building plans was such that

he needed huge amounts of money and resources to carry them through. And so he colonized the Canaanite areas and made them send him slaves to work on his quarrying and building projects; and this was why, as noted on :2, he was keen to colonize the area of 'Cabul', in order to also provide more dogs body workers for his architectural obsessions.

2Ch 8:9 But of the children of Israel, Solomon made no servants for his work; but they were men of war, and chief of his captains, and rulers of his chariots and of his horsemen-

This sounds very much like the fulfilment of Samuel's warning as to how a human king would abuse the Israelites. He made the Canaanites slaves (:2,8), but he made the Israelites his servants, to the point of whipping them with whips, as they later complained after his death. The difference between being his slaves and his servants was therefore not that significant.

Solomon had obsessive tendencies. We know that he became addicted to finding pleasure in women, and Ecc. 2 shows him racing down the road of obsession with architecture, alcohol, food, gold etc. The historical narratives so often mention his gold and silver (e.g. 2 Chron. 9:13-21,24,27). This repetition reflects Solomon's obsession. The same fact explains the record's repetition of Solomon's enthusiasm for horses (1 Kings 10:25-29; 4:26,28; 9:19,22; 2 Chron. 1:14,16,17; 8:6,9; 9:24,25,28). Yet amassing of gold, silver and horses was explicitly forbidden for the King of Israel (Dt. 17:17). There is a powerful point to be made here: we can deceive ourselves that God is blessing us, when actually we are breaching explicit commands. Would Solomon had understood the concept of self-examination.

2Ch 8:10 These were the chief officers of king Solomon, even two-hundred and fifty, who ruled over the people-

The difference with 1 Kings 9:23 may be because the word for "three" in Hebrew, 'sls', can easily be confused with that for "six" ['ss']. The same confusion is found in 2 Chron. 2:18 cp. 1 Kings 5:16. This would appear to be one of the copying errors in these Divinely inspired records.

But another approach is possible. The number of these overseers varies from 3,300 when the temple was being built (1 Kings 5:16) to 550 in 1 Kings 9:23 and then 250 in the Chronicles record. I suggested on 1 Kings 9:14,21 that all was not well in Solomon's apparently opulent kingdom. His building obsessions had led him to borrow money from Hiram to find it, and to excessively tax both Israel and the Canaanites amongst them to provide workers. And so the decreasing numbers of overseers may reflect his declining human resources, despite making every effort to try to pressgang more labourers he got fewer and fewer on the jobs in practice.

2Ch 8:11 Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David to the house that he had built for her; for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places where the ark of Yahweh has come are holy- If this is the woman of the Song of Solomon, then we can deduce they had a stormy relationship. It apparently ends at the end of Song 8 (see notes there), and yet with the hints of resumption. So perhaps it was not a blessed marriage, and Solomon ended up building her a separate house to live in outside his immediate citadel.

Solomon's lack of self examination and confidence that he could not spiritually fail is reflected in 1 Kings 11:2,3, where we are reminded that God had said that foreign wives would "surely... turn away your heart after their gods". How "surely"

this would happen was not believed by Solomon. "He had seven hundred wives... and his wives turned away his heart". He started marrying these foreign wives when he was young; presumably he reasoned that they could never turn away *his* heart because he was the Son of David, the Messianic King. In Prov. 6:27 he soberly warns against the strange (i.e. Gentile) woman, observing that a man cannot take this kind of fire into his bosom and not be burned by it. Yet this is exactly what he was doing at the time he wrote that. His public removal of his Egyptian wife from the house of David "because the places are holy" (2 Chron. 8:11) is therefore to be seen as spiritual pride, appearing to do the right thing, when his heart was far from it.

2Ch 8:12 Then Solomon offered burnt offerings to Yahweh on the altar of Yahweh, which he had built before the porch-

"Three times a year" in :13 surely refers to the three main feasts, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. No longer were the "high places" like Gibeon used, but worship was centralized in Jerusalem. This was indeed as the law of Moses intended, but Solomon appears to have used this as part of his policy of centralization of power in Jerusalem which we discussed on 1 Kings 4. We note that Solomon seems to have officiated as a priest as David did. David had done this kind of thing, but from careful reflection upon the spirit of the law, whose letter he says in Ps. 119 he studied constantly. And David came to this sense through careful reflection upon God's grace to him, and through the experience of Uzzah's death as a result of taking 'living the spirit of the law' too far. But Solomon does it from a wrong assumption that he is the Messianic king-priest.

2Ch 8:13 even as the duty of every day required, offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the Sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the set feasts, three times in the year, in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tents-

The idea is "sacrificing at the daily rate, according to the direction of Moses". And yet the scale of the arrangements for the priests, the altar, multiples tables, lavers etc. all implied that the whole structure was built to facilitate sacrifice on a far larger scale than in the tabernacle. If indeed they offered the number of sacrifices stipulated in the law of Moses, then all the grand scale was mere opulence and religious show.

2Ch 8:14 He appointed, according to the ordinance of David his father, the divisions of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their offices, to praise, and to minister before the priests, as the duty of every day required; the doorkeepers also by their divisions at every gate; for so had David the man of God commanded-

The language here reflects how Solomon had effectively replaced God's word through Moses with the obsessive fantasy of his father David. Things were appointed not according to ordinance of Moses, but of David.

Solomon's zealous organization of the temple worship was an exact fulfillment of the order laid down by his father David (1 Kings 7:51; 2 Chron. 7:6; 8:14). Solomon wanted God to bless the temple as a sign of His pleasure with David his father (e.g. 2 Chron. 6:42). Solomon's personal enthusiasm for service to God became subsumed by the huge psychological spiritual dominance of his parents. His zeal for the temple was almost purely a result of living out his father's expectation; he almost admits as much in 1 Kings 8:20: "I am risen up in the room of David my father... and have (therefore, in the context) built an house for the name of the Lord".

2Ch 8:15 They didn't depart from the commandment of the king to the priests and Levites concerning any matter, or concerning the treasures-
As noted on :14, the obedience was to David and his vision, rather than to the word of God through Moses.

2Ch 8:16 Now all the work of Solomon was prepared to the day of the foundation of the house of Yahweh, and until it was finished. So the house of Yahweh was completed-

God said that He accepted the temple not so much as a place to dwell in (as Solomon assumed it was) but as a place facilitating sacrifice, prayer etc., for the glorification of His Name through these things; He emphasized that He dwelt amongst *His people* (1 Kings 6:13; 2 Chron. 7:12-16). There are several other places where God's response to Solomon's words seems to be corrective rather than affirmatory. Thus Solomon says that God will hear the prayers of His people because *the temple* is called by God's Name; but God's response is that "my people, which are called by my name" would pray to Him themselves and be heard, quite apart from the temple (2 Chron. 6:33 cp. 7:14). He sees them as bearing His Name rather than the temple building, as Solomon perceived it. God goes on to parallel the temple and His people in 2 Chron. 7:21,22, saying that if He punishes the temple He will punish the people. Solomon seems to have thought that the temple would still stand favourably in God's eyes even if the people were punished. The record records that the temple was "perfected" whereas Solomon's heart wasn't perfect [s.w.] (1 Kings 11:4 cp. 2 Chron. 8:16).

2Ch 8:17 Then went Solomon to Ezion Geber, and to Eloth, on the seashore in the land of Edom-

Transporting ships overland was relatively common; there are several accounts of Alexander the Great doing so. Perhaps Hiram had transported his ships there overland through Israel, and Solomon decided to have them build ships for him at their port of departure, so that his traders could accompany the men of Tyre. The ships were perhaps "sent" (:18) in the form of wooden structures which were then assembled at the port.

2Ch 8:18 Hiram sent him ships and servants who had knowledge of the sea by the hands of his servants; and they came with the servants of Solomon to Ophir, and fetched from there four hundred and fifty talents of gold, and brought them to king Solomon-

1 Kings 9:28 says 420, but perhaps the 30 talents difference were paid to Hiram for his transport services, as the navy appears to have either been owned by Hiram or at least included his ships. "Ophir" may have been a generic name for areas to the east, including southern Arabia (famed for gold in Ps. 72:15; Ez. 27:22) and India; Ophir was in Arabia according to Gen. 10:29. Sheba was nearby and was famed for gold, so it was through this trading that the Queen of Sheba heard of the wisdom of Solomon. The next verse (2 Chron. 9:1) goes on to speak of her, connecting her with this gold trade with Ophir.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 9

2Ch 9:1 When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to Jerusalem to prove Solomon with hard questions, with a very great train, and camels

that bore spices, and gold in abundance and precious stones. When she had come to Solomon, she talked with him of all that was in her heart-

As explained on 2 Chron. 8:18, she would have first encountered Solomon's servants when they came to Sheba in search of gold, for which Sheba was famous. "Hard questions" is the word for "riddle". And it seems Solomon answered her riddles using his book of Proverbs. For he uses the word in Prov. 1:5,6 about how his Divinely inspired Proverbs were the answers to such "riddles" of the wise: "These proverbs can even add to the knowledge of the wise and give guidance to the educated, so that they can understand the hidden meanings of proverbs and the problems [s.w. "riddles", "hard questions"] that the wise raise" (GNB). He may have this wise queen of Sheba in mind, as it was her who raised these "riddles" / "problems" with him. The Hebrew idea seems to be of trick questions. She came to "prove" him- what we read of in this chapter is the conversion of a sceptic, but she was converted not so much by the ideas, the intellectual gymnastics, but what she saw with her own eyes of the effect of that wisdom. "No more spirit in her" (:4) could imply a giving up in a mental fight against Solomon. She initially didn't believe the words about Solomon (:6).

2Ch 9:2 Solomon told her all her questions; and there was not anything hidden from Solomon which he didn't tell her-

"Questions" is a poor translation. Literally, her 'words', s.w. "communed" in :1. He told her the words she had in her mind before she said them. This is the way good conversation goes, this is how people are won for Christ- when you tell them things which they were about to say. Paul uses this method when he foresees and answers questions which he foresees, e.g. "Some man will say, How are the dead raised up?" (1 Cor. 15:35). "Told her" translates the word used for solving riddles (Jud. 14:13) and interpreting dreams (Gen. 41:24; Dan. 5:12).

2Ch 9:3 When the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built-

The next verse suggests the "house" she was amazed at was not so much the temple, as his own house which had taken nearly twice as long to build and was of a grander nature than the temple. Yet he had prayed in 1 Kings 8 that the temple would be the source of wonder for the Gentile world, and would of itself bring about the creation of proselytes for Yahweh. But in reality it was replaced by his own house. We note how she was impressed by 'seeing' his wisdom; she had heard it in theory (:1), but it is the word made flesh which has the power of personal conversion in practice.

"Seen the wisdom" shows how wisdom and truth are seen in practice, not just heard with the ear. Only as the word becomes flesh in us will our witness of that word be ultimately persuasive to our audience.

2Ch 9:4 and the food of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers and their clothing, his cup bearers also and their clothing, and his ascent by which he went up to the house of Yahweh; there was no more spirit in her-
See on :1. Clearly 'spirit' here means something other than the life force, it refers to something mental and emotional. The way the Queen of Sheba was given a guided tour of Solomon's wealth makes ominous connection with Hezekiah's proud parading of his blessings to the Babylonian ambassadors. The "ascent" was the king's personal entry into the temple (2 Kings 16:18) and Hezekiah is also associated with this in that he wrote the songs of degrees after his healing. They allude to how the sun went back

on the sundial of Ahaz, which appears to have been a development of these grandiose steps of the king's entrance to the temple into a sundial. See on :11.

2Ch 9:5 She said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in my own land of your acts and of your wisdom-

"Report" is s.w. 'word', see note on :3. Hearing reports, wisdom in mere words, is not persuasive of itself until it is seen in practice. The actual content of Solomon's wisdom, perhaps in the form of the writings we now have as the book of Proverbs, had already been taken to her. She had heard the words by "report", but "didn't believe the words" (:6) until she actually saw the word made flesh. And this is typical of so many people. It is why God speaks His word to us now "in His Son", and why our witness will be the more effective if we make the word flesh in our lives.

2Ch 9:6 However I didn't believe their words until I came, and my eyes had seen it; and behold, the half of the greatness of your wisdom wasn't told me: you exceed the fame that I heard-

As explained on :5, it is hard for people to believe mere words. They have to see the word made flesh. This is why simply distributing propositional truths on various media will not of itself convert many people. The word must be made flesh, and then it is believed. This is why the person of the Lord Jesus, the word made flesh, must be absolutely and utterly paramount in our teaching of the Gospel. And it is why public lecturing about various Gospel truths will never convert as many people as witnessing that word in the flesh. It is encounter with real persons which converts real persons, rather than encounter with words and ideas. That is not to say God's word is not alive and powerful of itself. But people are people, they are weak, and often they have lacked access to God's word in its written form. It is the word made flesh in believers of that word which will be the most powerful witness in practice. By seeing the theory turned into practice, the word made flesh, she was converted.

2Ch 9:7 Happy are your men-

It is as if she wishes to see David's words about the blessedness or happiness of the righteous nation and people being fulfilled, or perhaps it was Solomon trying to fulfil those words (Ps. 1:1; 33:12 etc.). But it seems this was all an impression Solomon was giving her, for many things were "rotten in the state of Denmark" as noted throughout 1 Kings 8,9. LXX gives "wives" for "men", as if she was struck by the happiness of the wives in his harem, which was unusual. But surely this too was only an appearance, because Ecclesiastes betrays an unhappy family life in Solomon's experience.

And happy are these your servants who stand continually before you, and hear your wisdom-

Joy / happiness is a proof of wisdom in practice. Acts records constant joy amongst those who accepted Christ, and Heb. 3:6 implies that to stop rejoicing in the hope means we have lost the spiritual plot completely. Joy is therefore a necessary hallmark of those who are truly secured in Christ. The next generation were to complain that Solomon had chastised the people with whips (1 Kings 12:11). The happiness of the people which the Queen of Sheba observed was therefore just an impression Solomon arranged for her to receive.

2Ch 9:8 Blessed be Yahweh your God, who delighted in you to set you on His throne, to be king for Yahweh your God: because your God loved Israel to establish them

forever, therefore He made you king over them, to do justice and righteousness- These are identical words as in 1 Kings 5:7, of Hiram's response. We are given the impression that they became proselytes because they used the Yahweh Name; although polytheists could take the name of other gods, such as Yahweh, without it meaning they had accepted them as their own gods.

Because of God's enthusiasm for human response to His ways, the exalted language in which He describes believers, even in their weakness, is a further essay in His humility. The way the Father runs to the prodigal and falls on his neck in tears is a superb essay in this (Lk. 15:20). Thus God "delighted" in Solomon- translating a Hebrew word meaning literally 'to bend down to'. It's used about men in love (Gen. 34:19; Dt. 21:14; 25:7), and about Jonathan's deferential attitude to David (1 Sam. 19:2).

Although Israel's desire for a human king was a rejection of God as king, yet God worked through that situation rather than reject them as they had rejected Him. He accepted the human kingdom of Israel as His Kingdom on earth. It was God's wish that Israel would not have a human king; hence His sorrow when they did (1 Sam. 10:19-21). Yet in the Law, God foresaw that they would want a human king, and so He gave commandments concerning how he should behave (Dt. 17:14,15). These passages speak of how Israel would choose to set a King over themselves, and would do so. Yet God worked through this system of human kings; hence the Queen of Sheba speaks of how *God* had set Solomon over Israel as King, and how he was king on God's behalf (2 Chron. 9:8). Israel set a king over themselves; but God worked with this, so that in a sense *He* set the King over them.

"To establish them forever" shows that she perceived that God's intention was that Solomon's kingdom should be eternal, that he should be the full fulfilment of the Messianic Kingdom and King promised to David. But Israel later complained of how Solomon abused them, and his happy servants of :7 turned against his son, complaining of how harshly Solomon abused them. The great potential wasn't achieved, and so God's prophetic word was delayed and fulfilled a different way in Jesus.

2Ch 9:9 She gave the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold, and spices in great abundance, and precious stones. Neither was there any such spice as the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon-

This was about one third of his annual income (:13), which could imply she was more wealthy than he was. This note seems to imply that spices were never again imported into Israel, the implication being as Josephus states (*Antiquities*, 8.6.6), "that the cultivation of the balsam in Palestine dates from this visit; the plant having been one of the queen's gifts".

2Ch 9:10 The servants also of Hiram, and the servants of Solomon, who brought gold from Ophir, brought algum trees and precious stones-

"Almug" appears to refer to sandalwood, "the Hebraized form of the Deccan word for sandal". This points to "Ophir" as being in the east, possibly as far as the Indian coast where these trees grow.

2Ch 9:11 The king made of the algum trees terraces for the house of Yahweh and for the king's house, and harps and stringed instruments for the singers. There were none like these seen before in the land of Judah-

The idea is of a magnificent staircase with elaborate banisters. This appears to be the king's "ascent" into the temple which so amazed the queen of Sheba (:4). This verse is referring back before her visit, because the almug trees were brought for the temple and for the king's house, which were already built by the time she visited.

The way the record of Solomon's house follows straight on from that of God's house (1 Kings 6,7) seems to highlight the similarity between them. The house of Yahweh and Solomon's house are often spoke of together (e.g. 2 Chron. 7:11; 8:1; 9:11). The Temple was smaller than Solomon's house' he took nearly twice as long to build it. Clearly he spent more effort at housing his own glory than he did housing God's. The comparisons are intended to show this. The following comparisons put the temple first, and then Solomon's house.

Length: 60 cubits, breadth 20, height 30 (1 Kings 6:2) cp. Length: 100 cubits, breadth 50, height 30 (1 Kings 7:2)

Used cedar pillars and beams (1 Kings 6:9,10) cp. 1 Kings 7:2

Inner court built with three rows of hewn stone and a row of cedar beams (1 Kings 6:36 RV) cp. "The great court round about had three rows of hewn stones, and a row of cedar beams, like as the inner court of the house of the Lord" (1 Kings 7:12)

Hiram called in to build it (1 Kings 5:1-5) cp. 1 Kings 7:13

The Most Holy within God's house (1 Kings 7:8) cp. The "another court within the porch" in his house seems to have been a replica of the Most Holy within God's house. Here Solomon's wives worshipped their idols.

Built on large foundation stones cp. The record of the foundation stones (7:10) is similar to that of the temple foundations.

The temple had a "porch" (Ez. 8:7,16) cp. The porch of Solomon's house matches that of the temple (Ez. 8:7,16), which in Ezekiel's time was a place of apostasy.

Open flowers design of the temple cp. The two pillars with their pomegranates and lily-work seem to have matched the open flowers of the temple, and they have ominous connections with Absalom's pillar of self-glorification (2 Sam. 18:18).

2Ch 9:12 King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatever she asked, besides that which she had brought to the king. So she returned to her own land, she and her servants-

"She returned" is s.w. 'to be converted'. She became a proselyte. It is unclear whether this was a genuine gift, or whether it was part of a trade deal. For she had brought a huge caravan of gifts, and in return Solomon gave her what she asked for, as well as his own presents ("his royal bounty"). According to Ethiopian tradition, Solomon slept with the queen of Sheba and she bore Solomon a son called Melimelek. It is possible to interpret Ps. 45 as a reference to Solomon's relationship with the Queen of Sheba.

2Ch 9:13 Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold-

This number occurs in the description of the number and mark of the beast in Rev. 13:18. It is one of the biggest hints that in fact Solomon's kingdom was the kingdom of the flesh, and not at all God's Kingdom as had been promised to David. The apostate religious system called "Babylon" in Revelation is evidently presented in the language of Solomon - at the time his kingdom was apparently flourishing, due to his righteousness. 1 Kings 10:14 = Rev. 13:17,18; 1 Kings 10:23 = Rev. 18:11,12,15; 1 Kings 11:1,2 = Rev. 17:1,2; 1 Kings 10:22 = Rev. 18:17,19; 1 Kings 10:23 = Rev.

18:3,17; 1 Kings 10:21,22 = Rev. 18:12; 1 Kings 10:11 = Rev. 18:12; 1 Kings 10:22 = Rev. 18:12; 1 Kings 10:10,25 = Rev. 18:13; 1 Kings 10:23 = Rev. 18:3,9; 1 Kings 10:28 = Rev. 18:12; 1 Kings 9:22 = Rev. 18:13. These allusions of themselves suggest Solomon's spirituality was a mere appearance. The latter day system which his kingdom looked ahead to may therefore be Jewish or Jerusalem based, with elements of apparent obedience to God.

2 Chron. 3:8 says that Solomon used 600 talents of gold on the temple. Seeing he received 666 talents / year, plus the large income from :16, this means that it was not particularly generous. One talent is 26 kilograms (57 pounds). 1 kilogram of gold is currently worth about 40,000 US\$ [2020].

2Ch 9:14 besides that which the traders and merchants brought. All the kings of Arabia and the governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon- LXX understand this as tribute, the taxes he charged on trading with his ships or through his territory; and in addition there was the income from the taxation system described in 1 Kings 4.

2Ch 9:15 King Solomon made two hundred large shields of beaten gold; six hundred shekels of beaten gold went to one large shield-

The apostate religious system called "Babylon" in Revelation is evidently presented in the language of Solomon - at the time his kingdom was apparently flourishing, due to his righteousness. 1 Kings 10:14 = Rev. 13:17,18; 1 Kings 10:23 = Rev. 18:11,12,15; 1 Kings 11:1,2 = Rev. 17:1,2; 1 Kings 10:22 = Rev. 18:17,19; 1 Kings 10:23 = Rev. 18:3,17; 1 Kings 10:21,22 = Rev. 18:12; 1 Kings 10:11 = Rev. 18:12; 1 Kings 10:22 = Rev. 18:12; 1 Kings 10:10,25 = Rev. 18:13; 1 Kings 10:23 = Rev. 18:3,9; 1 Kings 10:28 = Rev. 18:12; 1 Kings 9:22 = Rev. 18:13; 2 Chron. 9:15 (666) = Rev. 13:18. These allusions of themselves suggest Solomon was fairly written from the start, and his spirituality a mere appearance.

2Ch 9:16 He made three hundred other shields of beaten gold; three hundred shekels of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon-

1 Kings 10:17 says that "three minas of gold went to one shield". 2 Chron. 9:16 says they weighed 300 shekels each, meaning that one mina was 100 shekels; although the definitions seemed to vary over time (Ez. 45:12). There were 60 shekels to one talent. But this hanging of shields on the walls was exactly what was done in Tyre (Ez. 27:11,12), so as noted earlier, it seems Solomon was copying Tyre as well as other Gentiles. Song 4:4 speaks of 1000 shields hanging "on the tower of David". This may be an exaggerated number, or it could be that these shields combined with those David had taken (see on :16) were 1000 in number.

Is. 2:6-13 condemns Israel for their pride whilst making many allusions to Solomon: "Full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures... full of horses... chariots... idols... the work of their own hands... the cedars of Lebanon" (i.e. Solomon's armoury of 1 Kings 7:2,3; 10:17). The amount of cedar used for Solomon's house as well as the temple would have probably resulted in the deforestation of parts of Lebanon in order to provide this number of mature cedar trees. To cover an area of 100 x 50 cubits (1 Kings 7:2) with a roof of cedar (1 Kings 7:3) would have required 5000 square cubits of cedar wood if it were a flat roof, and more if the roof was angled; although it could be that not all the area was covered, i.e. there may have been

a courtyard. But if it was, then we can better understand why it was called "the house of the forest of Lebanon" (1 Kings 10:17; Is. 22:8). About a whole forest of Lebanon would have been felled and transported to Jerusalem for all this building work.

2Ch 9:17 Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure gold-

"Ivory" is literally "tooth". It was likely made of wood overlaid with ivory and then gold, just as the 'house of ivory' (1 Kings 22:39) and 'bed of ivory' (Am. 6:4) were likewise not made of solid ivory. Ivory thrones were typical of the kings of Assyria, and we wonder if again this is evidence of pagan influence upon Solomon. God had promised to establish David's throne for ever, and Solomon wrongly assumed this was fulfilled in him and therefore he glorified his literal throne. This is typical of his total lack of spiritual perspective.

2Ch 9:18 And there were six steps to the throne, with a footstool of gold, which were fastened to the throne, and stays on either side by the place of the seat, and two lions standing beside the stays-

The six steps stressed the elevation of the throne. It is God's throne which alone is exalted (Is. 6:1). But Solomon justified his self exaltation on the basis that he had been exalted by God, and his throne was God's throne. He repeatedly refused to accept the conditionality of what had been promised to him. The two lions were surely part of the 12 lions of :20. Clearly two of the 12 lions [tribes of Israel] were seen as more exalted. This implies the supremacy of Judah over the ten tribes- and yet this kind of human point scoring was built in to what was supposed to be a replica of God's throne. Solomon was quite unawed by God's glory. For if he had been, he would have realized that before Him, all the tribes were equal.

Here Solomon starts to play God, because the idea of having a throne over the 12 tribes of Israel with a footstool is the language of God's throne. The porch of Solomon's house matches that of the temple (Ez. 8:7,16), which in Ezekiel's time was a place of apostasy. Solomon's own house was undeniably larger than God's, although built with the same layout (e.g. 1 Kings 6:2 cp. 7:2; 6:36 cp. 7:12; 5:1-5 cp. 7:13). The "another court within the porch" in his house seems to have been a replica of the Most Holy within God's house (1 Kings 7:8), yet it was here that Solomon's wives worshipped their idols. Likewise the record of the foundation stones (7:10) is similar to that of the temple foundations. The two pillars with their pomegranates and lily-work seem to have matched the open flowers of the temple, and they have ominous connections with Absalom's pillar of self-glorification (2 Sam. 18:18). Worst of all, Solomon's throne seems to have been built with allusion to Yahweh's enthronement upon the praises of Israel in the Most Holy. The temple steps are mentioned in the context of the steps to Solomon's throne (2 Chron. 9:4,18).

2Ch 9:19 Twelve lions stood there on both sides of the six steps: there was nothing like it made in any kingdom-

This extraordinary throne received so much attention from Solomon because he was convinced that the promises about David's throne being eternal were fulfilled in him. And so he effectively portrayed it as God's throne, with the 12 lions representing the tribes of Israel ruled over by him. After the division of the kingdom, the throne would have been a sad piece of furniture. But the 12 lions were found on each side of the steps, making 24. This is a number associated with the throne room of God, with 24 elders or division of Angels before it (Rev. 4:4; 5:8; 11:16; 19:4). Perhaps Solomon was aware of this, and so he was making his throne an imitation of God's. The lion

was specifically the symbol of Judah (Gen. 49:9); again, Solomon was inserting a subtext of Judah's domination of the rest of Israel. All Israel were to fall under the overall characterization of Judah.

If there were 12 lions on each side of the throne on each of the six steps then we have a total of 144 lions. The 144,000 before *God's* throne was an allusion to how royalty considered 144 a significant number. Solomon was acting as God, assuming his kingdom was the Kingdom of God, that he was the promised Messiah son of David, yet without the spirituality required for that. When have we played God?

The way Solomon built a huge physical throne, defended by impressive lions of his own creation (1 Kings 10:19,20), rather indicates how he missed the entire point-of ruling on *God's* throne, over a dynasty or 'throne' which God would perpetuate by grace; rather than establishing or creating the throne himself.

2Ch 9:20 All king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. Silver was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon-

However, Solomon only received 666 talents of gold / year (:13); and Alexander's pillage of Ectabana was estimated at 120,000 talents of gold. So Solomon's wealth was not so great, relatively speaking. But it appeared like that, relative to the earlier poverty of a subsistence farming economy like Israel had been before Solomon.

"He that loves silver (as Solomon did, Ecc. 2:8; 1 Kings 10:21-29) shall not be satisfied with silver (as he wasn't- see Ecc. 2); nor he that loves abundance (s.w. used about the abundance of Solomon's wives, 2 Chron. 11:23) with increase. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them (cp. the large numbers at his table, 1 Kings 4:27)" (Ecc. 5:10,11). The Hebrew word translated "not be satisfied" occurs around 25 times in the Proverbs, with Solomon warning of how the way of the flesh couldn't satisfy. Solomon said all this with an eye on himself. He preached it to others, he felt deeply the truth of it, but he saw no personal way out of it. All he had was the accurate knowledge of his situation, but no real motivation to change- like the alcoholic or drug abuser who knows every aspect of the harm of his habit.

2Ch 9:21 For the king had ships that went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram; once every three years came the ships of Tarshish, bringing gold, silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks-

The abundance of gold and silver is explained on the basis of the fact that Solomon had a "navy of Tarshish" along with that of Hiram. And along with the gold and silver therefore came ivory, apes and peacocks. The association of these five items together points to trading with areas to the south and east of Israel. There is no way that "Tarshish" can refer to Britain because these items are simply not found there in abundance, and apes and elephants [for the ivory] are hardly natives of Britain. The word for "peacocks" appears to be a Hebraized form of an Indian word. The location of the trading partners is consistently areas to the south and east of Israel, not to the west. "Tarshish" may not in this context refer to a particular location. Rather is it a play on the meaning of the word, 'endurance / long distance', and refers to long distance trading vessels; just as in the 19th century, such vessels were known as "Indiamen", even if they were not bound for India. Likewise minibuses in the USSR were known as "Latvias" but that didn't mean they were located in Latvia nor were going there. Comparing 2 Chron. 8:18 and 1 Kings 9:26, it seems that the navy of Solomon was initially based around the navy of Hiram. Hiram had transported his ships to the sea overland through Israel, and Solomon decided to have them build

ships for him at their port of departure, so that his traders could accompany the men of Tyre. The ships were perhaps "sent" in the form of wooden structures which were then assembled at the port. But then Solomon began to have the men of Tyre build him his own ships, so that his navy was separate to that of Hiram. But they journeyed together, trading up and down the gulf and as far as India; returning every three years to port and transporting their valuable profits overland back to Israel and thence to Tyre. Each visit to a port would have taken some time, and they would have gained the gold, silver etc. through trading rather than thieving. So they would have bought good from one place and sold them at another, and after three years they had accumulated boats full of gold and silver which amounted to their profits.

2Ch 9:22 So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom- These are the kings of the earth / land promised to Abraham, which is the same reference of :23. These are the kings of :25 LXX "and he ruled over all the kings from the river to the land of the Philistines, and to the borders of Egypt". The river Euphrates and the borders of Egypt were the *eretz* promised to Abraham.

2Ch 9:23 All the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart-

This refers to the earth / land promised to Abraham, the *eretz* of :22. As with the queen of Sheba, we note that they wanted to hear his wisdom from his actual mouth, in his presence; rather than just hear the ideas, which could easily enough have been relayed by word of mouth or even in writing. But for most people, the word has to become flesh to be persuasive. And so it is that God speaks to us in His Son, having earlier spoken solely through His written word. And our preaching of the word is likewise so far more effective through it being made flesh in us, as it was in the Lord, rather than being solely communicated through the written medium.

2Ch 9:24 They brought each man his tribute, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and clothing, armour, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year-

The nations traded their material wealth for spiritual instruction, coming annually to Jerusalem for instruction (2 Chron. 9:23,24). "A rate" would suggest Solomon began to charge for his wisdom- when it was God's wisdom. Even if it is argued that the gifts were totally voluntary, we recall how Daniel and others despised the gifts of kings offered in return for their having shared God's wisdom with them. Should wisdom ever really be paid for?

The first mention of mules in the Bible is associated with Absalom's murder of Amnon his brother (2 Sam. 13:29). They were cross bred in disobedience to Lev. 19:19. We get the impression that a generally slack attitude to what might have been considered minor matters of the law was associated with the major sin of murder. This is the problem when we start to think that some parts of God's laws can just be ignored. David was fond of them, having his own mule (1 Kings 1:33), and Solomon was willing to receive them as tribute (1 Kings 10:25).

2Ch 9:25 Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen that he stationed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem-

All in total disobedience to Dt. 17:16-20. When have we been blind to clear commandments, whilst preaching God's wisdom so well to others? Solomon had obsessive tendencies. We know that he became addicted to finding pleasure in

women, and Ecc. 2 shows him racing down the road of obsession with architecture, alcohol, food, gold etc. The historical narratives so often mention his gold and silver (e.g. 2 Chron. 9:13-21,24,27). This repetition reflects Solomon's obsession. The same fact explains the record's repetition of Solomon's enthusiasm for horses (1 Kings 10:25-29; 4:26,28; 9:19,22; 2 Chron. 1:14,16,17; 8:6,9; 9:24,25,28). Yet amassing of gold, silver and horses was explicitly forbidden for the King of Israel (Dt. 17:17). There is a powerful point to be made here: we can deceive ourselves that God is blessing us, when actually we are breaching explicit commands. Would Solomon had understood the concept of self-examination.

2Ch 9:26 He ruled over all the kings from the River even to the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt-

Israel was at its largest extent in Solomon's Kingdom; lost land was restored, and the borders re-established (2 Chron. 9:26; 8:4 cp. Josh. 16:3,5); it was also at its political strongest; nations submitted to Solomon (1 Kings 4:20); Israel was the chief of the nations (1 Kings 4:21).

2Ch 9:27 The king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedars to be as the sycamore trees that are in the lowland, for abundance-

All typical of the future Kingdom of God. This could mean that he planted cedars in Israel, perhaps transplanting them from Lebanon; for his wisdom included being given wisdom about plants. And that wisdom was for the sake of the blessing and wise leadership of God's people Israel.

2Ch 9:28 They brought horses for Solomon out of Egypt, and out of all lands-

Solomon started off as a middleman in the horse trade, buying horses from Egypt and selling them to the Hittite and Syrian kings (2 Chron. 1:16,17; 1 Kings 10:25,29); but he was playing with fire, and he soon came to flout the spirit of the command not to buy horses from Egypt. It's rather like the brother who works in a video store starting to watch the blue movies which he handles daily. Solomon would have justified it initially by saying that the horses were not for himself; just as we saw he justified his Egyptian wife by the thought that Joseph also married an Egyptian girl.

2Ch 9:29 Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, aren't they written in the history of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat?_

We can imagine that all of these prophets would have been critical of Solomon. He was therefore mentioned in the judgments against Jeroboam.

2Ch 9:30 Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years-

Saul, David and Solomon are all said to have reigned for "forty years", but the similarity is such that we wonder whether this isn't a symbolic period. For numbers were not used in Semitic literature in the precise way which we are accustomed to. Thus three consecutive kings of Babylon, Saosduchinus, Chiniladanus, and Nabopolassar are each recorded as having reigned 21 years.

2Ch 9:31 Solomon slept with his fathers, and he was buried in the city of David his father. Rehoboam his son reigned in his place-

The description of death as sleeping with fathers is clear evidence that death is seen as

a sleep, unconsciousness, and not as the start of an immortal soul going to heaven or 'hell'. Good and bad, David and Solomon, are gathered together in death. The division between them will only therefore come at the resurrection of the dead, and the granting of immortality at the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 10

2Ch 10:1 Rehoboam went to Shechem; for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king-

The LXX addition adds: "And Jeroboam went to Shechem in mount Ephraim, and assembled there the tribes of Israel; and Roboam the son of Solomon went up thither". This would explain why this gathering to instate Rehoboam as king was held in Shechem and not in Jerusalem. And yet although Jeroboam was present with supporters, it appears that "all Israel" favoured the idea of Rehoboam as king. The old men truly advised him that if he would only ease the taxation, all Israel would remain loyal to him. It could even be that the ten tribes had invited Rehoboam from Jerusalem to their great meeting place in Shechem specifically because they wanted him to be king. But this had to change, according to God's judgment upon Solomon- the ten tribes had to be removed from the control of his dynasty.

2Ch 10:2 When Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of king Solomon), then Jeroboam returned out of Egypt- It seems this verse and :3 should follow 2 Chron. 9:31 as in LXX and some Hebrew manuscripts.

2Ch 10:3 They sent and called him; and Jeroboam and all Israel came, and they spoke to Rehoboam saying-

See on 2 Chron. 24:2. We note that Jeroboam didn't immediately begin by demanding the throne, but rather led the people in asking Rehoboam to reduce his father's excessive taxation system. But his return from Egypt, and his awareness of the prophecy about him ruling over Israel, surely meant he had in view the possibility of Rehoboam rejecting the request.

In a distorted way, Jeroboam was almost a type of Christ; for as made clear at the end of 1 Kings 11, he could have been the Messianic ruler over Israel had he chosen Yahweh's way. I'd suggest that many wicked Old Testament characters *could* have been types of Christ if they had lived righteously, and the record indirectly indicates this. Jeroboam fled to Egypt because of the persecution of Solomon, as did the Lord. When Solomon died, "they sent and called him", connecting with the record of the Lord Jesus going to Egypt and coming back after Herod's death. Jeroboam came back on the third day (:12) and offered freedom from bondage to Israel, as did Christ on his resurrection. In 1 Kings 13:10 we read of the prophet who came to prophesy about Jeroboam; we are told that he didn't return the way he came, but went back another way. That's an echo of the wise men, who came to see Jesus, and returned another way.

2Ch 10:4 Your father made our yoke grievous. Now therefore make lighter the grievous service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you-

Ephraim had been specifically targetted as a provider of labour and tax revenues (1 Kings 11:28). The influence of Egypt upon Solomon is reflected by the way in which

he is described as making the people serve him with "hard bondage" (2 Chron. 10:4; 1 Kings 12:4). This is the very Hebrew phrase used to describe what the Egyptians did to Israel (Ex. 1:14; 6:9; Dt. 26:6). Solomon put his people under a yoke (2 Chron. 10:4), just as Egypt did to them (Lev. 26:13). And so we see the progression. Solomon loved an Egyptian woman, came to serve her gods, traded with Egypt... and the attitude of Egypt to God's people became Solomon's attitude to them. There is something unique about God's people; and yet the closer we come to the world, the more we come to see our own community, God's special family, just as this world sees us. The world's attitude to us can so easily become our attitude to our brethren- no longer seeing them as the specially chosen little children of God, sensitive to them as our very own brothers and sisters.

The very possession of wisdom and teaching of it to others can of itself make a man or woman demotivated to personally apply it. He foretold that the people would sigh when a wicked man ruled them (Prov. 29:2 RV)- and they did "sigh" because of the heavy burdens he placed upon them (1 Kings 12:4). He imposed the "yoke" of tribute upon the people (2 Chron. 10:4), whereas he himself had warned that a king that imposes tribute on his people "overthrows" a country (Prov. 29:4 RV mg.). He saw it all as true- and yet it was far from him personally.

The influence of Egypt upon Solomon is reflected by the way in which he is described as making the people serve him with "hard bondage" (2 Chron. 10:4; 1 Kings 12:4). This is the very Hebrew phrase used to describe what the Egyptians did to Israel (Ex. 1:14; 6:9; Dt. 26:6). Solomon put his people under a yoke (2 Chron. 10:4), just as Egypt did to them (Lev. 26:13). And so we see the progression. Solomon loved an Egyptian woman, came to serve her gods, traded with Egypt... and the attitude of Egypt to God's people became Solomon's attitude to them. There is something unique about God's people; and yet the closer we come to the world, the more we come to see our own community, God's special family, just as this world sees us. The world's attitude to us can so easily become our attitude to our brethren- no longer seeing them as the specially chosen little children of God, sensitive to them as our very own brothers and sisters.

The very possession of wisdom and teaching of it to others can of itself make a man or woman demotivated to personally apply it. He foretold that the people would sigh when a wicked man ruled them (Prov. 29:2 RV)- and they did "sigh" because of the heavy burdens he placed upon them (1 Kings 12:4). He imposed the "yoke" of tribute upon the people (2 Chron. 10:4), whereas he himself had warned that a king that imposes tribute on his people "overthrows" a country (Prov. 29:4 RV mg.). He saw it all as true- and yet it was far from him personally.

2Ch 10:5 He said to them, Come again to me after three days. The people departed-

The three days may have been in order to allow the advisers to be summoned from Jerusalem.

2Ch 10:6 King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men who had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What advice do you give me to return answer to this people?-

If Solomon was 41 at this time and the "young men" were those who had grown up with him, these men would have been really quite "old", old enough to have lived through much of David's reign and to have been influenced by his spirituality. Or the word may be used here to simply refer to the elders, whereas Rehoboam had also surrounded himself with his own peer group as advisers.

In this context, we may consider Solomon's frequent proverbs about the wisdom of having advisors, and his words in Prov. 20:18: "Plans are established by advice". Solomon's advice to his son sounds all well and good; but Rehoboam was given two different paths of advice by his advisors. Again, Solomon's words are true, but simplistic. Because as Rehoboam's case shows, the issue is not so much having advisors *per se*, but deciding which advisors to listen to. Solomon too had advisors, but did what he wanted, making this Proverb somewhat hollow when applied to himself.

2Ch 10:7 They spoke to him saying, 'If you are kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever' -

See on :1. The general will of Israel was for Rehoboam and not Jeroboam, but the taxation issue was crucial.

The paradox of servant leadership is found here- if Rehoboam had been a servant of his people, then he would have ruled over them. In all ways, the Lord is our pattern. He was a servant of all, and so should we be. His servanthood dominated His consciousness. He said that He came not [so much as] to be ministered unto, but so as to minister, with the end that He gave His life for others (Mk. 10:45).

2Ch 10:8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him-

It is true that as we go through life, we ought to realize that harsh responses and demands upon others are not really the way to go. These "young men" were perhaps the boys he had grown up with in Solomon's harem, his half brothers. They, like him, would not have been pure Israelites as their mothers were Gentiles, and they didn't have the long term well being of the nation at heart. Rehoboam was 41 at this stage. Perhaps then we can understand this as meaning that he had appointed young men as his advisers, who had been raised near him (the Hebrew *eth* translated "with" is a very wide word). They were young, but the Hebrew doesn't have to mean he had grown up with them. Rather they were young men who had been raised as he had been, in the same harem, which would hardly have been much of a place of wisdom.

2Ch 10:9 He said to them, What advice do you give, that we may return answer to this people who have spoken to me saying, 'Make the yoke that your father put on us lighter?' -

He had written in his Proverbs that the ruler who lacks wisdom will oppress his people (Prov. 28:16); and although his wisdom remained with him right to the end, in terms of knowledge (Ecc. 2:9; 12:10), yet at the end of his reign Solomon was the ruler who did oppress his people. And he had gone on in Prov. 28:16 to warn against covetousness in a ruler, even though he went ahead with practicing every conceivable form of it in Ecc. 2. "Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh" (Ecc. 11:10) Solomon taught- and yet Solomon in Ecclesiastes is the very picture of such a person. Like the experienced pilot who takes off with frozen wings and then crashes, so Solomon's very wisdom somehow disinclined him to living it out in practice. This is the perversity of our nature- the higher we may rise, the deeper we are inclined to fall.

2Ch 10:10 The young men who had grown up with him spoke to him saying, Thus you shall tell the people who spoke to you saying, Your father made our yoke heavy, but make it lighter on us; thus you shall say to them, My little finger is thicker than my father's waist-

The Lord appears to allude to this when He invites all those burdened and heavy laden to come to Him because His yoke is easy and the burden light (Mt. 11:28). It could be argued that He is thereby acknowledging that Jeroboam, who offered the easier burden, could have been as Him, a fulfilment of the promise of the Messianic king (1 Kings 11:38). He saw in those people abused by Solomon the religiously abused people who were suffering under the burdens placed upon them by their religious leaders; and He saw those Jews as represented by Solomon, whom He continually reads in a bad light.

2Ch 10:11 Now whereas my father burdened you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions- The contrast is not between whips and scorpions, but the idea is rather than he would use a far heavier whip known as a scorpion. The Romans had a whip called a "scorpio", used for punishment.

We have an insight into why Solomon was like this in Prov. 10:13 LXX: "He that brings forth wisdom from his lips smites the fool with a rod". Solomon has himself in view, but now instead of attributing wisdom to Divine inspiration, he starts to consider that it emanated from himself. When he died, the people complained that he had whipped [Heb. 'beaten'] them unreasonably. It was Solomon's false view of his wisdom which led him to do this. He assumed that he must be right, he was infallible, because of his possession of Divine truths. He justified indulging his natural human tendency to be overly harsh on others because he claimed he was the source of all wisdom. And again we see a parallel in fundamentalist Christian groups; where the more dogmatic are the claimants to possession of absolute truth about everything, the more they tend to abuse others and show no mercy to any who fail to attain to their supposed wisdom. Prov. 26:3 is also relevant, in the LXX "As a whip for a horse, and a goad for an ass, so is a rod for a simple nation". It was this attitude which led Solomon to beat his own people. Like many who hold God's truth, the mere holding of it lifted Solomon up in pride, and he came to despise all others who didn't accept his wisdom.

Despite having such knowledge and wisdom with which to rule Israel (for this was the primary purpose of the gift of wisdom to him), Solomon oppressed his people. With evident reference to himself, he commented: "Because the king's word has power, who may say unto him, What doest thou?" (Ecc. 8:4 RV). It is only God who cannot be questioned in this way. But Solomon felt that because he possessed God's wisdom, he could therefore act as God: "I counsel you, Keep the King's command, and that in regard of the oath of God" (Ecc. 8:2) could suggest that he thought that his commandments were in fact God's. So the possession of Truth, which we too have, can lead to an incredible arrogance, a lack of openness to others' comments upon us, and a certainty that *we* are right in all that we do and are beyond criticism. The hardness of a man is changed by true wisdom (Ecc. 8:1 RV), but knowing this, Solomon became hard hearted. He had the wisdom- but as he said, it was far from him personally.

"Surely oppression maketh a wise man foolish" (Ecc. 7:7 RV), he commented at the end of his life- even though *right then* he was chastising the people with whips, oppressing them (1 Kings 12:11). He knew the true wisdom, he saw his reflection so accurately in the mirror, but resigned from its personal implications. He could even write that "I returned and considered all the oppression that are done under the sun

[by himself!]: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power [Solomon was king and had set up the tax system in a clever and biased way]; but they had no comforter” (Ecc. 4:1; 5:8). It was a real case of spiritual schizophrenia- he sorrowed for the people he oppressed.

2Ch 10:12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king asked, saying, Come to me again the third day-

We the readers are drawn into a sense of expectation; we ourselves know what Rehoboam is going to say, but we are placed in the position of the suffering people, who didn't yet know what Rehoboam was going to answer.

2Ch 10:13 The king answered them roughly; and king Rehoboam forsook the advice of the old men-

"Roughly" is the word used of how the Egyptians treated the Israelites in whipping them and giving them heavy burdens to carry (Ex. 1:14). This was how he was behaving. It is the word the people have just used when they complained that Solomon had treated them 'grievously' (:4); and Rehoboam confirms that he is going to do the same. Solomon had frequently warned against forsaking the advice of elders (s.w. Prov. 2:17; 4:2 and especially the warning of Prov. 27:10 not to forsake the advice of your father's friend). But Rehoboam had probably not even read or heard all these Proverbs, as Solomon himself had ignored his own Proverbs and lived quite opposite to them. And so did his son.

2Ch 10:14 and spoke to them after the advice of the young men saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to it. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions-

Solomon has so much to say about 'chastisement' / "correction" / "instruction" coming from the possession of wisdom (Prov. 8:10,33; 10:17; 12:1; 13:1,24; 15:5,10,32; 16:22; 19:20,27; 22:15; 23:12,13). But in the end he chastised or corrected his people by whipping them (s.w. 1 Kings 12:11,14). Solomon initially asked for wisdom in order to guide his people, but he ended up whipping / physically chastising them into conformity with his wishes rather than allowing wisdom to correct. Again, he was playing God; for it is God through His wisdom who chastises, and not man. But Solomon thought he was effectively God to his people. This is why Solomon argues that servants cannot be corrected by words (Prov. 29:19 s.w.), and a child must be physically chastised (s.w. Prov. 19:18; 29:17 cp. Prov. 13:24; 23:13), regardless of his screams of pain. This kind of thing is a denial of his claims elsewhere that it is Divine wisdom which chastises / corrects, and such correction is from God and not man. Solomon's final description of himself as an old and foolish king who refuses to be admonished says it all (Ecc. 4:13); he admonishes others (s.w. Ecc. 12:12), but refuses to be admonished or corrected by his own wisdom. He failed to personalize it.

2Ch 10:15 So the king didn't listen to the people; for it was brought about of God, that Yahweh might establish His word, which He spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat-

There are times when God has influenced men not to respond to the evidently wise words of other men, in order to fulfill His purpose (e.g. 1 Kings 12:15; 2 Chron. 25:20). There are a number of other passages which mention how "it was of the Lord" that certain attitudes were adopted by men, resulting in the sequence of events which

He desired (Dt. 2:39; Josh. 11:20; 1 Sam. 2:25; 1 Kings 12:15; 2 Chron. 10:15; 22:7; 25:20). It is tempting to read Jud. 14:4 in this context, meaning that God somehow made Samson desire that woman in order to bring about His purpose of freeing Israel from Philistine domination. God through His Spirit works to confirm men in the path they wish to go. And this is the huge significance of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives today.

I suggest that the events predicted by Ahijah the Shilonite (the family of David and the tribe of Judah losing kingship over all Israel) are the fulfilment of Gen. 49:10 "The scepter will not depart from Judah" [he will not be banished from his kingdom] "until he comes to Shiloh". When Judah came to Shiloh to crown Rehoboam there, and there the "peoples [of Israel] will gather to him" to crown him, there the kingship or scepter over the ten tribes was lost. Shechem and Shiloh are close to each other and mentioned together twice: "Behold, there is a sacrifice before the Lord in Shiloh... on the east side of the highway that goes up from Beth-El to Shechem" (Jud. 21:19). Likewise in Jer. 41:5: "from Shechem (and) from Shiloh". The one who comes to Shiloh, the one from Shiloh, may refer not to Messiah but to Ahijah the Shilonite, the one from Shiloh, who prophesied how the kingship would depart from Judah. Ahijah is called "the Shilonite", the man from Shiloh, five times in the record. Quite some emphasis. If "until Shiloh come" refers to the Lord Jesus, it is hard to understand how the kingship departs from Judah when He comes, seeing He Himself is the lion from Judah. And it is hard to understand why He should be called "Shiloh" and the passage never apparently applied to Him in later scripture. The diadem / sceptre did depart from Judah, as Ezekiel 21:25-27 makes clear- and well before the Lord Jesus came. So to make "Shiloh" simply equal to Messiah just doesn't work.

2Ch 10:16 When all Israel saw that the king didn't listen to them, the people answered the king saying, What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse! Every man to your tents, Israel! Now see to your own house, David. So all Israel departed to their tents-

This was the cry of Sheba in 2 Sam. 20:1. But the promises of 2 Sam. 7 were to David and his seed / house. By resigning from any association with that house, they were walking out of the hope of Israel which was in those promises. This has been done so many times by those who [understandably] become disillusioned with the family of believers, but their break with them develops into a break with the things of God's Kingdom.

2Ch 10:17 But as for the children of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them-

This means that there were people from the ten tribes living in Judah, particularly those who had been transported there by Solomon to live in the various defensive outpost towns he had built in southern Judah. And they remained under Rehoboam.

2Ch 10:18 Then king Rehoboam sent Hadoram, who was over the men subject to forced labour; and the children of Israel stoned him to death with stones. King Rehoboam made speed to get himself up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem-

If the forced labour quotas of Solomon were to now be multiplied, life would literally be impossible for the ten tribes. It is no surprise therefore that Adoram was stoned and Rehoboam had to flee for his life back to Jerusalem- reflecting on the folly of his young advisors.

2Ch 10:19 So Israel rebelled against the house of David to this day-

The same phrase used of Edom in 2 Kings 8:22. The word for "rebelled" is also translated "transgressed". Their division from the house of David was a division away from the promises about the eternal establishment of that house, as noted on :16. In this sense it was therefore sinful.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 11

2Ch 11:1 When Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled the house of Judah and Benjamin, one hundred and eighty thousand chosen men who were warriors, to fight against Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam-

Benjamin was a small tribe (1 Sam. 9:21; Ps. 68:27). 18 years later, there were 400,000 warriors in Judah (2 Chron. 13:3), so this was a very significant proportion of warriors.

2Ch 11:2 But the word of Yahweh came to Shemaiah the man of God saying-

This may be now a quotation from the history written by Shemaiah about Rehoboam (2 Chron. 12:15).

2Ch 11:3 Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin saying-

"The rest of the people" presumably refers to those of the ten tribes who lived in Judah and were loyal to Rehoboam (2 Chron. 10:17). The records dovetail so perfectly, as we would expect of a history written ultimately under Divine inspiration.

2Ch 11:4 Thus says Yahweh, 'You shall not go up nor fight against your brothers! Return every man to his house; for this thing is of Me'. So they listened to the words of Yahweh, and returned from going against Jeroboam-

This was significant humility, involving a recognition that what had happened was "of God", in judgment for Solomon's sins. To fight against our brothers can never be justified. 1 Kings 14:30 "There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually" would indicate disobedience to this command to Rehoboam not to fight the ten tribes.

At this point, LXX adds to the record: "Roboam his son reigned in his stead in Jerusalem, being sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twelve years... And there was a man of mount Ephraim, a servant to Solomon, and his name was Jeroboam: and the name of his mother was Sarira, a harlot: and Solomon made him head of the levies of the house of Joseph: and he built for Solomon Sarira in mount Ephraim; and he had three hundred chariots of horses: he built the citadel with the levies of the house of Ephraim; he fortified the city of David, and aspired to the kingdom...".

2Ch 11:5 Rehoboam lived in Jerusalem, and built cities for defence in Judah-

1 Kings 12:25 fleshes out the detail: "Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived in it; and he went out from there, and built Penuel". Shechem was ideally centrally situated within his territory. Penuel was on the east side of Jordan, and would consolidate his power there, as well as controlling the fords of Jordan.

2Ch 11:6 He built Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa-

All quite near to each other. The idea is that he rebuilt or fortified them. Etam is the one in Judah, not the town belonging to Simeon (1 Chron. 4:32).

2Ch 11:7 Beth Zur, Soco, Adullam-

These were all strategically positioned to defend the approaches to Jerusalem. But we read in 2 Chron. 12:4 that when he turned away from Yahweh, Shishak "took the fortified cities which pertained to Judah and came to Jerusalem".

2Ch 11:8 Gath, Mareshah, Ziph-

This is surely not the Gath in Dan, as this wasn't under Rehoboam's control. If it is the Gath of the Philistines, from which David had won the hearts of several former Philistine enemies, we wonder at how a town once so against David now becomes a core part of God's people of Judah.

2Ch 11:9 Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah-

Inscriptions on the wall of the temple at Karnak list many cities in Palestine which Shishak of Egypt conquered, including three of the "cities for defence" which Rehoboam had built, Shoco, Adoraim and Aijalon (2 Chron. 11:7-10). The list also includes many cities within the ten tribes, suggesting that if Jeroboam got Shishak to invade Judah, Shishak then turned against his one time protégé Jeroboam and invaded the ten tribes also.

2Ch 11:10 Zorah, Aijalon and Hebron, which are in Judah and in Benjamin, fortified cities-

Zorah was in Dan, so it seems there were pockets of support for Judah even within the ten tribes.

2Ch 11:11 He fortified the strongholds, and put captains in them, and stores of food, and oil and wine-

This sounds like he expected a siege, and was very much on the defensive, in a kind of bunker mentality. He had inherited a political situation from Solomon which was far from peaceful; Judah faced threats not only from Israel, but from the surrounding nations.

2Ch 11:12 He put shields and spears in every city, and made them exceedingly strong. Judah and Benjamin belonged to him-

The idea seems to be that both tribes were solidly behind him. We note that Benjamin, Saul's tribe, had initially been the tribe most disloyal to Judah just a generation before. We see the fickleness of people, and also how people can genuinely change. Just as Philistines of Gath became David's most loyal followers.

2Ch 11:13 The priests and the Levites who were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their border-

This could indeed imply a mass migration of them to Judah (:14). But Heb. "took their stand by him" suggests there may have been individuals within the ten tribes who were loyal to Judah and the Davidic line. Both books of Kings reference several such individuals.

2Ch 11:14 For the Levites left their suburbs and their possessions and came to Judah and Jerusalem; for Jeroboam and his sons cast them off, that they should not execute the priests' office to Yahweh-

And yet Jeroboam claimed to be worshipping Yahweh, through worshipping the golden calves. But he changed the priesthood.

2Ch 11:15 He appointed priests for the high places, and for the male goats, and for the calves which he had made-

Jeroboam allowed the ordinary people to be priests; in Ex. 32 we learn that the ordinary people offered the sacrifices to the golden calf, not the priests. Again, it seems that Jeroboam was trying to consciously mimic the golden calf apostasy, perhaps arguing that Israel were a nation of priests. It is no accident that Josiah stamped his calves to powder, just as Moses did to the golden calf. Now *why* did Jeroboam so consciously lead Israel into the same apostasy which brought them as it were within a hairs breadth of national rejection in Ex. 32? Jeroboam wasn't ignorant. Perhaps he had gone down a path of contorted exposition which made out that Israel didn't really sin by worshipping the calf. Or perhaps he got so carried away with the idea that he was like Aaron, the priest, that he thought (like some modern Rabbis) that Aaron couldn't have done anything wrong, and therefore he consciously copied Aaron, as he did David, Solomon, Jacob and Samuel. Again, we see Jeroboam having a familiarity with Scripture, but not pausing to really meditate upon his actions or upon the real spirit of the word. We see him failing to analyze why Aaron acted as he did, failing to see that Aaron acted politically, failing to deeply analyze his own motives. The character of Jeroboam shines through here. Jeroboam named his sons Abijah [Abihu] and Nadab- the very names of Aaron's sons. It seems Jeroboam tried to model himself upon Aaron, and justify the building of the calves by interpreting what Aaron did as a positive, righteous thing (as some Jewish expositors do today). He politely overlooked the fact that Aaron was condemned for making the calf, and that Nadab and Abihu were slain for unacceptable worship (Lev. 10:1,2). We too can justify outright wrong behaviour in the name of superficial allusion to Scripture, willfully failing to see the similarities between our actions and those of men who were condemned for doing in essence the things which we seek to justify.

The "male goats" are AV "devils" or demons (Lev. 17:7). Clearly demons were originally images to idols, and in this context Paul says that idols have no real existence. And therefore, neither do demons.

2Ch 11:16 After them, out of all the tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts to seek Yahweh, the God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to Yahweh, the God of their fathers-

This suggests there may have been individuals within the ten tribes who were loyal to Judah and the Davidic line. Both books of Kings reference several such individuals.

2Ch 11:17 So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years; for they walked three years in the way of David and Solomon-

1 Kings 11:4-6 is clear that the way of Solomon was not that of David. So although the record here in inspired in its recording, this doesn't cancel out the bias of the historian, who wishes to whitewash the house of David. Likewise personal preference for various words and images is found in inspired writings; the process of inspiration didn't necessarily destroy the personal perspectives and style of the authors.

2Ch 11:18 Rehoboam took him a wife, Mahalath the daughter of Jerimoth the son of David and of Abihail the daughter of Eliab the son of Jesse-

Contrary to AV, this speaks of only one wife, Mahalath, whose parents were Jerimoth and Abihail. Rehoboam was well connected to the Davidic line.

2Ch 11:19 She bore him sons: Jeush, and Shemariah, and Zaham-

"Zaham", loathing', is surely not the name given to the child at birth. It confirms the suggestion I have often made, that names were given in response to later character and life experience. Sometimes in these genealogies we read the birth names, at others, the names they were given later in life. And therefore the same person can have more than one name.

2Ch 11:20 After her he took Maacah the daughter of Absalom. She bore him Abijah, Attai, Ziza and Shelomith-

"Daughter" may be grand daughter, as she was the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah (2 Chron. 13:2 LXX, which gives "Maacah" rather than "Michaiah"). 2 Sam. 18:18 says that Absalom had no son, so presumably he had this daughter who married Uriel and became mother to Maacah. Maachah his beloved wife (2 Chron. 11:20-22) was an idolater (2 Chron. 15:16).

2Ch 11:21 Rehoboam loved Maacah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines. (He took eighteen wives, and sixty concubines, and became the father of twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters.)-

We note that the sons he had by Maacah had secular names, apart from Abijah. Two of the three sons by his other wife had the Name of God in them. And yet Abijah was chosen by Rehoboam to succeed him.

2Ch 11:22 Rehoboam appointed Abijah the son of Maacah to be chief, the prince among his brothers; for he intended to make him king-

This would be another case of the firstborn being replaced by another. For Abijah wasn't the firstborn of Rehoboam. This is such a huge theme, it reflects how passionate God is for the outsiders.

2Ch 11:23 He dealt wisely, and settled some of his sons throughout all the lands of Judah and Benjamin, to every fortified city: and he gave them food in abundance. He sought for them many wives-

Rehoboam should have learned from his father Solomon's mistakes but his taking many wives shows that he didn't. "He that loveth silver (as Solomon did, Ecc. 2:8; 1 Kings 10:21-29) shall not be satisfied with silver (as he wasn't- see Ecc. 2); nor he that loveth abundance (s.w. used about the abundance of Rehoboam's wives, 2 Chron. 11:23) with increase. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them (cp. the large numbers at his table, 1 Kings 4:27)" (Ecc. 5:10,11). The Hebrew word translated "not be satisfied" occurs around 25 times in the Proverbs, with Solomon warning of how the way of the flesh couldn't satisfy. Solomon said all this with an eye on himself. And Rehoboam surely must have realized his father's hypocrisy. Solomon preached it to others, he felt deeply the truth of it, but he saw no personal way out of it. All he had was the accurate knowledge of his situation, but no real motivation to change- like the alcoholic or drug abuser who knows every aspect of the harm of his habit.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 12

2Ch 12:1 When the kingdom of Rehoboam was established and he had made himself strong, he forsook the law of Yahweh, and all Israel with him- Yahweh was no longer apparently needed by them, and so they turned to other gods. Maachah his beloved second wife (2 Chron. 11:20-22) was an idolater (2 Chron. 15:16). The simple truth is that those who perceive how powerless they are... turn to God for strength. And those who refuse to are those who turn away from Him to idols.

2Ch 12:2 It happened in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had trespassed against Yahweh- Shishak had given refuge to Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:40), so it could be that he urged Shishak to attack Judah once Rehoboam became established as king of Judah. "A monument of this king, the first of the 22nd dynasty, has been discovered at Karnak in Upper Egypt, recording his conquests and the names of certain towns which he had taken in Palestine". Inscriptions on the wall of the temple at Karnak list many conquered cities, including three of the "cities for defence" which Rehoboam had built, Shoco, Adoraim and Aijalon (2 Chron. 11:7-10). The list also includes many cities within the ten tribes, suggesting that if Jeroboam got Shishak to invade Judah, Shishak then turned against his one time protégé Jeroboam and invaded the ten tribes also.

2Ch 12:3 with twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand horsemen. The people were without number who came with him out of Egypt: the Lubim, the Sukkiim and the Ethiopians- Rehoboam's father Solomon had sold his soul to the Egyptians, and married the daughter of Pharaoh. But now Egypt turned against his son, just as the world does. We note that "hundred" and "thousand" are often used to denote military divisions, rather than literally 100 or 1000.

2Ch 12:4 He took the fortified cities which pertained to Judah and came to Jerusalem- I noted on 2 Chron. 11:6,7 that Rehoboam's carefully fortified cities were all strategically positioned to defend the approaches to Jerusalem. But this was all human strength, and without God on his side it all came to nothing.

2Ch 12:5 Now Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and to the princes of Judah, who were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them, Thus says Yahweh, You have forsaken Me, therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak- This may be now a quotation from the history written by Shemaiah about Rehoboam (2 Chron. 12:15). "Forsaken" is the same word as "left you". But 'You forsake Me, I'll forsake you' is not the conclusion we should take too easily. For God only forsook sinners after years of patience with them. And it is doubtful whether Rehoboam ever had much spirituality, as his father was Solomon and his mother an Ammonitess pagan. Yet he was generously counted as 'with Yahweh'.

2Ch 12:6 Then the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, Yahweh is righteous- Who God is, as expressed in His Name, is an imperative to prepare ourselves to meet

Him in judgment. The confession of the Name is paralleled with repentance in 2 Chron. 6:24. There we read that if Israel sin and repent "and confess Your name" they will be forgiven. But instead of "confess Your name" we expect "confess their sins": the point being that to confess the name is effectively to confess sins. The name is the characteristics of Yahweh. The more we meditate upon them, the more we will naturally be lead to a confession of our sins, the deeper we will sense the gap between those principles and our own character. Likewise here, the statement that "the Lord is righteous" is effectively a confession of sin. And thus we are not to bear or take the Name of Yahweh called upon us at baptism in vain- the reality of the implications of the name are not to be lost upon us. But we note that Solomon had envisaged Israel sinning, repenting and being saved by reason of the temple. But here, humility was what was required. Solomon had been wrong in assuming that the temple would be a kind of mediatrix of forgiveness.

2Ch 12:7 When Yahweh saw that they humbled themselves, the word of Yahweh came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves. I will not destroy them; but I will grant them some deliverance. My wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak-

The theme of humbling themselves alludes to God's words in 2 Chron. 7:14, which is His reply to Solomon's claim that if Israel prayed to the temple, then God would save them in battle. He says simply that if Israel humble themselves in battle [He makes no mention of the temple], then He will save them. And the situation with Shishak was an example of that. We note that even at that stage, God had in mind to destroy the temple and Zion / Jerusalem. Solomon and David's dogmatism that it would last eternally are thus shown to be misplaced right from the start of the temple's 430 year history.

"Shemaiah", 'Yah has heard', gave them the message that He had heard their humility, as if that itself was reckoned as prayer. And indeed, character and situation are often effectively reckoned as prayer. We have the impression that God had intended the destruction of Jerusalem at this point; but He relented, in response to their repentance. Just as He did with Nineveh. There is a gap between His statement of judgment, and its fulfilment. During that gap, we can change the outcome by prayer and repentance.

"They have humbled themselves" could be an expression of pleasant surprise. Scripture repeatedly speaks as if God notices things and is then hurt or encouraged by what He sees (Jonah 3:10; Gen. 29:31; Ex. 3:4; Dt. 32:19; 2 Kings 14:26; 2 Chron. 12:7; Ez. 23:13; Is. 59:15 cp. Lk. 7:13). If He knew in advance what they were going to do, this language is hard for me to understand. But God is therefore hurt and 'surprised' at sin- He saw Israel as the firstripe grapes, but they were worshipping Baal even then (Hos. 9:9). Thus God can allow Himself to feel an element of surprise- and this was a shock to Jeremiah, who queried: "Why are You like a man who is caught by surprise...?" (Jer. 14:9).

The wrath of God can be turned away by the actions of those He is angry with (Num. 25:4; Dt. 13:15-17; Ezra 10:14; Jonah 3:7,10; 2 Chron. 12:7; Jer. 4:4; 21:12). And yet that wrath can also be turned away by the prayers of a third party (Ps. 106:23; Jer. 18:20; Job 42:7). This means that in some cases, our prayers for others can be counted as if they have repented. We can gain our brother for God's Kingdom (Mt. 18:15), as Noah saved his own house by his faithful preparation (Heb. 11:7).

2Ch 12:8 Nevertheless they shall be his servants, that they may know My service, and

the service of the kingdoms of the countries-

They were to perceive in their servitude to this man what servitude to Yahweh ought to be like. They were therefore to serve him "as unto the Lord", and Col. 3:23 taught Christian slaves to serve their masters as if they were serving the Lord Jesus. This, therefore, is an abiding theme in God's dealings with His people, and has enabled so many in positions of awful subservience to be able to live out their lives with the dignity of knowing that their lives are counted as serving God.

2Ch 12:9 So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of Yahweh, and the treasures of the king's house. He took it all away. He also took away the shields of gold which Solomon had made-

LXX mentions that David took golden spears from Hadadezer: "And the golden spears which David took from the hand of the servants of Adraazar king of Soba and carried to Jerusalem, he took them all". These would not have been used as real spears, but were part of the worship of the golden sun which was the main religion in Syria at the time. David would have been better destroying them, rather than bringing idol paraphernalia into Jerusalem. For it later contributed towards the freedom Judah felt to worship sun gods. These spears would have been taken at the time of 2 Sam. 8:7: "David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem". "Hadad" was the god of the sun, "Hadadezer" had not been 'helped by Hadad' as his name means, and so David brought these golden imitations of the sun to Yahweh's temple. It is perhaps questionable whether David should have brought idols into Jerusalem; we note that later Judah worshipped sun gods. David's actions here were not blessed, for the LXX adds "And Susakim [i.e. Shishak] king of Egypt took them, when he went up to Jerusalem in the days of Roboam the son of Solomon".

Shishak is usually identified as Shoshenq I. But as always with Egyptology, there are other claims. Immanuel Velikovsky in *Ages in Chaos* has him as Thutmose III of the 18th dynasty; David Rohl as Ramesses II of the 19th dynasty, and Peter James as Ramesses III of the 20th dynasty.

2Ch 12:10 King Rehoboam made in their place shields of brass, and committed them to the hands of the captains of the guard who kept the door of the king's house-
Gold being downgraded to brass reflects the decline of faith in Rehoboam, for gold is a symbol of faith (1 Pet. 1:7).

2Ch 12:11 It was so, that as often as the king entered into the house of Yahweh, the guard came and carried them back into the guard room-

This indicates that there was a very low level of security even in the Jerusalem temple. Rehoboam wished by all means to imitate the worship of his father Solomon, but it was on a pathetically lower level. Despite all his idolatry, he still entered the temple for public worship of Yahweh. This was Israel's recurrent problem, to worship both Yahweh and the idols.

2Ch 12:12 When he humbled himself-

"Humbled himself" is the word also used for being "subdued under" military powers. When Israel didn't subdue themselves under God, they were subdued beneath their enemies. So it was a case of humility one way or the other. And the same logic applies to us. Flesh must be humbled, either by our willing choice in this life, or in the condemnation of the last day.

The wrath of Yahweh turned from him, so as not to destroy him altogether. Moreover, in Judah there were good things found-

Ps. 78:38; 85:3 seem to suggest God Himself controlled His anger, Himself turning that anger away, rather than being like a pagan deity whose anger was appeased by blood sacrifice. God turned from His anger due to Moses' intercession (Ex. 32:12 s.w.), but this is not to say that He cannot in any case turn away His anger, simply by His grace. Just as we may control our anger from within ourselves, or at other times we may do this because of the appeal of another to us, or because there is repentance from the one who provoked us. And there were times when this was the case with God (s.w. Num. 25:4; Josh. 7:26; 2 Chron. 12:12; 29:10; 30:8).

2Ch 12:13 So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which Yahweh had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess-

1 Kings 14:21; 2 Chron. 12:13 says Rehoboam was 41 when he became king. But he was "young and tender hearted" (2 Chron. 13:7). The LXX addition at 1 Kings 12:24 says he was 16 when he began to reign. He was surrounded by young men who had grown up with him. I suggest on balance that he was indeed 41 and the "young men" were "young" in comparison to the older men present. The description "young and tender hearted" could simply be a purposeful repetition of the description of his father Solomon when he ascended the throne; or it could mean that he was a rather weak and child like man.

2Ch 12:14 He did that which was evil, because he didn't set his heart to seek Yahweh- Constantly, the Bible stresses the importance of the heart, and of conscious 'setting' of the heart, of directing the thoughts toward God. And doing evil is the result of failing to do this.

2Ch 12:15 Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, aren't they written in the histories of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer, after the way of genealogies?- The priests who wrote those records in Chronicles were writing down the result of their national self-examination. This was the record of their lessons from Chronicles. Each of the genealogies say something about the people they are concerned with; and thus 2 Chron. 12:15 RVmg. speaks of how the acts of Rehoboam are reflected in the reckoning of the genealogies.

There were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually- This would indicate disobedience to the command to Rehoboam not to fight the ten tribes (1 Kings 12:24).

2Ch 12:16 Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David; and Abijah his son reigned in his place-

The description of death as sleeping with fathers is clear evidence that death is seen as a sleep, unconsciousness, and not as the start of an immortal soul going to heaven or 'hell'. Good and bad, David and Solomon, are gathered together in death. The division between them will only therefore come at the resurrection of the dead, and the granting of immortality at the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 13

2Ch 13:1 In the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam began Abijah to reign over Judah-

Called Abijam in 1 Kings 15:1, which means "father of the sea", but 'father of' can mean 'worshipper of', as 'Abijah' means 'father / worshipper of Yah'. The sea god was worshipped, and so we conclude this was reflective of pagan devotions. He is called Abijah in 2 Chronicles, 'worshipper of Yah'. Having both a pagan and Yahwistic name was typical of the times, and Maacah / Michaiah his mother had a similar two names (see on :2). 2 Chron. 11:20-22 shows that Rehoboam had 28 sons. Abijam wasn't the firstborn, but rather the firstborn son of the favoured wife. Abijam had 38 children (2 Chron. 13:21), so he must have been a reasonable age when he came to the throne.

2Ch 13:2 He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Micaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam-

LXX gives Maacah for Micaiah, "the daughter of Absalom" (2 Chron. 11:20).

"Daughter" may be grand daughter, as she was the daughter of Uriel. 2 Sam. 18:18 says that Absalom had no son, so presumably he had this daughter who married Uriel and became mother to Maacah. Michaiah, "Who is like Jehovah?", was known by her more pagan name Maachah, "oppression". The records of the kings so often mention their mothers, in reflection of the huge spiritual influence of a mother upon her children. The three years is a figure inclusive of parts of years, as he became king in the 18th year of Jeroboam's reign in Israel and died in his 20th year. "Three days / years" is often not a literal figure, and this must be recalled when considering the chronology of the Lord's three days in the tomb

2Ch 13:3 Abijah joined battle with an army of valiant men of war, even four hundred thousand chosen men. Jeroboam set the battle in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, who were mighty men of valour-

We note that "hundred" and "thousand" are often used to denote military divisions, rather than literally 100 or 1000. This would indicate disobedience to the command to Rehoboam not to fight the ten tribes (1 Kings 12:24). The terrible sin and tragedy of fighting ones own brethren is noted twice (also in 1 Kings 14:30).

2Ch 13:4 Abijah stood up on Mount Zemaraim, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, Hear me, Jeroboam and all Israel-

Zemaraim was in the territory assigned to Benjamin (Josh. 18:22), but is located "in the hill country of Ephraim" in 2 Chron. 13:4. Clearly the inheritances were flexible in practice. Zemaraim was on the border of Benjamin and Ephraim, so this was an appropriate place for Israel and Judah to meet in battle.

2Ch 13:5 Ought you not to know that Yahweh, the God of Israel, gave the kingdom over Israel to David forever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?-

This was true only to an extent. The Davidic covenant was very clearly conditional upon obedience and faithfulness, and the wording clearly envisaged that the seed of David might not be that. And therefore Jeroboam himself had been offered the possibility of being the Messianic king, even though he was not of the line of David. Salt made a sacrifice meaningful (Lev. 2:13), and therefore a "covenant of salt" meant a sure covenant confirmed by sacrifice (Num. 18:19). David and Solomon had both dedicated the plans for the temple with abundant sacrifices, claiming that the covenant

with David was fulfilled in Solomon and confirmed through the building of the temple. But that was on their initiative and suggestion, and in reality Solomon had broken that covenant.

2Ch 13:6 Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up, and rebelled against his lord-

This again was true but only to an extent. The kingdom was rent away from the house of David for their apostasy, and Jeroboam had potentially been enabled to be a new Messianic king. He failed in that, but to blame the division solely upon Jeroboam merely being a rebellious servant was Abijah's biased narrative.

2Ch 13:7 There were gathered to him vain men, base fellows, who strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tenderhearted, and could not withstand them-

Rehoboam was 41 when he became king, so again Abijah is spinning narrative according to his own bias.

2Ch 13:8 Now you think to withstand the kingdom of Yahweh in the hand of the sons of David. You are a great multitude, and there are with you the golden calves which Jeroboam made you for gods-

Abijah recognizes they are double his strength, but he seeks to touch their conscience about the golden calves, as if they are as it were pitting themselves against Yahweh. Even though his own wife was an idolater and he likely was too. He is leading up to the argument that they are fighting against God (:12). See on :21. He overlooks how God Himself withstood the line of David and had torn away the ten tribes and given them to Jeroboam, with the potential to make a Messianic kingdom out of them.

2Ch 13:9 Haven't you driven out the priests of Yahweh, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and made priests for yourselves after the ways of the peoples of other lands? So that whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams, the same may be a priest of those who are not gods-

Yahweh's priests were consecrated with a young bull and two rams (Ex. 29:1). Again we see how Jeroboam crafted a false religious system on the basis of the true one, and that is typical of all our apostasy. And whilst perhaps they did drive out Yahweh's Levitical priests, it's likely many left the apostasy of their own accord. Although they would've arrived in a Judah also given over to idolatry, with the queen Maacah an idolater; hence God's wrath with Judah through Shishak's invasion.

2Ch 13:10 But as for us, Yahweh is our God, and we have not forsaken Him. We have priests ministering to Yahweh, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites in their work-

This was untrue, they had forsaken Yahweh and been seriously punished for it by Shishak, and the queen was an idolater. Abijah, like many in the orthodox churches, reasoned that because he had a priesthood obeying Mosaic commands, therefore and thereby they had not forsaken Yahweh. He thought that religious structure alone defined his faith in and loyalty to Yahweh.

2Ch 13:11 and they burn to Yahweh every morning and every evening burnt offerings and sweet incense. They also set the showbread in order on the pure table; and the lampstand of gold with its lamps, to burn every evening. We keep the instruction of Yahweh our God; but you have forsaken Him-

Shishak's invasion had perhaps taken away the plural "gold tables" for the showbread, and forced them to return to the Godly, Mosaic pattern of just one table for the showbread.

The table of show bread was to be made of acacia wood (Ex. 25:23), but David planned to make it of pure gold, and even worked out the weight of gold required for it (1 Chron. 28:16). And Solomon indeed made it of gold (1 Kings 7:48), leading to it being known as "the pure table" (2 Chron. 13:11). Religion had overtaken spirituality, form had eclipsed content. Likewise the "tables of silver" David ordered to be made (1 Chron. 28:16) do not feature in the tabernacle. He was missing the point- that God wanted His holiest symbols made of common, weak things like acacia wood. For His strength and glory is made perfect in weakness. David claims these plans were from God (1 Chron. 28:19), although as discussed on 1 Chron. 28:12, they were in fact from his own mind. The way these things were taken into captivity, with no record of this golden table ever being returned, surely reflects God's judgment upon this kind of religious show. He prefers a humble house church in an inner city room, rather than a gold plated cathedral. The way some exclusive churches speak of 'maintaining a pure table' suggests they have made the same essential mistake as David did.

2Ch 13:12 Behold, God is with us at our head, and His priests with the trumpets of alarm to sound an alarm against you. Children of Israel-

We read here of Abijah's apparent devotion. The comment of 1 Kings 15:3 is that his heart wasn't perfect with Yahweh as David's was. David clearly sinned and seems to have suffered a decline in his ethics and spirituality as he got older. But he was judged on the overall dominant desire of his heart, to the point that having a heart perfect with Yahweh seems to effectively mean 'He was wholeheartedly devoted to Yahweh and never worshipped other gods'. Whereas Abijah, despite peaks of spirituality and an appearance of loyalty to Him, did not have that total devotion to Yahweh as the dominant position of his heart throughout his life. Whatever peaks of obedience and devotion we may attain at points in our lives, it is the overall core position of our heart which is judged. Men like David may sin terribly at some points, those like Abijah may achieve wonderful levels of devotion at some points. But those high or low points play no major part in the final, unknowable equilibrium of Divine judgment. We need to remember this, as we encounter our brethren and ponder what to make of them, in their pits of sin and heights of devotion. Those points on their graph ought not to unduly weight our overall position on them.

The reference to trumpets alludes to Num. 10:9, and Abijah thought that by merely blowing trumpets he would have Yahweh's help. This is why he was driven to a desperate situation in the battle with Jeroboam, so that he really called to Yahweh with all his heart, and not through mere ritualism.

Don't fight against Yahweh, the God of your fathers; for you shall not prosper- Acts 5:39; 23:9 appear to allude to this. But as pointed out on :8, Abijah himself was associated with idolatry, and as with the context of the Acts allusions, this is a rather twisted argument. 'If you fight me you're fighting God' has been an oft deployed argument that often lacks full integrity. See on :21.

2Ch 13:13 But Jeroboam caused an ambush to come about behind them: so they were before Judah, and the ambush was behind them-

As discussed on :14, this was meant by God to put Judah into a hopeless situation. I have shown above that Judah were not much better than Israel and their claims to be

faithful to Yahweh were hypocritical. But they were put into a situation which forced them to realize that, and to truly repent and cry to Yahweh from their hearts.

2Ch 13:14 When Judah looked back, behold, the battle was before and behind them; and they cried to Yahweh, and the priests sounded with the trumpets-

The reference to trumpets alludes to Num. 10:9, and Abijah thought that by merely blowing trumpets he would have Yahweh's help. This is why he was driven to a desperate situation in the battle with Jeroboam, so that he really called to Yahweh with all his heart, and not through mere ritualism. The "shout" of :15 was their cry from the heart to God, and He responded to that. We all tend to repeat the same words in prayer, until prayer becomes little more than ritualism, the blowing of trumpets which Abijah had practiced. But then situations are brought into our lives when we "shout" to God from the heart, praying as we ought to- and then He responds.

2Ch 13:15 Then the men of Judah gave a shout; and as the men of Judah shouted, it happened, that God struck Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah-

As explained on :14, this "shout" was a cry from the heart to Yahweh, well beyond the mere ritualism of blowing trumpets. Judah were not much better than Israel, as demonstrated above. But they cried from the heart to Yahweh, whereas Israel didn't. And so God gave them victory, and used them to punish Jeroboam for his impenitent apostasy.

2Ch 13:16 The children of Israel fled before Judah; and God delivered them into their hand-

Judah weren't much better than Israel. But God so respects faith and repentance, even if in extremity, such as on a deathbed- that He responds. .

2Ch 13:17 Abijah and his people killed them with a great slaughter; so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men-

"Thousand" is not to be read literally; the term often refers to a military division of some sort. And they didn't fall in the same day, as the fighting continued for some time (:19).

2Ch 13:18 Thus the children of Israel were overcome at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied on Yahweh, the God of their fathers-

They relied on Him at one point, and were rewarded for it. But not generally. This reflects God's extreme sensitivity to faith in Him, even if He knows the surrounding context of a man's life is not of faith in Him. "Relied" is the word used in 2 Chron. 14:11; 16:8 in a similar context.

2Ch 13:19 Abijah pursued after Jeroboam, and took cities from him: Bethel with its suburbs, Jeshanah with its suburbs and Ephron with its suburbs-

These victories were short-lived, because Bethel soon returned to the northern kingdom, and the golden calf there was not destroyed by Judah as it should have been (2 Kings 10:29).

2Ch 13:20 Jeroboam didn't recover strength again in the days of Abijah. Yahweh struck him, and he died-

This implies special judgment from God (1 Sam. 25:38; Acts 12:13).

2Ch 13:21 But Abijah grew mighty, and took to himself fourteen wives, and became the father of twenty-two sons, and sixteen daughters-

"Grew mighty" is the same word Abijah has twice used in :7,8, claiming in :8 that Jeroboam was withstanding or growing mighty against Yahweh. Perhaps the hint is that Abijah was really no better (see on :8,12), because he too withstood Yahweh in marrying so many wives, at least one of whom [the favourite] was an unashamed idolater.

2Ch 13:22 The rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways and his sayings, are written in the commentary of the prophet Iddo-

Neither the sayings of Abijah nor the book of Iddo have been preserved. There are many writings referenced within scripture which are not now available. The book of the prophet Iddo may well have been inspired by God, but was only useful for its time. The scriptures we have are therefore the result of careful Divine selection, and all of them are somehow relevant to us, even the Chronicles genealogies, in a way these other writings aren't.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 14

2Ch 14:1 So Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David; and Asa his son reigned in his place. In his days the land was quiet ten years-
The description of death as sleeping with fathers is clear evidence that death is seen as a sleep, unconsciousness, and not as the start of an immortal soul going to heaven or 'hell'. Good and bad, David and Solomon, are gathered together in death. The division between them will only therefore come at the resurrection of the dead, and the granting of immortality at the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus.

The land itself was quiet but that didn't mean Judah were not at war. There was 20 years peace later on (2 Chron. 15:10, 19). The impression is given that Asa's [partial] faithfulness to Yahweh meant there was peace, and peace is a fruit of loyalty to Yahweh. Baasha became king of Israel in the third year of Asa (1 Kings 15:28,33) and "there was war between Asa and Baasha all their days" (1 Kings 15:32).

2Ch 14:2 Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of Yahweh his God-
This is the phrase specifically used in appeal to Israel as they approached the promised land; their inheritance of it was conditional upon this (Dt. 6:18; 12:28). This connects with the idea of the land being at peace whilst Asa was obedient (see on :1; 2 Chron. 15:19). One meaning of "Asa" is "physician", and he ended his days trusting physicians rather than Yahweh. Perhaps he trained as a physician and ended up therefore having more faith in science than in Yahweh. The statement therefore may refer to his initial state of loyalty to Yahweh. But this could refer to God's judgment upon his whole life, and 1 Kings 15:11 says that "he did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, as did David his father".

Asa is recorded as serving God just as well as David, when actually this wasn't the case; but God counted him as righteous. The incomplete faith of men like Baruch was counted as full faith by later inspiration (Jud. 4:8,9 cp. Heb. 11:32). Asa was not perfect, nor was David; but God's overall judgment was that he "did right", despite doing wrong at specific points in his life. Indeed as noted on 2 Chron. 16:12, Asa died at a low point for him spiritually. But the judgment overall was that he "did right" and that "nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect with Yahweh all his days" (1 Kings

15:14). We must learn therefore not to judge a person too harshly if they die at a weak spiritual point, e.g. through suicide.

2Ch 14:3 He took away the foreign altars, and the high places, and broke down the pillars, and cut down the Asherim-

Chronicles typically seeks to sanitize the record and present the kings as positively as possible. The truth is that Asa didn't remove the high places (1 Kings 15:14), and soon afterwards, the worship of foreign gods revived. So Asa's reforms were not that thorough, and in any case, the people generally remained in idolatry.

2Ch 14:4 and commanded Judah to seek Yahweh, the God of their fathers, and to obey the law and the commandment-

Perfection is simply not achieved by God's people. Therefore the idiom of 'seeking Yahweh' is used, and is made parallel with obedience to His laws (2 Chron. 14:4) and not forsaking Him, just holding on to Him in faith, 'being with Him' (2 Chron. 15:2).

2Ch 14:5 Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the sun images-

Asa and Jehoshaphat removed the high places, but in a sense they didn't (1 Kings 15:14 cp. 2 Chron. 14:5; 17:6 cp. 20:33). We read of how the land was purged of Baal, Sodomites etc.; but in a very short time, we read of another purge being necessary. Hezekiah, Manasseh and Josiah all made major purges within a space of 80 years. Jeremiah therefore condemns the Jews who lived at the time of Josiah's reformation for not *knowing* God in their hearts. Asa gathered the gold and silver vessels back into the temple- and then went and used them to make a political treaty. He *apparently* treated them as God's riches, but then in reality he used them as his own (1 Kings 15:18, 15). Many a Western Christian has this very same tendency. We too must ask ourselves whether our spirituality is really just a product of the crowd mentality; as the crowd shouted one day "Hosanna to the Son of David", a few days later they wanted Jesus to be delivered rather than Barabbas, but within minutes they were persuaded to cry for the crucifixion of the Son of God. Church life, Bible studies, the breaking of bread... inevitably, there is a crowd mentality developed here. There is a feeling of devotion which wells up within us as a community, as an audience, as we sit there, as we stand in praise and worship together. But the *real* spirituality is far deeper than this. We must seriously ask whether our spirituality, our feelings of devotion, our true repentance, are *only* stimulated by these meetings?

The kingdom was quiet before him-

See on :1; 2 Chron. 15:19.

2Ch 14:6 He built fortified cities in Judah; for the land was quiet, and he had no war in those years, because Yahweh had given him rest-

This seems a major theme in the record; see on :1; 2 Chron. 15:19. We note how circumstances repeated. Rehoboam had built fortified cities in Judah, especially on the approaches to Jerusalem. But they were all overwhelmed by Shishak, and he took Jerusalem. The lesson was that human strength alone would not save Judah. He was intended to learn from Rehoboam's history, as we are.

2Ch 14:7 For he said to Judah, Let us build these cities, and make walls around them, with towers, gates, and bars. The land is yet before us, because we have sought

Yahweh our God. We have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side. So they built and prospered-

It is unlikely that all Israel were solidly seeking Yahweh, as Asa himself had weak aspects, the high places weren't removed and the population revived the idolatry after his death. So this seems a rather self congratulatory attitude. See on :12. After the victory against the Ethiopians, Asa purges Judah of idols (2 Chron. 15:8); and there is ample evidence from what is said after the victory that Asa and Judah were not so totally devoted to Yahweh at the time of 2 Chron. 14 (see on 2 Chron. 15:1,3,5,8).

2Ch 14:8 Asa had an army that carried shields and spears: out of Judah three hundred thousand; and out of Benjamin, that bore shields and drew bows, two hundred and eighty thousand. All these were mighty men of valour-

We note the relatively large number of Benjamites. "Little Benjamin" were far smaller than Judah but committed more soldiers in relative terms. The loyalty of Benjamin to Judah is a theme of the records, and yet we recall that relatively recently, they as the tribe of Saul had been the least loyal to Judah. Just as Philistines of Gath became David's most loyal followers, so Benjamin became solidly united with Judah. God has a way of turning people around completely.

There is a significant increase in numbers in his son's time, when the army was exactly double the size of that recorded in this section (2 Chron. 14:8 cp. 2 Chron. 17:14-18). The total here was 580,000; but there it is exactly double (1,160,000; Judah 780,000, Benjamin 380,000). This suggests that again, numbers are not being used in the literal sense which modern readers are accustomed to.

2Ch 14:9 There came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an army of a million troops, and three hundred chariots; and he came to Mareshah-

The apparent problem of large numbers in the records are largely resolved by understanding the terms 'hundred' and 'thousand' not literally, but as referring to military subdivisions. A "Zerah" is mentioned as a descendant of Esau, and the name refers to at least four different people, all within the Abraham family. So this individual could have been a descendant of Esau who was exercising "the old hatred" against Jacob, although he was now located in "Ethiopia", a vague term applicable to anywhere around Egypt.

2Ch 14:10 Then Asa went out to meet him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah-

Zephathah is the Zephath of Jud. 1:17, where Judah won a great victory against the Canaanites, and was afterward renamed to Hormah, also a site of victory (Num. 21:3). Perhaps the usage of the old name is to draw attention to the victory won there historically.

2Ch 14:11 Asa cried to Yahweh his God and said, Yahweh, there is none apart from You to help, between the mighty and him who has no strength. Help us, Yahweh our God; for we rely on You, and in Your name are we come against this multitude.

Yahweh, You are our God. Don't let man prevail against You-

This is a similar situation to that in 2 Chron. 13:18, where an otherwise unspiritual and idolatrous Judah "relied" on Yahweh in desperation. They relied on Him at that one point, and were rewarded for it. But not generally. This reflects God's extreme

sensitivity to faith in Him, even if He knows the surrounding context of a man's life is not of faith in Him.

Our faith will be strengthened by knowing that because we bear the Name, all that happens to us happens to our Lord and His Father. Thus Asa prayed: "Help us... in Your Name we go against this multitude...let not man prevail against *You*". It is absurd that man should prevail against God; and yet Asa believed that because His people carried His Name, therefore it was just as impossible that man should prevail against *them*.

This is a feature of many spiritual prayers: not to crudely, directly ask for the obvious; but to simply inform the Almighty of the situation, in faith. Other examples include: Gen. 19:24; Ps. 3:1-4; 142:1,2; Jn. 11:21,22; 1 Kings 19:10 cp. Rom. 11:2,3; Ps. 106:44 cp. Is. 64:3.

There is only one God, one source of help and power- and thus the oneness of God inspires our faith in Him. This motivated Asa to cry unto Yahweh in faith: "There is none beside You to help...". James 2:14-18 speaks of the connection between *faith* (believing) in the one God and *works* (doing). It is no co-incidence that James 2:19 then says in this context: "Thou *believest* that God is one; thou *doest* well" (RV). To have *faith* in the unity of God will lead to *works*, 'doing well'.

2Ch 14:12 So Yahweh struck the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled-

Enemies fleeing before God's people was the sign of obedience to the covenant. But as noted on :7, Judah generally were not particularly obedient. We continually marvel at God's grace toward His people, ever eager to impute righteousness, and to be impressed by any sign of faith and obedience. After the victory against the Ethiopians, Asa purges Judah of idols (2 Chron. 15:8); and there is ample evidence from what is said after the victory that Asa and Judah were not so totally devoted to Yahweh at the time of 2 Chron. 14 (see on 2 Chron. 15:1,3,5,8).

2Ch 14:13 Asa and the people who were with him pursued them to Gerar. There fell of the Ethiopians so many that they could not recover themselves; for they were destroyed before Yahweh and before His army; and they carried away very much booty-

Yahweh's army is paralleled with that of Judah. Yahweh of hosts, of Angelic armies, is manifested in His people upon earth. David was taught this when he was told to advance his army only in accordance to the noise of the heavenly armies above him (see on 2 Sam. 5:24). We too are not alone; we are the manifestation of our guardian Angels above us, and collectively, the hosts of God's people reflect Yahweh of hosts above them.

2Ch 14:14 They struck all the cities around Gerar; for the fear of Yahweh came on them. They despoiled all the cities; for there was much spoil in them-

A similar situation repeated itself in 2 Chron. 17:10. The record constantly stresses that the victory was from God. The fear of Yahweh coming upon those cities was the promised reward for obedience (Dt. 11:25), and recalls the terror which fell upon the cities around Jacob at the time of Gen. 35:5. But that terror didn't come because Israel were righteous at that time; in fact the opposite. For they had just massacred Shechem. Likewise here, these blessings were by grace, for Judah were not so righteous at this time; and reflected Yahweh's extreme sensitivity to any faith and obedience toward Him. The Hebrew word here used for "spoil" is found only in

Chronicles, Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah and Daniel- evidence that this part of Chronicles was Divinely rewritten in the captivity.

2Ch 14:15 They struck also the tents of the herdsmen, and carried away sheep in abundance, and camels, and returned to Jerusalem-

This phrase in the LXX is used in Lk. 24:52 and Acts 1:12 of the disciples returning after a far greater victory. The Bible is continually seeing deeper meaning and application of all the wealth of history recorded in it. Although it is debatable whether such pillaging as recorded here was really God's will.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 15

2Ch 15:1 The Spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Oded-

I hinted throughout 2 Chron. 14 that things were not quite as spiritually rosy with Asa and Judah as Asa liked to present. And so this message from God was to warn Asa of the conditionality of God's help, implying Asa was tempted to forsake Him.

"Azariah", 'Yah has helped', was the son of Oded, 'repetition'; it was as if the message that God had helped win the victory of 2 Chron. 14 needed to be repeated. It seems from :2 that Azariah went out to meet Asa as he returned to Jerusalem from the victory of 2 Chron. 14:15.

2Ch 15:2 and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin! Yahweh is with you, while you are with Him; and if you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you-

The whole way of life of the righteous man is described as seeking God, knowing we will eventually find Him when the Lord returns to change our natures. So many times does David parallel those who seek God with those who keep His word (e.g. Ps. 119:2). We will never achieve perfect obedience; but seeking it is paralleled with it. Perfection is simply not achieved by God's people. Therefore the idiom of 'seeking Yahweh' is used, and is made parallel with obedience to His laws (2 Chron. 14:4) and not forsaking Him, just holding on to Him in faith, 'being with Him'.

The Lord Jesus was well aware of the connection between God's refusal to answer prayer and His recognition of sin in the person praying (2 Sam. 22:42 = Ps. 2:2-5). It is emphasized time and again that God will not forsake those who love Him (e.g. Dt. 4:31; 31:6; 1 Sam. 12:22; 1 Kings 6:13; Ps. 94:14; Is. 41:17; 42:16). Every one of these passages must have been well known to our Lord, the word made flesh. He knew that God forsaking Israel was a punishment for their sin (Jud. 6:13; 2 Kings 21:14; Is. 2:6; Jer. 23:33). God would forsake Israel only if they forsook Him (Dt. 31:16,17; 2 Chron. 15:2). We can therefore conclude that His desperate "Why have You forsaken me?" was because He was so intensely identified with our sins that in the crisis of the cross, He indeed felt forsaken because of sin. He did not sin, but felt like a sinner; He thereby knows how sinners feel.

Asa had a wife called Azubah, who was the mother of the generally righteous Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:42). The mother may be mentioned because of her great influence upon the spiritual path of her children. However, there is also the theme that believers arise from unbelieving backgrounds. "Azubah" means "forsaken". It is the same word used here in 2 Chron. 15:2, where Jehoshaphat's father Asa was told of God "If you forsake Him, He will forsake you". It could be that Asa forsook Azubah and she was effectively a divorced woman; or perhaps the wife was renamed this

because Asa felt she had forsaken Yahweh, which is how the word "forsaken" ('Azubah') is usually used.

2Ch 15:3 Now for a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law-

Although this can be read as a general comment upon Israel's history at the time of the judges (:4), it clearly has relevance to the time of Asa (see on 2 Chron. 17:9). It would also have been perceived by the exiles as relevant to them. This again suggests that the spiritual picture of Asa and Judah in 2 Chron. 14 was presented there in a very rosy way. Things were not spiritually so wonderful. The main priestly duty was to teach God's word to the people. A whole string of texts make this point: Dt. 24:8; 2 Kings 17:27; 2 Chron. 15:3; Neh. 8:9; Mic. 3:11. Note too the common partnership between priests and prophets. Because of their role as *teachers*, it is understandable that the anger of the first century priesthood was always associated with Christ and the apostles *teaching* the people: Mt. 21:33; Lk. 19:47; 20:1; Acts 5:21. The priests felt that their role was being challenged. As part of the priesthood, our duty is to *all* teach or communicate the word of God to each other. It was God's intention that natural Israel should obey the spirit of this, so that they would "teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord" (Heb. 8:11). That was how God intended Israel of old to fulfil this idea of being a priestly nation.

2Ch 15:4 But when in their distress they turned to Yahweh the God of Israel and sought Him, He was found by them-

The point was that Asa must learn the lesson from the history of God's people at the time of the judges, and continue seeking God in distress as he had done in the conflict of 2 Chron. 14. Sadly at the end of his life, Asa in his distress didn't turn to Yahweh (2 Chron. 16:12).

2Ch 15:5 In those times there was no peace to him who went out, nor to him who came in; but great troubles were on all the inhabitants of the lands-

This clearly describes how things were at the time of the judges. But Asa is being bidden see parallels between that period and his time. And this invitation surely reveals that things were not well with Judah spiritually, and Asa was being set up as similar to the judges who revived God's people.

2Ch 15:6 They were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city; for God troubled them with all adversity-

This may be a reference to the fighting within Israel which went on in the period of the judges (e.g. Jud. 9:44-47; 20:35-45). Asa is being bidden understand that circumstances repeat, exactly because we are intended to learn from Biblical history. He was to see that his conflict with the ten tribes was a repeat of those situations. And to act as the Godly judges did, in faith.

2Ch 15:7 But you be strong, and don't let your hands be slack; for your work shall be rewarded-

"Work" here is put for "faith". For it is faith and not works which is being appealed for from Asa (:2). This continues the purposeful confusion between faith and works which is found in James.

2Ch 15:8 When Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he

took courage, and put away the abominations out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from the hill country of Ephraim; and he renewed the altar of Yahweh that was before the porch of Yahweh-

This purging of idolatry which took place *after* the victory against the Ethiopians in 2 Chron. 14 shows that Asa's claims that Judah were totally loyal to Yahweh, and therefore as it were deserved victory, were somewhat hollow. But he was given the victory, and in fact that elicited from him an awareness that this was by grace, and his claims to total devotion to Yahweh in 2 Chron. 14:7,11 had been exaggerated. We too are sometimes given blessing and victory which is inappropriate to our faith, and the experience elicits in us self examination and repentance.

2Ch 15:9 He gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those who lived with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon; for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that Yahweh his God was with him-

AV "And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon". "The strangers" reflects how religious division soon leads to those divided from being considered as foreigners. This makes the account absolutely psychological reality, and is true to observed experience in Christian divisions. Simeon had inheritance within Judah (Josh. 19:1), so it is unsurprising that people from there came over to Judah.

2Ch 15:10 So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa-

The feast of weeks began on the sixth day of the third month.

2Ch 15:11 They sacrificed to Yahweh in that day, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred head of cattle and seven thousand sheep-

Remember that 'hundred' and 'thousand' are not always to be taken as literal numbers, but can refer to groups. The sacrifices often feature offerings in groups of seven (Num. 29:32; 1 Chron. 15:26). Presumably these were offered as peace offerings, although there is no evidence of the burnt offerings and sin offerings which were intended to precede peace offerings.

2Ch 15:12 They entered into the covenant to seek Yahweh the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul-

2 Chron. 15:12,15 parallels seeking God with having our whole desire for Him, giving all our heart and soul to Him. God judges a man's life with regard to where the essential, dominant desire of his heart is focused. This is why some of the kings of Judah are introduced with the comment that they did right in God's sight- even though it becomes apparent that they did many wrong things, and sometimes died committing wrong acts. But surely they were judged on their dominant desire, where their heart was, and not on their specific acts of failure. For David, the salvation promised to him through Christ was "all my desire" (2 Sam. 23:5). The direction of his life was towards that end.

2Ch 15:13 and that whoever would not seek Yahweh the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman-

This smacks of hypocrisy and a commitment made on the cusp of religious extremism, rather than humble spirituality. For as noted throughout 2 Chron. 14 and 2 Chron. 15:3,5,8, they themselves had not wholly sought Yahweh. And now they

condemn such persons to death. But not so many years later they needed to be brought back to Yahweh (2 Chron. 19:4). See on :14.

2Ch 15:14 They swore to Yahweh with a loud voice, and with shouting, trumpets and cornets-

The loudness of their voice corroborates the impression noted on :13, that this was unspiritual religious extremism.

2Ch 15:15 All Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought Him with their whole desire; and He was found of them: and Yahweh gave them rest all around-

This joy was at an oath which threatened death against anyone who didn't worship Yahweh (:13), when they themselves had not been wholeheartedly for Him. And yet despite the hypocrisy, Yahweh "was found of them". Again, we see His sensitivity to any faith and spirituality. This is not to say that He accepts just whatever we give Him, and that, by extension, we can serve God on our own terms. But it is also so that God is very sensitive to all movements towards Him and for Him.

2Ch 15:16 Also Maacah, the mother of Asa the king, he removed from being queen, because she had made an abominable image for an Asherah. Asa cut down her image, and made dust of it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron-

This would have been difficult for him, given it was his mother. The Lord may have thought of this as He crossed the same brook, the night before His death.

2Ch 15:17 But the high places were not taken away out of Israel. Nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days-

As discussed on :15, this is not to say that we are free to serve God on our own terms, picking and choosing our issues of obedience and compliance. Rather does this reflect how human external behaviour, even if it is sinful, is not always a reflection of the basic, core position of the human heart. Human behaviour is so complex in its motivation, and there is often a connection between the heart and external behaviour which is very indirect and can even at times be inverse. In other words, we may act the opposite of what we really think. But God alone can know and judge these complexities. This is why we must not judge; because we cannot judge. We do not see the heart.

Asa and Jehoshaphat removed the high places, but in a sense they didn't (1 Kings 15:14 cp. 2 Chron. 14:5; 17:6 cp. 20:33). We read of how the land was purged of Baal, Sodomites etc.; but in a very short time, we read of another purge being necessary. Partial cleansing of idolatry amounted to no cleansing. Hezekiah, Manasseh and Josiah all made major purges within a space of 80 years. Jeremiah therefore condemns the Jews who lived at the time of Josiah's reformation for not *knowing* God in their hearts. Many a Western Christian has this very same tendency. We too must ask ourselves whether our spirituality is really just a product of the crowd mentality; as the crowd shouted one day "Hosanna to the Son of David", a few days later they wanted Jesus to be delivered rather than Barabbas, but within minutes they were persuaded to cry for the crucifixion of the Son of God. Church life, Bible studies, the breaking of bread... inevitably, there is a crowd mentality developed here. There is a feeling of devotion which wells up within us as a community, as an audience, as we sit there, as we stand in praise and worship together. But the *real*

spirituality is far deeper than this. We must seriously ask whether our spirituality, our feelings of devotion, our true repentance, are *only* stimulated by these meetings?

As discussed on 1 Kings 15:3, Asa like David clearly sinned and seems to have suffered a decline in his faith as he got older, as the Chronicles record shows. But he was judged on the overall dominant desire of his heart, to the point that having a heart perfect with Yahweh seems to effectively mean 'He was wholeheartedly devoted to Yahweh and never worshipped other gods'. Despite all the ups and downs, of which his final faith in doctors rather than Yahweh was one of the down points (2 Kings 16:12), his overall deepest heart was for Yahweh.

2Ch 15:18 He brought into God's house the things that his father had dedicated, and that he himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels-

The reference is to what he captured from the Ethiopians and looted from the tribesmen around Gerar (2 Chron. 14:14,15); and to what his father Abijah had taken from Jeroboam (2 Chron. 13:16). We note that Abijah dedicated things to God, but despite that, "he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him; and his heart was not perfect with Yahweh his God" (1 Kings 15:3). External generosity isn't anywhere near as valuable as a heart totally given over to God.

2Ch 15:19 There was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Asa- 1 Chron. 14:1 likewise notes that Asa's reign began with 10 years of peace. The land itself was at peace but that didn't mean Judah were not at war. For Baasha became king of Israel in the third year of Asa (1 Kings 15:28,33) and "there was war between Asa and Baasha all their days" (1 Kings 15:32). Then there was then this 20 years peace later on (2 Chron. 15:10, 19). The impression is given that Asa's [partial] faithfulness to Yahweh meant there was peace, and peace is a fruit of loyalty to Yahweh. See on 2 Chron. 16:1.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 16

2Ch 16:1 In the thirty sixth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah-

But Baasha died in the 26th year of Asa's rulership (1 Kings 16:8,10). The 35th year in 2 Chron. 15:19 refers to the point of division with Israel, when Judah became a separate entity. And this may be the same case here. However, the Hebrew characters used for 30 and 10 are very similar, and this may be an example of a coping error. If we read 15 and 16 in 2 Chron. 15:19 and 2 Chron. 16:1, then the chronological problem disappears.

And built Ramah, that he might not allow anyone to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah-

There was such a flow of Israelites to Judah that Baasha tried to stop it, by building Ramah as an effective border control point on the approach road to Jerusalem- only about six miles from city. Ramah was in Benjamin, and clearly Asa had failed to retain it within Judah.

2Ch 16:2 Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of Yahweh and of the king's house, and sent to Ben Hadad king of Syria, who lived at Damascus saying- Benhadad was the grandson of Hezion, a name which uses similar characters to Rezon who led the first attempted revival of Zobah and Damascus (1 Kings 11:23) after David's victories against them in 2 Sam. 8:3-8. Asa gathered the gold and silver vessels back into the temple- and then went and used them to make a political treaty. He *apparently* treated them as God's riches, but then in reality he used them as his own (1 Kings 15:18, 15).

2Ch 16:3 Let there be a covenant between me and you, as there was between my father and your father. Behold, I have sent you silver and gold. Go, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me-

The intent of the treaty, however, was that Benhadad would attack Baasha (:4). Perhaps this was not stated specifically because Asa wanted to give lip service obedience to the command not to fight with his own brethren in (1 Kings 12:24. So the Lord's money was spent on effectively getting others to fight their own brethren; and in essence the same can happen today in church politics. We also see how fickle are relationships when not governed by Divine principle; Benhadad's treaty with Baasha was broken when money was received from a third party, and he not only trashed the treaty but attacked him.

We must balance this lack of faith against the Divine assessment in 2 Chron. 15:17: "The high places were not taken away out of Israel. Nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days".

2Ch 16:4 Ben Hadad listened to king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they struck Ijon, and Dan, and Abel Maim, and all the storage cities of Naphtali-

These cities were in the far north of Israel. It was an invasion of the border area rather than of all Israel.

2Ch 16:5 It happened, when Baasha heard of it, that he left off building Ramah, and let his work cease-

Asa's plan appeared to have worked. Baasha stopped the attempted blockade of Jerusalem. Even though Asa did wrong in how he used the Lord's money / wealth, that isn't commented upon. It all seemed to work out. But we are left, naturally, with the question as to whether this was right or not.

2Ch 16:6 Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and its timber, with which Baasha had built; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah-

We see here the value of stones and timber and the huge amount of labour needed to move them. This corroborates the way that Solomon's huge demand for these things led him into debt financially (see on 1 Kings 9:14) and into abusing his people for labour.

2Ch 16:7 At that time Hanani the seer of visions came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on Yahweh your God, therefore is the army of the king of Syria escaped out of your hand-

A lack of spiritual ambition is in fact a sin. When Asa was threatened by his enemies, he hired the Syrians to drive them away- and he was condemned for this, being told that he should instead have had the ambition to ask God to deliver the mighty Syrians into his hand, as well as his enemies (2 Chron. 16:7). He was reminded that the Angelic eyes of the Lord are running to and fro in our support (2 Chron. 16:9), as Asa would have theoretically acknowledged. But his sin of omission, his lack of an ambitious vision, incited the Father's anger. We need to meditate carefully upon this, because it surely has many similarities with modern life, where money and 'hiring' worldly help is so easy...

2Ch 16:8 Weren't the Ethiopians and the Lubim a huge army, with exceeding many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on Yahweh, He delivered them into your hand-

This is a similar situation to that in 2 Chron. 13:18, where an otherwise unspiritual and idolatrous Judah "relied" on Yahweh in desperation. They relied on Him at that one point,

and were rewarded for it. But not generally. This reflects God's extreme sensitivity to faith in Him, even if He knows the surrounding context of a man's life is not of faith in Him.

Asa's faith was rewarded when he faced a massive Ethiopian army; but some years later, God repeated the situation. A huge Israelite army faced him; and instead of trusting in Yahweh, he gave the temple treasures to Syria so that they would come and fight the battle for him. And God wasn't slow to point out how circumstances had repeated, but this time Asa had failed the test: "Were not the Ethiopians and Lubims a huge host...? Yet because you relied on the Lord, He delivered them into your hand... herein you have done foolishly: therefore from henceforth you shall have wars" (2 Chron. 16:8,9). The "wars" God brought upon Asa weren't merely punishments; they were yet further opportunities for Asa to face the same situations, and overcome them with faith. And God likewise works in our lives.

2Ch 16:9 For the eyes of Yahweh run back and forth throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him-

The Biblical record seems to very frequently seek to deconstruct popular ideas about sin and evil. One of the most widespread notions was the "evil eye", whereby it was believed that some people had an "evil eye" which could bring distress into the eyes of those upon whom they looked in jealousy or anger. This concept is alive and well in many areas to this day. The idea entered Judaism very strongly after the Babylonian captivity; the Babylonian Talmud is full of references to it. The sage Rav attributed many illnesses to the evil eye, and the Talmud even claimed that 99 out of 100 people died prematurely from this (*Bava Metzia* 107b). The Biblical deconstruction of this is through stressing that *God's* eye is all powerful in the destiny of His people (Dt. 11:12; Ps. 33:18); and that "an evil eye" refers to an *internal* attitude of mean spiritedness *within* people- e.g. an "evil eye" is understood as an ungenerous spirit in Dt. 15:9; Mt. 6:23; 20:15; or pure selfishness in Dt. 28:54,56; Prov. 23:6; 28:22. We must remember that the people of Biblical times understood an "evil eye" as an *external* ability to look at someone and bring curses upon them. But the Bible redefines an "evil eye" as a purely *internal* attitude; and cosmic evil, even if it were to exist, need hold no fear for us- seeing the eyes of the only true God are running around the earth *for* us and not against us (2 Chron. 16:9).

Herein you have done foolishly; for from henceforth you shall have wars-

"Done foolishly" alludes to the failures of Saul (1 Sam. 13:13) and David (2 Sam. 24:10), both also connected with trust in human rather than Divine strength.

2Ch 16:10 Then Asa was angry with the seer of visions, and put him in the prison; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time-

If true guilt is not faced up to, there will be anger, the anger that comes from refusing to acknowledge subconscious guilt. Balaam's angry striking of his donkey is an obvious Biblical example, and we are surrounded by so many others. Another classic example would be Asa's "rage" with Hanani the prophet when he rebuked Asa for trusting in the Syrian army rather than in Yahweh. And Asa's anger was then taken out upon the people- for "Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time" (2 Chron. 16:10).

The harsh treatment of the Ammonites, torturing them under harrows, is indication enough of David's bad conscience before God being shown in his harsh treatment of others. Likewise Asa oppressed the people when he was guilty in his conscience (2 Chron. 16:10). And the wicked Kings of Israel usually died "without being desired" by their people, presumably because their broken relationship with God had led to a broken relationship between them and their brethren (e.g. 2 Chron. 21:20).

When Israel played traitor to their brethren, by doing so they broke their marriage covenant with God (Mal. 2:10); their attitude to their brethren was essentially their attitude to their Heavenly Father. Our God and our brethren simply can't be separated. Asa's broken relationship with God resulted in him 'crushing' the people at the same time (2 Chron. 16:10 Avmg.).

2Ch 16:11 Behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel-

This may not necessarily be the book of Kings as we know it.

2Ch 16:12 In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa was diseased in his feet. His disease was exceeding great; yet in his disease he didn't turn to Yahweh, but to the physicians-

One meaning of "Asa" is "physician", and he ended his days trusting physicians rather than Yahweh. Perhaps he trained as a physician and ended up therefore having more faith in science than in Yahweh. 1 Kings 15:11 says that "he did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, as did David his father". 2 Chron. 14:2 is likewise positive: "Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of Yahweh his God".

Asa is recorded as serving God just as well as David, when actually this wasn't the case; but God counted him as righteous. The incomplete faith of men like Baruch was counted as full faith by later inspiration (Jud. 4:8,9 cp. Heb. 11:32). Asa was not perfect, nor was David; but God's overall judgment was that he "did right", despite doing wrong at specific points in his life. Yet we learn here that Asa died at a low point for him spiritually. But the judgment overall was that he "did right" and that "nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect with Yahweh all his days" (1 Kings 15:14). We must learn therefore not to judge a person too harshly if they die at a weak spiritual point, e.g. through suicide.

2Ch 16:13 Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the forty-first year of his reign-

The description of death as sleeping with fathers is clear evidence that death is seen as a sleep, unconsciousness, and not as the start of an immortal soul going to heaven or 'hell'. Good and bad, David and Solomon, are gathered together in death. The division between them will only therefore come at the resurrection of the dead, and the granting of immortality at the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus.

2Ch 16:14 They buried him in his own tombs, which he had dug out for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and various kinds of spices prepared by the perfumer's art; and they made a very great burning for him-

"The bed" may refer to that on which he laid at the end of his life (:12). It seems he was buried in his own bed, which recalls the style of burial for the Pharaohs and other Gentile kings. This would be another indication that Asa died spiritually weak, and yet as discussed on :12, he was still reckoned as righteous according to his core heart positions.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 17

2Ch 17:1 Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place-

Jehoshaphat means 'whom Jehovah judges'. And this is largely the point of his life. He made major mistakes in his relationships with Israel, incited the wrath of God against him (2 Chron. 19:2), died without removing the high places, and yet overall was judged as having a faithful *heart* before God (1 Kings 22:43; 2 Chron. 19:3). And so we have a parade example of how indeed 'Jehovah judges', factoring in the various

dimensions of a man's life in a way in which we cannot. The lesson is indeed that we cannot judge, nor should we be tempted to judge a person according to the high and low points on their spiritual graph, nor upon the fact they may die with unconquered weaknesses.

And strengthened himself against Israel-

Yet 1 Kings 22:44 commends him that: "Jehoshaphat made peace with the king[s] of Israel". But the way to that peace was by clarifying boundaries.

2Ch 17:2 He placed forces in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim which Asa his father had taken-

This building or rebuilding of fortified cities at the start of a reign is a continuity between Asa, Jehoshaphat and Rehoboam. But in each case, those strengthened cities failed to protect them as they intended, but rather God's strength was needed. The later kings were clearly intended to learn from history as recorded, as we are.

2Ch 17:3 Yahweh was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and didn't seek the Baals-

Many have struggled to reconcile the statement that David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14) with the fact that his life contains many examples not only of failure, but of anger and a devaluing of human life. He was barred from building the temple because of the amount of blood he had shed (1 Chron. 22:8). The figure of 'shedding blood' takes us back to the incident with Nabal, where David three times is mentioned as intending to "shed blood" (1 Sam. 25:26-33), only to be turned away from his sinful course by the wisdom, spirituality and charm of Abigail. David started out as the spiritually minded, humble shepherd, full of faith and zeal for his God. Hence Jehoshaphat is commended for walking "in the first ways of his father David" (2 Chron. 17:3). It seems to me that the comment that David was "a man after God's own heart" refers to how he initially was, at the time God chose him and rejected Saul. But the trauma of his life, the betrayals, jealousies and hatred of others, led him to the kind of bitterness which so often surfaces in the Psalms and is reflected in several historical incidents where he lacks the value of others' lives which we would otherwise expect from a man who walked so close with his God.

2Ch 17:4 but sought to the God of his father, and walked in His commandments and not after the doings of Israel-

Yet Jehoshaphat allowed his son to marry Ahab's daughter (2 Chron. 18:1), and repeatedly failed in being as separate from Israel as he ought to have been. He nearly lost his life as a result of it. Yet God's overall judgment is that for all his social contact with Israel and failure to separate from them, he still did not himself 'walk' in their evil doings.

2Ch 17:5 Therefore Yahweh established the kingdom in his hand. All Judah brought to Jehoshaphat tribute; and he had riches and honour in abundance-

The tribute may refer to a revival of the taxation system of Solomon described in 1 Kings 4. Or possibly the reference may be to the tithes being brought to Jehoshaphat, as if he were a king-priest; see on :7. Or the reference may simply be to presents, brought to him when he ascended the throne as in 1 Sam. 10:27. In this case, the entire description of Jehoshaphat in :2-6 would specifically refer to the beginning of his reign.

2Ch 17:6 His heart was lifted up in the ways of Yahweh-

The phrase "lifted up" is nearly always used in a negative sense about pride. The idea was that he was proud of Yahweh and His ways.

Furthermore, he removed the high places and the Asherim out of Judah-

Asa and Jehoshaphat removed the high places, but in a sense they didn't (1 Kings 15:14 cp. 2 Chron. 14:5; 17:6 cp. 20:33). We read of how the land was purged of Baal, Sodomites etc.; but in a very short time, we read of another purge being necessary. Hezekiah, Manasseh and Josiah all made major purges within a space of 80 years. Jeremiah therefore condemns the Jews who lived at the time of Josiah's reformation for not *knowing* God in their hearts. Asa gathered the gold and silver vessels back into the temple- and then went and used them to make a political treaty. He *apparently* treated them as God's riches, but then in reality he used them as his own (1 Kings 15:18, 15). Many a Western Christian has this very same tendency. We too must ask ourselves whether our spirituality is really just a product of the crowd mentality; as the crowd shouted one day "Hosanna to the Son of David", a few days later they wanted Jesus to be delivered rather than Barabbas, but within minutes they were persuaded to cry for the crucifixion of the Son of God. Church life, Bible studies, the breaking of bread... inevitably, there is a crowd mentality developed here. There is a feeling of devotion which wells up within us as a community, as an audience, as we sit there, as we stand in praise and worship together. But the *real* spirituality is far deeper than this. We must seriously ask whether our spirituality, our feelings of devotion, our true repentance, are *only* stimulated by these meetings?

2Ch 17:7 Also in the third year of his reign he sent his princes, even Ben Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah-

The sending of princes along with Levites (:8) could imply some idea of a joint king-priesthood, which we saw possibly hinted at in :5, if we understand the "tribute" given to Jehoshaphat as king as being the tithes due to the Levites.

2Ch 17:8 and with them the Levites, even Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah and Tobadonijah the Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, the priests-

The idea was that the two priests were sent to teach Judah the law (:9), for that was the function of the priests. But in practical terms they were assisted by a group of Levites and princes (:7). We would rather imagine the priests as being listed first, and then those subservient to them coming afterwards. But the priests were true servant leaders and are listed last, as being "with the Levites" [the servants of the priests] rather than the other way around.

2Ch 17:9 They taught in Judah, having the book of the law of Yahweh with them. They went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught among the people-

This is a tacit admission that the local priests were not teaching the people. 2 Chron. 15:3 had reminded Asa of the similarity of his times with those of the judges: "Now for a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law". It seems that sad situation continued. The statements about Judah's faithfulness and loyalty to Yahweh were therefore very generous; for in an illiterate society, they would have been unaware of the majority of details in the Mosaic law if they weren't taught it by the local priests. Although priests from the ten tribes had emigrated to Judah, it seems they were not teaching the people as intended. Their

identity with Yahweh religion was therefore more cultural than based upon accurate awareness of His ways. But despite this lack of knowledge, God still counted them as loyal to Him, just as He counted weak kings like Asa as loyal to Him in their hearts. Yahweh's generosity in judgment of His people is one of the themes which comes through in the historical records.

2Ch 17:10 The fear of Yahweh fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat-

A similar situation repeated itself in 2 Chron. 14:14. The record constantly stresses that the victory was from God. The fear of Yahweh coming upon Gentiles was the promised reward for obedience (Dt. 11:25), and recalls the terror which fell upon the cities around Jacob at the time of Gen. 35:5, "so that they made no war against" Jacob. But that terror didn't come because Israel were righteous at that time; in fact the opposite. For they had just massacred Shechem. Likewise here, these blessings were by grace, for Judah were not so righteous at this time; and reflected Yahweh's extreme sensitivity to any faith and obedience toward Him. And it was surely the same in Jehoshaphat's time.

2Ch 17:11 Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and silver for tribute. The Arabians also brought him flocks, seven thousand seven hundred rams, and seven thousand seven hundred male goats-

Remember that 'hundred' and 'thousand' are not always to be taken as literal numbers, but can refer to groups. It was these same groups of Philistines and Arabians whose spirit Yahweh stirred up (for He can work directly upon the human mind) to break away from Judah in Jehoram's time (2 Chron. 21:16).

2Ch 17:12 Jehoshaphat grew great exceedingly; and he built in Judah fortified and store cities-

See on :2. "Store cities" implies he anticipated the possibility of a siege from enemies.

2Ch 17:13 He had many works in the cities of Judah; and men of war, mighty men of valour, in Jerusalem-

"Many works" is unclear. GNB for :12,13 offers: "Throughout Judah he built fortifications and cities, where supplies were stored in huge amounts. In Jerusalem he stationed outstanding officers".

2Ch 17:14 This was the numbering of them according to their fathers' houses. Of Judah, the captains of thousands: Adnah the captain, and with him mighty men of valour three hundred thousand-

Remember that 'hundred' and 'thousand' are not always to be taken as literal numbers, but can refer to groups. The "them" could refer specifically to the officers or soldiers quartered in Jerusalem (:13).

2Ch 17:15 and next to him Jehohanan the captain, and with him two hundred and eighty thousand-

We note that the names of all the captains in this section include God's Name.

2Ch 17:16 and next to him Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself to Yahweh; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valour-

His being so willing to offer himself to Yahweh was noted, as in Jud. 5:9. Human

initiative in serving God is indeed valuable to Him; not because He saves according to works, but because He recognizes and values freewill human expressions of love toward Him.

2Ch 17:17 Of Benjamin: Eliada a mighty man of valour, and with him two hundred thousand armed with bow and shield-

There is a significant increase in numbers from his father's time, when the army was exactly half the size of that recorded in this section (2 Chron. 14:8). The total then was 580,000; but here in :14-18 it is exactly double (1,160,000), Judah 780,000, Benjamin 380,000. This suggests that again, numbers are not being used in the literal sense which modern readers are accustomed to.

2Ch 17:18 and next to him Jehozabad; and with him one hundred and eighty thousand prepared for war-

This group were ready for immediate deployment.

2Ch 17:19 These were those who waited on the king, besides those whom the king put in the fortified cities throughout all Judah-

This is a very large number to continually serve the king. The same phrase is used in 1 Chron. 27:1, where they served their king through a rotation system of monthly service.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 18

2Ch 18:1 Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance; and he joined affinity with Ahab-

The Chronicles record clearly shows that he was too close to Israel. His son married a daughter of Ahab, and his insistence on supporting Ahab was seen as loving those who hated Yahweh, and the wrath of God was upon him because of it (2 Chron. 19:2). And yet he is commended for having peace with the kings of Israel (1 Kings 22:44), even though that desire for peace with them led him into major sin. But he was judged as having a heart right with God (2 Chron. 19:3). We sense God weighting Jehoshaphat's sins with his relations with Israel against his genuine desire for peace within God's people. And overall, as he was judged on the state of his heart, his desire for unity and peace was judged as his dominant desire. We simply cannot factor in or weight all the dimensions in a man's heart. Only God can. And the reason we are not to judge is because in fact we cannot judge, in that we don't have access to human hearts.

2Ch 18:2 After certain years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. Ahab killed sheep and cattle for him in abundance, and for the people who were with him, and moved him to go up with him to Ramoth Gilead-

Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram had wrongly married Ahab's daughter, Athaliah; probably under some false mantra of 'unity amongst God's people'. The visit was likely in connection with this. Had Jehoshaphat not fraternized with wicked Ahab, the possibility of the doomed venture which follows wouldn't have arisen. And if Ahab had slain Benhadad as commanded, Ramoth Gilead would have been returned to Israel. And indeed if Benhadad kept his covenant, it should have been returned anyway (1 Kings 20:34).

"Moved" is 'persuaded'. "Ahab persuaded Jehoshaphat to go up with him to Ramoth-gilead", just as Jezebel persuaded Ahab to do wickedness (1 Kings 21:25 Heb.). It is a story of sin leading to sin, and sinful attitudes and behaviour spreading through wrong and unwise associations.

2Ch 18:3 Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Will you go with me to Ramoth Gilead? He answered him, I am as you are, and my people as your people. We will be with you in the war-

We note they both have "horses", which were forbidden for the kings of Israel under the law of Moses. Jehoshaphat likely reasoned that a weak Syria on the east bank of Jordan was good for Judah, but he was also caught up in the false mantra of "unity" which had led his son to marry Ahab's daughter.

2Ch 18:4 Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, Please inquire first for the word of Yahweh-

Ahab responded to the request for a word from Yahweh by summoning the group of 400 false prophets (:5). He had so mixed Yahweh worship with paganism that he considered their word to be that of Yahweh. And he gathered such a huge group in order to argue that the majority must surely be right. And the Bible consistently teaches that in these situations, the majority is usually wrong.

2Ch 18:5 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred men, and said to them, Shall we go to Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I desist?

Ahab had 400 false prophets earlier in his reign (1 Kings 18:19), who were slain on Carmel. So it seems that he didn't learn his lesson, and raised up another such group. This fits with the common theme of purges and repentances at the time of the kings needing to be repeated. For the purges were only surface level, despite all the evidence for them at the time. "Forbear" means 'to cease'. Ahab, like us at times, had already started the project without asking God's guidance, and his request for guidance in the project was compromised in integrity by the fact he had already begun it.

They said, Go up; for God will deliver it into the hand of the king-

This recalls the instant answer of Nathan when David enquired about building a temple for Yahweh. Too easily we assume we know the will of God, and speak and act as if we have His blessing on our endeavours already.

2Ch 18:6 But Jehoshaphat said, Isn't there here a prophet of Yahweh besides, that we may inquire of him?-

Ahab had provided the 400 prophets of Baal in response to the request for a word from Yahweh. Jehoshaphat realized this; and ought to have immediately pulled out of working with someone who was presenting Baal worship as Yahweh worship. He means of course 'an old time, old school prophet of Yahweh who is not also a prophet of Baal and repudiates Baal'.

2Ch 18:7 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of Yahweh-

The idea is, "one more man". He considered that the 400 prophets of Baal were also in touch with Yahweh (see on :5), and Micaiah was just one more who could do that, although he repudiated Baal worship.

But I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me, but always evil-
Again we sense the pouting, spoilt kid characteristics of Ahab. His characterization in the records is absolutely consistent and credible, as we would expect of a Divinely inspired history. We have here a parade example of how men come to God's word having already decided what they want to hear. Indeed there is a tendency to have "itching ears", heaping up teachers to confirm us in our own desires, lusts and hunches (2 Tim. 4:3; maybe a reference to Ahab heaping up 400 such teachers to tell him what he wanted to hear). This is why there are so many different interpretations of the Bible. Because readers / hearers like to hear only what confirms that which they already had a hunch about. To achieve a second naivety as we come to God's word, to be a born again virgin, is hard indeed. Jehoshaphat realized what Ahab was doing, and asked him not to talk like that- but to accept Yahweh's word. The fact Jehoshaphat himself still went into battle shows how he himself perceived the truth of all this, but didn't do accordingly. The "evil" prophesied was presumably of Ahab's condemnation, confirming Elijah's words.

He is Micaiah the son of Imla. Jehoshaphat said, Don't let the king say so-
Again we are introduced to a true prophet of Yahweh who existed at the time of Elijah. His claim to be the only prophet of Yahweh is continually demonstrated to be false. Presumably Elijah knew these other prophets, but considered that they had all gone wrong on this or that point of doctrine or practice. And perhaps they had, but God still counted them as His prophets, and used them as such. And it was Elijah who was removed from the prophetic ministry because of his arrogance in considering none of them genuine, and he alone being the true representative of Yahweh. Micaiah had previously spoken critical things to Ahab in Yahweh's Name, hence Ahab says that this prophet only says "evil" about him and he doesn't want to consult him. Elijah was quite wrong to discount all these brave prophets as somehow not genuine.

2Ch 18:8 Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, Get Micaiah the son of Imla quickly-

"Who is like Yah?" was a direct challenge to the idea that Yahweh could be worshipped through Baal worship (see on :4). According to :26, Micaiah was imprisoned at this time. The 'quick' summoning from prison by an officer to speak God's word would have recalled to Micaiah the example of faithful Joseph.

2Ch 18:9 Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, arrayed in their robes. They were sitting in an open place at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them-

This was an impressive sight, and the area had clearly been especially prepared so that so many prophets could prophesy together. It was designed to sway Jehoshaphat according to the false maxim that the majority must be right, and how could so many be wrong. See on Ez. 10:5

2Ch 18:10 Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron and said, Thus says Yahweh, 'With these you shall push the Syrians, until they are consumed'-
Zedekiah, like a typical apostate, is mixing the truth of God out of context with wrong ideas. He alludes to Moses' blessing of Joseph in Dt. 33:17 to the northern tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh: "Buffalo horns are his (Joseph's) horns, with them he thrusts down nations". But of course he overlooked the fact that the blessings of Moses were predicated upon obedience to the covenant. He probably made the horns and held

them on his forehead. Micaiah's response is to also quote from the law of Moses, but about the judgment for disobedience to the covenant (:16).

2Ch 18:11 All the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth Gilead, and prosper; for Yahweh will deliver it into the hand of the king-

These 400 prophets of Baal [for they were the equivalent of the 400 executed on Mount Carmel] still used the name of Yahweh. Their position was that they conducted Yahweh worship through Baal worship. Perhaps their usage of the Hebrew word for "prosper" alluded to how the word is four times used of the prospering of Abraham's servant on his journey and mission (Gen. 24:21,40,42,56). And this is probably our most common temptation as believers; to mix the flesh and the spirit, to justify sin in the name of serving God. But Ahab had broken the covenant, and would not prosper (s.w. Dt. 28:29). Jehoshaphat later learnt this lesson, for he uses the word in saying that only those who hear Yahweh's prophets will "prosper" (2 Chron. 20:20).

2Ch 18:12 The messenger who went to call Micaiah spoke to him saying, Behold, the words of the prophets declare good to the king with one mouth. Let your word therefore, please be like one of theirs, and speak good-

We sense the build up of pressure upon Micaiah. He was imprisoned for having spoken God's word against Ahab (see on :8,25), and would be under huge pressure from the presence of the 400 prophets and the audience watching (:27 "all you people"). And as the officer led him from prison towards the huge crowd of people gathered before the two kings, he too added his pressure. The request of the officer was perhaps because he actually liked Micaiah and could foresee the death sentence being given if he again "spoke evil" and not "good" to Ahab, and he didn't want to have to carry that out. But he still totally fails to perceive that God's word cannot be changed or controlled by man.

2Ch 18:13 Micaiah said, As Yahweh lives, what my God says, that will I speak-

If Micaiah was at that time imprisoned for prophesying evil against Ahab (see on :8,25), bearing in mind Naboth had been slain for allegedly cursing the king, he would have been sorely tempted to now buy his freedom by saying what Ahab wanted to hear. And despite his determination not to do so, I suggest on :14 that he did temporarily fail. The pressure on him was intense. Micaiah uses the words and ideas of Balaam when pressured to not say Yahweh's word. He was clearly a spiritually minded man who was deeply aware of Biblical precedent for his situation, as we ought to be.

2Ch 18:14 When he had come to the king, the king said to him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I desist? He said, Go up, and prosper. They shall be delivered into your hand-

It could be argued that by repeating the very words of the false prophets, Micaiah was just repeating them sarcastically, with the tone of his voice indicating that. But I prefer to conclude that this faithful man, who had gone to prison for his witness of God's word to Ahab, now faltered under the pressure of the presence of the 400 false prophets. He acted like Nathan when David enquired about building a temple for Yahweh, who gave the answer that his enquirer wanted to hear. Such failure of a moment would be absolutely true to human experience and would be psychologically and spiritually credible. See on :13.

2Ch 18:15 The king said to him, How many times shall I adjure you that you speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of Yahweh?-

See on :14. We are left to speculate which singular "king" it was who said this, Ahab or Jehoshaphat. The Biblical record is intentionally open ended at some points, to encourage us to think ourselves into the situation. The king sensed that Micaiah was cowed by the situation, and really wanted to know what Yahweh thought. So we sense "the king" in view was Jehoshaphat.

2Ch 18:16 He said, I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. Yahweh said, These have no master. Let them return every man to his house in peace-

As explained on :10, Zedekiah had quoted Moses' blessings of the tribes as justification for a successful battle- which were conditional upon obedience to the covenant. Micaiah responds by quoting the curses for disobedience to the covenant (Num. 27:16,17). The removal of the master / shepherd implies that the shepherd or king of Israel is to be slain, and the sheep would return to their homes once the shepherd was slain. And that is just what happened when it was recognized that Ahab had been slain.

2Ch 18:17 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, Didn't I tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?-

Ahab intuitively sensed what Yahweh's true word was even before Micaiah pronounced it. His insistence on going ahead was therefore the more culpable. And God's word is often intuitively recognized as "truth" even by those who reject it, which is why they tend towards anger and other psychological reactions appropriate to denial.

2Ch 18:18 Micaiah said, Therefore hear the word of Yahweh-

There does not follow a "Thus says the Lord", but rather a description of the vision Micaiah had seen, a peek into the heavenly throne room, the court of heaven. Discerning the vision was perhaps the essential "word of Yahweh" which the kings were to "hear".

I saw Yahweh sitting on His throne, and all the army of heaven standing on His right hand and on His left-

It seems there are two groups of Angels- Angels of evil (Ps. 78:49) and of good. Thus God creates both good and evil- and Isaiah 45:5-7 emphasizes that He makes a distinct creation of both- using these separate groups of Angels. However we stress that the Angels of evil are not sinful Angels. We think of the Angel called "the destroyer" at Passover time, who was restrained by the Passover Angel from destroying the Israelite firstborn. And so one wonders whether "the destroyer" was one of those on the left hand side, and the Passover Angel one of those on the right hand. This division is perhaps hinted at here, where "all the host of Heaven" are seen standing around the throne of God himself "on His right and on His left". The exact way in which these two groups of Angels work is unclear, and this perhaps explains the difficulty all Bible students face in understanding the undefined "power of darkness", hints of which lurk throughout Scripture (e.g. evil spirits, the forces of evil unleashed at the end of Revelation etc.), and also in defining the apparently super-human power of righteousness which the Psalms and New Testament especially speak

of. At present these topics seem to defy close definition- until we appreciate the Angelic basis behind them?

The visions of Isaiah 6 and Rev. 4 also show God seated on a throne with Angels before Him, bringing information and requests to Him and departing with commands to obey; the idea of a council in Heaven is clearly hinted at in Job 1; Gen. 1:26; Ps. 89:7. God sitting on a throne implies that each request or piece of information presented is 'judged' and an appropriate decision made. The 'case' of the adversaries to God is presented by a 'satan' Angel in Job.

We have here perhaps the most detailed picture of the Heavenly council. God told them His desire- for Ahab to die at Ramoth-Gilead. He then asked which Angel wanted to effect this. We thus learn that like us, on hearing God's desire the *elohim* all have different ways of trying to fulfil it. One "Spirit" (Angel) suggested that He would put a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets, and this was the suggestion chosen and enabled by God. This shows that the Angels do not all automatically know the best way of bringing about God's purpose, and therefore they need to seek His advice and perhaps discuss things amongst themselves first before acting. Note that "*all* the host of Heaven" were there around the throne of God participating in this decision. And so all the Angels are involved in the decisions God and the Angels make about us. Lk. 15:6 implies the same.

2Ch 18:19 Yahweh said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead? One spoke saying this way, and another saying that way- "Entice" is the word elsewhere translated 'deceive'. Clearly God does deceive; for He confirms men in the mental path in which they themselves wish to go. Ez. 14:9 uses the word very clearly in this connection (see commentary there); and the teaching is confirmed in 2 Thess. 2:11.

In Revelation we see the incense of human prayers arising into Heaven, resulting in Angels coming to earth, pouring out bowls, blowing trumpets, and major events happening on earth (Rev. 5:8; 8:3). Prayer is noticed; it brings forth quite out of proportion responses. The Angels discuss their plans for us in the court of Heaven, coming up with various possibilities of how to act in our lives, discussing them with God (1 Kings 22:20-22). They play some part in the whole process of our prayers. When we read that "Surely the Lord does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets" (Am. 3:7), we might tend to take that as a statement of absolute principle that is obvious to all the Angels. But we find an Angel discussing with others: "Shall I hide from Abraham [who was a prophet] what I am about to do?" (Gen. 18:17). The Angels have more debate, expend more mental and physical energy than we surely realize, in order to operationalize things which we might consider to be standard and automatic in God's work with men. In our context, what this means is that when men reject the machinations and schemings of God's love, they reject an awful lot; and it grieves and disappoints Him, and appears tragic to those like the prophets who see things from His viewpoint.

2Ch 18:20 A spirit-

God makes His Angels "spirits" (Ps. 104:4), and Angels are in view here. But the word 'spirit' has a wide range of meaning. It can refer to power, but also to the thought which is then expressed through the power of action. The Angel is here called a "spirit" because the idea was to place a thought in the mind or spirit of the false prophets, and thereby Ahab.

Came out-

This is the same word as in :21 "I will go forth". The Angel was as it were demonstrating how he intended acting.

Stood before Yahweh and said-

It was the true prophets who stood before Yahweh (1 Kings 17:1). The connection is to show that the true prophets were represented by the Angels in the court of heaven, and this Angel was as it were on their side.

I will entice him. Yahweh said to him, How?-

Ahab had been persuaded or enticed to do evil by Jezebel, and had enticed or persuaded Jehoshaphat to go to battle. But this was because he had himself been persuaded or enticed by God.

2Ch 18:21 He said, I will go forth, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. He said, You will entice him, and will prevail also-

God deceived prophets to speak things in His Name which were actually false (1 Kings 22:20-22; Ez. 14:9). He chose Israel's delusions by making their idols answer them (Is. 66:3,4). Jeremiah feared God had deceived *him* (Jer. 20:7)- showing he knew such a thing was possible. Dt. 13:1-3 warns Israel not to believe prophets whose prophecies came true although they taught false doctrines, because they may have been raised up to test their obedience. God deceived Israel by telling them about the peace which would come on Jerusalem in the future Kingdom; they didn't consider the other prophecies *which were given at the same time* concerning their imminent judgment, and therefore they thought that God was pleased with them and was about to establish the Messianic Kingdom; when actually the very opposite was about to happen (Jer. 4:10). This is why the Bible is confusing to those who aren't humble to God's word.

Go forth, and do so-

This describes the Angels being sent out from the court of Heaven to do God's word. So when we read of God sending lions (2 Kings 17:25,26), sending wild beasts and famine (Lev. 26:22; Ez. 5:17; Dt. 32:24), sending locusts (Joel 2:25), it would seem that Angels are sent forth from God's throne in order to command animals to obey God's word. And moreover, He sends an evil spirit between men (Jud. 9:23) and stubborn hearts are also sent from God (Ps. 81:13). The same Angels who are sent to control the animals can also therefore work to give men certain attitudes of mind.

2Ch 18:22 Now therefore, behold, Yahweh has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these your prophets; and Yahweh has spoken evil concerning you-

This was exactly what Micaiah had said before about Ahab, and Ahab intuitively knew that this was coming.

2Ch 18:23 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way did the spirit of Yahweh go from me to speak to you?-

"Cheek" can be "ear". The idea was that Zedekiah implied Micaiah was saying that the spirit had left him and entered Micaiah through his ear. And so he smote that ear. To strike on the cheek was the punishment for a heretic, and was applied to the Lord Jesus (Mic. 5:1).

2Ch 18:24 Micaiah said, Behold, you shall see on that day, when you shall go into an inner room to hide yourself-

When Ahab was defeated and slain, everyone in Samaria would be looking for the

false prophets to kill them. Not least Jezebel. For the defeat would have been blamed upon them. So Zedekiah would have hid from shame and fear of being killed. There is a connection between Benhadad going into an inner room to hide when Ahab was given victory against him (1 Kings 20:30), and the false prophet Zedekiah going into an inner room to hide when Ahab was defeated (1 Kings 22:25). The same Hebrew words are used, and the connection becomes more apparent if we accept that 1 Kings 20 and 21 should be placed the other way around, as in LXX. This would mean that the hiding of Benhadad is recorded just a short time before that of Zedekiah. The connection would be to show that the false prophets were in fact bracketed together by God with Israel's enemies; whereas they had claimed that they were nationalists on Israel's side, proclaiming Israel's certain victory against their enemies. God sees not as man sees, and the real spiritual realities are often the very opposite of what appears.

2Ch 18:25 The king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son-

These men were those who ran the prison, for "carry him *back*" means Micaiah was already in prison. See on :8. Again we see how wrong Elijah had been to claim that no prophet of Yahweh existed apart from himself. Micaiah had gone to prison for speaking God's word to Ahab. But Elijah presumably considered there was some curious point of theology or matter of legal practice which enabled Elijah to rubbish Micaiah as not sincere and not a true prophet. It reminds us of how truly committed Christians who have gone to jail or even death for their witness... are trashed by others as somehow not the real Christians. And only they the critics are in fellowship with God. They really need to learn the lesson of Elijah. For he was ejected from his ministry because of those attitudes.

2Ch 18:26 Say, 'Thus says the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I return in peace' -

I suggest on :8,25 that he was already in prison for his faithful witness against Ahab. So the idea here seems to be that he was to be put in the inner prison and given a very tough regime.

2Ch 18:27 Micaiah said, If you return at all in peace, Yahweh has not spoken by me. He said, Listen, you peoples, all of you!-

If I were Micaiah, I think I would have just shrugged and remained silent, fearing the harsh regime of punishment in :26 could easily be changed into the death sentence. For Naboth had been slain for 'cursing the king'. But Micaiah bravely invites the large audience to listen and take note, because he seeks their conversion.

2Ch 18:28 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead-

The record is intentionally silent about the utter folly of Jehoshaphat in going ahead with this. He was keenly interested to 'know the truth' from God's word, and didn't want to hear false teaching. But when the truth was presented, he didn't follow it. We can take a huge lesson from this. He allowed the intense pressure of the crowd of prophets, and his family relationship with Ahab as the in-law of his son, to lead him to walk right against the 'truth' he had sought. And there are many who seem to rejoice more in 'searching for the truth' than in actually following it when they are find it or have it presented to them.

2Ch 18:29 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and go into the battle; but you put on your robes. So the king of Israel disguised himself; and they went into the battle-

LXX even suggests that Ahab asked Jehoshaphat to wear Ahab's robes. The next verse describes why this was; Ahab was aware of the king of Syria's desire to resolve the issue by capturing or killing Ahab. The incident is a parade example of 'bad friends'. We marvel at Jehoshaphat's stupidity in agreeing. For surely he must have foreseen what could happen. This was the pressure he felt from Ahab and Jezebel, the in-laws of his son. And so often family pressure leads otherwise solid believers into uncharacteristic actions, seriously unwise behaviour and positions which are utterly the opposite of all they stand for. Because quite simply, they do not really commit to following God's word, even if they stand with their backs to the world.

2Ch 18:30 Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of his chariots saying, Fight neither with small nor great, except only with the king of Israel-

Only three years previously (see on 1 Kings 22:1), the king of Syria had been foolishly spared by Ahab. Perhaps he couldn't live down that humiliation, and wanted to kill the man who had shown him so much mercy. That again is absolutely true to observed human experience, and the record time and again is absolutely psychologically credible.

2Ch 18:31 It happened that when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, It is the king of Israel! Therefore they turned around to fight against him. But Jehoshaphat cried out, and Yahweh helped him; and God moved them to depart from him-

The Hebrew implies that they surrounded him. He was clearly "lucky" to escape with his life. It was only by Divine grace that he did. His 'crying out' was surely to God to save him from his foolishness; "and Yahweh helped him". We note that God's grace was shown through His acting directly upon the hearts of men to "move" them to an otherwise unnatural course of action. And so the grace of His Spirit works upon human hearts today.

2Ch 18:32 It happened, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him-

This was in response to his crying out to God for salvation in :31. And yet he was strongly rebuked by God in 2 Chron. 19:2. His actions provoked "the wrath of Yahweh", but God saved a man by grace whilst at the same time having great wrath against him. This is so different to human wrath and attempts to show grace, which seem usually to be displayed without any other pole of feeling in mind. But God had both in perfect balance at the same time. This is the wonder of His Name, which includes all these poles of feeling toward men within His personality.

2Ch 18:33 A certain man drew his bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of the armour. Therefore he said to the driver of the chariot, Turn your hand, and carry me out of the army; for I am severely wounded-

The gaps in armour around vital organs would have been relatively small. This is evidence for all time that there is no such thing as "random". This was so clearly of God.

2Ch 18:34 The battle increased that day. However the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot against the Syrians until the evening. About the time of the going down of the sun, he died-

The weak minded Ahab genuinely wanted to do the best for his troops, and therefore remained in his chariot, propped up. Presumably Israelite soldiers knew where and who he was. It was this policy of not being removed from his chariot which resulted in the blood accumulating within it, which was required for the fulfilment of the prophecies about his blood (see on 1 Kings 22:38).

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 19

2Ch 19:1 Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem-

After the very close shave with death recorded in 2 Chron. 18, we can assume he returned shaking. But at peace with God.

2Ch 19:2 Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Should you help the wicked, and love those who hate Yahweh? Because of this, wrath is on you from before Yahweh-

This was major criticism. And yet when he dies, we read that "He walked in all the way of Asa his father; he didn't turn aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh" (1 Kings 22:43). Again we marvel at God's positive overall opinion of Jehoshaphat. For he rejected Yahweh's word in going to fight at Ramoth Gilead, and was condemned by God for working together with those who hated Him, and "therefore is wrath on you from before Yahweh". A man may fail repeatedly, as Jehoshaphat did in his relations with Ahab and allowing his son to marry Jezebel's daughter, and even experience God's wrath. And yet finally be judged as having done what was right in God's eyes. That doing of right may refer therefore not to a spotless track record of behaviour, but rather to a basic faith in God, repentance and what the New Testament calls "abiding in Him". It is not the dramatic ups and downs on the graph of human spirituality over time which are significant to God. It is the overall state of the heart. And we can take courage from this in our own lives, and be guided therefore not to think too highly of those who at specific points show great commitment, nor to think too lowly of those who fail in specific points of their journey. We also learn that some men die with weaknesses, such as not taking away the high places. But this does not necessarily tip the balance towards their condemnation. This needs to be factored in to our thinking about the spiritual fate of those who die committing suicide.

He was too close to Israel. His son married a daughter of Ahab (2 Chron. 18:1), and his insistence on supporting Ahab was seen as loving those who hated Yahweh, and the wrath of God was upon him because of it. And yet he is commended for having peace with the kings of Israel (1 Kings 22:44), even though that desire for peace with them led him into major sin. But he was judged as having a heart right with God (2 Chron. 19:3). We sense God weighting Jehoshaphat's sins with his relations with Israel against his genuine desire for peace within God's people. And overall, as he was judged on the state of his heart, his desire for unity and peace was judged as his dominant desire. We simply cannot factor in or weight all the dimensions in a man's heart. Only God can. And the reason we are not to judge is

because in fact we cannot judge, in that we don't have access to human hearts. See on :10.

2Ch 19:3 Nevertheless there are good things found in you, in that you have put away Asheroth out of the land, and have set your heart to seek God-

This is the basis upon which he was judged positively at the end of his life (1 Kings 22:43). For all the ups and downs of his spiritual graph (see on :3), his heart basically was with God. His "set" or 'prepared' heart could be seen as a fulfilment of Solomon's prayer in 1 Chron. 29:18, where He asks God to keep the hearts of His people focused upon the temple, keeping it "in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Your people, and prepare their heart unto You". We see how God weighs up human hearts and actions. It is not that some "good things" outweigh bad things. That would be too simplistic, and ends up giving undue weight to works. So the emphasis is that good things were "found in you", within him, in his heart; and this is paralleled with setting his heart to seek God. It was this state of heart which more than counterbalanced his external sins of weakness in connection with Ahab.

2Ch 19:4 Jehoshaphat lived at Jerusalem. He went out again among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, and brought them back to Yahweh, the God of their fathers-

We recall how not so long ago, the people were rejoicing in giving the death sentence to any who didn't seek Yahweh (2 Chron. 15:13). I suggested this was on the cusp of religious extremism, and they were hypocritically uncommitted themselves. We note that he went out personally to appeal to the people, which is the best way of appeal. We note "Mount Ephraim" was the northern border of Judah, with Beersheba forming the southern border. However, Mount Ephraim was in Ephraim, and it could be that Jehoshaphat went there too, appealing even to the ten tribes.

2Ch 19:5 He set judges in the land throughout all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city-

David had planned for 6000 Levitical "officers and judges" throughout Israel (1 Chron. 23:4). But clearly the Levites had failed to be as they should have been, and the system of judges had failed; this is another indication that David's final plans for the new religious system based around the temple never really worked out in practice.

2Ch 19:6 and said to the judges, Consider what you do. You don't judge for man, but for Yahweh; and He is with you in the judgment-

This suggests that Jehoshaphat was installing new judges; it's not that there were no judges before this time. Priests were to represent God, and to come before them was to come "before the Lord" (Dt. 19:17). The Lord Jesus was presented as a baby "before the Lord" (Lk. 2:22)- i.e. before the priest. Yahweh was "with" them in the judgment in that their judgments were to be guided by His revealed word, which was a source of His presence amongst them- as it is now.

2Ch 19:7 Now therefore let the fear of Yahweh be upon you. Be careful and do so; for there is no iniquity with Yahweh our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of bribes-

This had presumably been a problem with the previous judges whom Jehoshaphat was now replacing (see on :6). This setting up of judges may have been in obedience to Dt. 16:18, whereas before this perhaps the judgment was done as in most primitive

societies, by the heads of families. But that was bound to be open to "respect of persons" and bribes.

2Ch 19:8 Moreover in Jerusalem Jehoshaphat appointed Levites and priests, and of the heads of the fathers' households of Israel, for the judgment of Yahweh, and for controversies-

The idea was that they judged cases which were handed up to them by the system of local judges described in :5-7. But LXX "And to judge the inhabitants of Jerusalem". "The judgment of Yahweh" may refer to interpretation of the Mosaic law, and "controversies" to interpersonal disputes. We note that "Levites" were to be part of this higher system of judges, and they are here differentiated from the priests. Levites were servants to the priests, but here they are invested with high authority. Those of the servant class were elevated to positions of senior judgment, and Paul has the same spirit in view in 1 Cor. 6:4. See on 2 Chron. 20:14.

David (2 Sam. 14:4; 15:3) and Solomon (1 Kings 3:16) appear to have concentrated all judgment in themselves, setting themselves up effectively as both king and priest, for the "judge" was to be a priest. Jehoshaphat reformed this by placing the power of judgment in the hands of a group of Levites, priests and heads of families as the higher court in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 19:7). But still Jehoshaphat didn't appoint a singular senior judge, as required in Dt. 17:9. We note from Dt. 19:17 that this singular priestly supreme judge is called "Yahweh", because he was to be Yahweh's supreme representative when it came to judgment. But it seems even the best kings of Judah preferred to keep that office in their own power.

They returned to Jerusalem-

LXX "And to judge the inhabitants of Jerusalem". If we follow the AV, then this was after Jehoshaphat's reforming tour of his land which began in :4.

2Ch 19:9 He commanded them saying, Thus you shall do in the fear of Yahweh, faithfully, and with a perfect heart-

"Perfect heart" may mean as in 1 Chron. 12:38, a united heart amongst all the judges.

2Ch 19:10 Whenever any controversy shall come to you from your brothers who dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and ordinances-

Judging between "blood and blood" (Dt. 17:8) may refer to judging whether between murder and manslaughter. Judgment between "law and commandment" may mean deciding which particular Mosaic law was appropriate in a given case.

You shall warn them, that they not be guilty towards Yahweh, and so wrath come on you and on your brothers-

We have just read this phrase in :2, where wrath came upon Jehoshaphat for his actions. Perhaps in humility because of this, he now hands over the judiciary to a system of judges rather than continuing to be the personal judge of Israel, as previous kings had been (see on :8).

Do this, and you shall not be guilty-

The idea seems to be that the judges would not be guilty if they judged according to information given which was in fact false. But those who made false testimony would have been warned that doing so meant facing Yahweh's judgment.

2Ch 19:11 Behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of Yahweh-

This may refer to Amariah, "Yah has spoken", who was to finally judge over all matters of interpretation of the Mosaic law.

And Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, in all the king's matters. The Levites shall be officers before you. Deal courageously, and may Yahweh be with the good-

Levites were servants to the priests, but here they are invested with high authority. Those of the servant class were elevated to positions of senior judgment, and Paul has the same spirit in view in 1 Cor. 6:4. Although the idea may be that they were waiting to operationalize the judgments handed down.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 20

2Ch 20:1 It happened after this that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them some of the other Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle-

For "Ammonites", LXX and some texts read "the Mehunim", of 2 Chron. 26:7; 1 Chron. 4:41.

2Ch 20:2 Then some came who told Jehoshaphat saying, A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea from Syria. Behold, they are in Hazazon Tamar (that is, En Gedi)-

Some manuscripts read "from Edom", called "mount Seir" in :10, which would make better sense of them coming from En Gedi, with "the sea" then referring to the Dead Sea.. G.A. Smith explains that En Gedi was "on the west coast of the Dead Sea at a point where a rugged pass leads up into the hill country of Judah".

2Ch 20:3 Jehoshaphat was alarmed, and set himself to seek to Yahweh. He proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah-

Fasts were typically proclaimed to call for repentance, as a result of calamity convicting people of sin. Jehoshaphat recognized that his reforms had not touched the soul of most of his people, and saw this invasion as a result of that. See on :10.

2Ch 20:4 Judah gathered themselves together to seek help from Yahweh. They came out of all the cities of Judah to seek Yahweh-

The people came to "seek help", but as explained on :3, Jehoshaphat realized that what was essentially needed was repentance.

2Ch 20:5 Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of Yahweh, before the new court-

Jehoshaphat stood not "in" but "before" this court, so it may refer to the court of the priests which had been rebuilt recently. Hence "new".

2Ch 20:6 and he said, Yahweh, the God of our fathers, aren't You God in heaven? Aren't You ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand, so that no one is able to stand against You-

To "stand against" is s.w. "stand with" or "before". Jehoshaphat 'stood' "before" Yahweh (:5). He feels his unworthiness to do this, and yet is aware that all the world likewise stands before Him, and cannot stand against Him. We note that God was king of the Gentile world even then. For them to become His 'kingdom', as today, required a recognition that He is king, and to accept His position as their king and

they as His subjects. In other words, to accept what is already potentially the situation. This aspect of the call of the Gospel of the Kingdom is often felt by those who truly respond to it, having previously known nothing of His ways.

2Ch 20:7 Didn't You, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and give it to the seed of Abraham Your friend forever?-

"Drive out" is s.w. "inherit" in :11. It is not the usual word for "drive out". If as suggested on :2 the invaders were from Edom, Ammon and Moab (:10), they too were the seed of Abraham. And it is all of them whom Jehoshaphat has in view here. They were called to be part of God's kingdom (see on :6). The idea is not, therefore, 'You drove out the Canaanites, do drive out these invaders now'. For the Canaanites were not the seed of Abraham. But these invaders were. These descendants of Abraham were to be defeated, Jehoshaphat argues, because they were trying to drive Judah out of the land which they too had been given to inherit (:11). So the grounds of their condemnation were not that they were Canaanites, but rather that they were forbidding other members of the seed a place in the inheritance. And there is a lesson for that in the warring members of the true seed of Abraham today.

2Ch 20:8 They lived in it, and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your name saying- Jehoshaphat has great spirituality and faith at this point. But he retains the misunderstanding of David and Solomon, that the sanctuary or temple built was somehow a guarantee that God would always protect His people. God had explained that He didn't want them to build it, but rather wanted to build them a 'house' or family of humbled hearts, open to the operation of His Spirit. See on :28.

2Ch 20:9 If evil comes on us- the sword, judgment, plague or famine- we will stand before this house and before You, (for Your name is in this house), and cry to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save-

He is repeating the prayer of Solomon. But he also repeats the same misunderstanding, that the physical temple was some kind of talisman which would nudge God into saving His people from judgment even when they sinned. This was not the case. And the final destruction of the temple and captivity of the people was evidence enough of that.

2Ch 20:10 Now, consider the children of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom You would not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned aside from them, and didn't destroy them-

This is starting to put the blame on God for allowing these people to still exist. But the reason for their invasion was because Judah had sinned, and Jehoshaphat realized that when he called for a fast (see on :3). But like us, he soon drifted away from that initial realization of sin and the need for repentance and salvation by grace. For from that height, he slips down into considering the temple as a physical talisman which would bring help (:8,9), and now he tries to rationalize the situation by even blaming God. Rather than retaining his sense of sin.

2Ch 20:11 See how they reward us, to come to cast us out of Your possession which You have given us to inherit-

As discussed on :7, their behaviour was obnoxious because they too were the seed of Abraham, but refused to allow Judah to have a place in the land promised to Abraham.

2Ch 20:12 Our God, will You not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that comes against us; neither know we what to do, but our eyes are toward You-

As discussed on :10, Jehoshaphat has slipped down from his initial sense that Judah have sinned and must desperately, urgently repent (:3). Now he is saying that those sent to judge Judah are sinners worthy of judgment. And yet he recognizes that he has no might against that judgment. And yet the history of Israel is full of faithful individuals and armies winning victories, with Yahweh's help, against far larger and stronger armies. Yet Jehoshaphat seems to lack that level of faith, and is simply "dismayed", which we will note on :15 seems to imply a lack of faith.

2Ch 20:13 All Judah stood before Yahweh, with their little ones, their wives and their children-

We see here how "all" in the Bible isn't always to be read literally. Representatives from a community are counted as "all" of it. "Little ones" seems here to mean babies.

2Ch 20:14 Then the Spirit of Yahweh came on Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, the Levite, of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly-

"Jahaziel", 'he who sees visions of God', is an example of a person having a name which was acquired due to later life experience, and was likely not the birth name. We note he was a Levite not from the priestly line, continuing the theme we saw developed in 2 Chron. 19:8,11 of Levites being chosen for exalted work. Levites were servants to the priests, but here they are invested with high authority.

2Ch 20:15 He said, Listen, all Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, king Jehoshaphat. Thus says Yahweh to you, 'Don't be afraid, neither be dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's-

I noted on :12 that Jehoshaphat's faith was rather weak and he appeared almost fatalistic. "The battle is... God's" is a quotation of David's words to Goliath in 1 Sam. 17:47. Being "dismayed and terrified" is the term used of how Israel generally were terrified of Goliath, whereas David by faith wasn't (1 Sam. 17:11). David in turn uses to his son Solomon (1 Chron. 22:13; 28:20). He was thereby urging Solomon not to worry if he was out of step with all Israel; if they were dismayed and terrified, he was still to walk in faith as David had done at the time of the Goliath crisis. It is also used to urge the people toward the spirit of David rather than that of Israel in 2 Chron. 20:15,17. The same phrase is also used in urging the people of Judah in Hezekiah's time to consider the Assyrians to be as a Goliath which they like David could vanquish (2 Chron. 32:7). The exiles likewise were urged not to be dismayed and terrified at the reproach of men (Is. 51:7; Jer. 30:10), very clearly making the history with Goliath relevant to their times.

2Ch 20:16 Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they are coming up by the ascent of Ziz. You shall find them at the end of the valley, before the wilderness of Jeruel-

The valley refers to one of the ravines leading from the Dead Sea; see on :2.

2Ch 20:17 You will not need to fight this battle. Set yourselves, stand still, and see the salvation of Yahweh with you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Don't be afraid, nor be

dismayed. Go out against them tomorrow, for Yahweh is with you' -

To "stand still and see" was the language of the invitation to behold the miracle of the salvation at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:13, cp. 1 Sam. 12:16 and see note there). Yahweh was "with you" whilst they were with Him (2 Chron. 15:2), and yet it seems the faith of the people was weak, and they had been called to radical repentance in :3. But by grace, Yahweh was with them despite this. Just as they had stood still and seen His salvation at the Red Sea whilst they were still clutching the idols of Egypt (according to Ez. 20). And Jehoshaphat grasped that, saying that the victory was to be by grace (:21).

2Ch 20:18 Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before Yahweh, worshipping Yahweh-
This was an act of great faith in the prophetic word. For at that point there was no visible evidence that this victory would happen.

2Ch 20:19 The Levites, of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites, stood up to praise Yahweh, the God of Israel, with an exceeding loud voice-

This again, as noted on :19, was the joy of deep faith. For there was no evidence that the victory would happen. That had to be taken on absolute faith. They didn't just 'wait and see', they proactively rejoiced.

2Ch 20:20 They rose early in the morning and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa. As they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Listen to me, Judah, and you inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in Yahweh your God, so you shall be established!-
The word was and is God. Dt. 4:12 [Heb.] says that Israel heard God's voice and saw no similitude *save* a voice. To hear the word is to in that sense see God; for the word was and is God. There are other connections between seeing God and hearing His word in Ex. 20:21 and 1 Kings 19:12-14. Observe the parallelism in 2 Chron. 20:20: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper". Our attitude to God is our attitude to His word. Because the word is so pure, *therefore* we love it (Ps. 119:140). John Carter rightly observed: "Upon our understanding of what the Bible is, our attitude to it will be determined".

Believe His prophets, so you shall prosper-

The false prophets had told Ahab and Jehoshaphat to go up and fight at Ramoth Gilead, "for Yahweh will deliver it into the hand of the king" (1 Kings 22:12). But Jehoshaphat had nearly lost his life, because he had refused to hear the voice of the one true prophet of Yahweh. So the emphasis is upon believing Yahweh's prophets, and not false prophets. By saying this, Jehoshaphat shows he had learned from his mistake.

2Ch 20:21 When he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who should sing to Yahweh and give praise in holy array, as they went out before the army, and say, Give thanks to Yahweh; for His grace endures forever-

This is really a parade example of believing that you receive what you ask for, before the answer arrives. And feeling you have received it. It seems they sung Ps. 136, glorying in the victory which was not then theirs. The vanguard were singing Levites, as in the victory over Jericho. Indeed "before the army" appears to allude to Josh. 6:7,9.

2Ch 20:22 When they began to sing and to praise, Yahweh set ambushers against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were struck-

It was exactly at the moment that they began to praise God for a victory which seemed impossible, that Yahweh began to destroy them. The ambushers could have been Angels appearing as men. Or more likely, the people of Esau / Edom (see on :2) began fighting amongst themselves (:23). It could be however that as in Josh. 8:2, God told Jehoshaphat to set an ambush against the enemy, which resulted in them fighting each other.

2Ch 20:23 For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to kill and destroy them. When they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, each one helped to destroy another-

This is typical of how God so often destroyed Israel's enemies (e.g. Jud. 7:22), and how He will work in the last days. They destroy each other, just as men bring about their own judgment rather than being simply judged by God.

2Ch 20:24 When Judah came to the place overlooking the wilderness, they looked at the multitude which were now dead bodies fallen to the earth, and there were none who escaped-

As they came to the edge of the cliff, down which they had to descend in full view of the enemy they expected, their faith was at maximum stretch. We wonder whether the singers of confident praise for the promised victory... just slightly quavered as they approached it. But faith was rewarded. AV "came toward the watchtower" may refer to one of the castles built by Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 17:12).

2Ch 20:25 When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take their spoil, they found among them in abundance both riches and dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away. They were three days in taking the spoil, it was so much-

The presence of so much wealth amongst the attackers was doubtless a reason they fought each other.

2Ch 20:26 On the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Beracah; for there they blessed Yahweh. Therefore the name of that place is called The valley of Beracah to this day-

This may be the "valley of Jehoshaphat" which will feature in the latter day destruction of Israel's enemies (Joel 3:2,12).

2Ch 20:27 Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in their forefront, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for Yahweh had made them to rejoice over their enemies-

God's psychological influencing of people is a parade example of how His Spirit works upon the human spirit. They rejoiced before the battle with the same joy they experienced after it. Truly they believed they had already received what they had asked for (Mk. 11:24).

2Ch 20:28 They came to Jerusalem with stringed instruments and harps and trumpets to the house of Yahweh-

This returning to Jerusalem recalls how Jehoshaphat had earlier returned to Jerusalem in shame after the conflict at Ramoth Gilead. He ought to have learned that without association with the ten tribes, he would return to Jerusalem with joy. However we note that they came to the temple with their praise. On one hand this was appropriate, but we sense that for all their faith, they had still not learned the lesson that the temple was not in fact the source of their victory. See on :8.9.

2Ch 20:29 The fear of God was on all the kingdoms of the countries, when they heard that Yahweh fought against the enemies of Israel-

The fear of Yahweh coming upon those cities was the promised reward for obedience (Dt. 11:25), and recalls the terror which fell upon the cities around Jacob at the time of Gen. 35:5. But that terror didn't come because Israel were righteous at that time; in fact the opposite. For they had just massacred Shechem. Likewise here, these blessings were by grace, for Judah were not so righteous at this time (:33); and reflected Yahweh's extreme sensitivity to any faith and obedience toward Him.

2Ch 20:30 So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet; for his God gave him rest all around-

As in 2 Chron. 15:15, peace with the surrounding nations is seen as a result of spiritual blessing. This also implies that the invasion they had just experienced was indeed due to their serious sins (see on :3).

2Ch 20:31 Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah: he was thirty-five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi-

Kings notes that he "began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel", but Chronicles seems to not mention Ahab, nor use the apostate kings of Israel as a time marker for the reigns of the kings of Judah. Perhaps in exile, when Chronicles was written or rewritten, they realized that it was thanks to the influence of the kings of Israel that Judah had fallen away from Yahweh. "Azubah" means 'forsaking' and may mean that although his mother forsook Yahweh, Jehoshaphat in the end was loyal to Him in his heart.

2Ch 20:32 He walked in the way of Asa his father, and didn't turn aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh-

Jehoshaphat did externally turn aside, in his trust in Ahab and association with the apostate ten tribes. His behaviour incited the wrath of God against him- serious language. See on 2 Chron. 19:2. But God saw that in his heart, he didn't swerve from Him; and He considered those heart positions as being the 'doing' which is all important to Him. This idea is continued in :33, where we learn God's overall judgment upon Judah at this time was that their hearts were not with Him- despite their great faith shown in the conflict earlier in this chapter. Peaks of faith and works are not the same as a core heart position.

2Ch 20:33 However the high places were not taken away; neither as yet had the people set their hearts to the God of their fathers-

Israel never really wholeheartedly committed themselves to Yahweh, and yet 2 Chron. 20:33 AV positively and hopefully says: "*As yet* the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers". They never did. Especially in the preaching of the word of salvation to those who they knew wouldn't respond, the Father and Son

show their hopeful spirit. We therefore conclude that the apparent blessings upon the people for obedience were by grace, or perhaps from Divine respect for Jehoshaphat's faithful heart. For their hearts were not set upon their God.

Asa and Jehoshaphat removed the high places, but in a sense they didn't (1 Kings 15:14 cp. 2 Chron. 14:5; 17:6 cp. 20:33). We read of how the land was purged of Baal, Sodomites etc.; but in a very short time, we read of another purge being necessary. Hezekiah, Manasseh and Josiah all made major purges within a space of 80 years. Jeremiah therefore condemns the Jews who lived at the time of Josiah's reformation for not *knowing* God in their hearts. Asa gathered the gold and silver vessels back into the temple- and then went and used them to make a political treaty. He *apparently* treated them as God's riches, but then in reality he used them as his own (1 Kings 15:18, 15). Many a Western Christian has this very same tendency. We too must ask ourselves whether our spirituality is really just a product of the crowd mentality; as the crowd shouted one day "Hosanna to the Son of David", a few days later they wanted Jesus to be delivered rather than Barabbas, but within minutes they were persuaded to cry for the crucifixion of the Son of God. Church life, Bible studies, the breaking of bread... inevitably, there is a crowd mentality developed here. There is a feeling of devotion which wells up within us as a community, as an audience, as we sit there, as we stand in praise and worship together. But the *real* spirituality is far deeper than this. We must seriously ask whether our spirituality, our feelings of devotion, our true repentance, are *only* stimulated by these meetings?

2Ch 20:34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, behold, they are written in the history of Jehu the son of Hanani, which is inserted in the book of the kings of Israel-

The prophet Jehu rebuked Baasha (1 Kings 16:1) and yet he also wrote a history of Jehoshaphat's reign (2 Chron. 20:34), implying that he outlived Jehoshaphat. This means that Jehu must have been a young man at the time of his rebuke of Baasha. It's hard to keep on keeping on in ministry over a long lifetime, and those who do should be deeply respected.

2Ch 20:35 After this, Jehoshaphat king of Judah joined himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly-

He was so slow to learn the lesson that he should not work together with the apostate ten tribe kingdom. He had almost lost his life because of this whilst fighting at Ramoth Gilead. And like us, the situations were repeated, but he was so slow to learn.

2Ch 20:36 He joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish; and they made the ships in Ezion Geber-

1 Kings 22:48 "*to go to Ophir for gold*". Despite the wealth God gave Jehoshaphat, even he was tempted by the desire for more. This has to be a warning to all generations.

"Ships of Tarshish" is clearly a technical term for a long distance trading vessel. "Tarshish" appears to have been the source of gold, peacocks, silver etc., which are only found together in southern India. But a ship of Tarshish wasn't necessarily a ship which went to Tarshish. "Tarshish" means 'endurance' and refers to vessels which had a capacity for long distance trading. At that time, India was the end of the earth for someone living in Israel. There is an analogous situation with how 19th century long distance trading vessels were known as "Indiamen", not because they necessarily

sailed the routes to India, but because they were long distance vessels of the kind which had sailed to India. This is why 'going to Tarshish' in 2 Chron. 20:36,37 is paralleled with 'going to Ophir in ships of Tarshish' in 1 Kings 22:48.

"Ophir" may have been a generic name for areas to the east, including southern Arabia (famed for gold in Ps. 72:15; Ez. 27:22) and India; Ophir was in Arabia according to Gen. 10:29. Sheba was nearby and was famed for gold, so it was through this trading that the Queen of Sheba heard of the wisdom of Solomon. 1 Kings 10:1 goes on to speak of her after mentioning gold of Ophir in 1 Kings 9:28, connecting her with this gold trade with Ophir. But 1 Kings 10:11 connects Ophir with "almug trees and precious stones". "Almug" appears to refer to sandalwood, "the Hebraized form of the Deccan word for sandal". This points to "Ophir" as being in the east, possibly as far as the Indian coast where these trees grow.

2Ch 20:37 Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat saying, Because you have joined yourself with Ahaziah, Yahweh has destroyed your works. The ships were broken, so that they were not able to go to Tarshish-

"Broken" is literally 'broken forth'. It is used of God as it were lashing out in sudden judgment (1 Chron. 13:11). He was so patient with Jehoshaphat regarding his abiding weakness of association with wicked people, even though his core heart position was with Yahweh. 1 Kings 22:49 suggests that the ships were broken because Jehoshaphat refused Ahaziah's offer of more experienced sailors. So perhaps the ships were destroyed by a storm as soon as they left, which Ahaziah blamed upon inexperienced sailors from Judah. The ships had to be broken by the wind / storm of God's wrath, perhaps in the form of a gale. But according to 1 Kings, when Ahaziah proposes another join venture, Jehoshaphat apparently learns the lesson. I say apparently, because after Ahaziah dies, Jehoshaphat again repeats the same mistake with Ahab's other son Jehoram (2 Kings 3:7). And yet he was finally counted righteous with God because his basic state of heart was for Him. We marvel again at God's patience with men. This means that we are to continue seeking the repentance of men and never cut them off, as is typically done by small minded churches 'disfellowshipping' people.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 21

2Ch 21:1 Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David; and Jehoram his son reigned in his place-

The description of death as sleeping with fathers is clear evidence that death is seen as a sleep, unconsciousness, and not as the start of an immortal soul going to heaven or 'hell'. Good and bad, David and Solomon, are gathered together in death. The division between them will only therefore come at the resurrection of the dead, and the granting of immortality at the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus.

2Ch 21:2 He had brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat: Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael and Shephatiah. All these were the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel-

They all God's Name in their names, but it seems it was spirituality in name only. Jehoshaphat himself held on in faith, but his wrong association with the ten tribes led to the spiritual destruction of his family.

2Ch 21:3 Their father gave them great gifts, of silver, and of gold, and of precious things, with fortified cities in Judah; but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram, because he

was the firstborn-

We could infer from this that they were perhaps spoilt. Wealth never brought blessing to this family. His careful arrangements to try to split things up fairly were presumably because he thought this would stop them arguing amongst themselves. But it didn't work out at all; Jehoram killed all his brothers (:4).

2Ch 21:4 Now when Jehoram was risen up over the kingdom of his father, and had strengthened himself, he killed all his brothers with the sword, and various also of the princes of Israel-

See on :3. This continues a theme, of the kings of Judah strengthening or fortifying themselves, often when they first became king; but then having that human strength tested by God or removed. The same word is used repeatedly (1 Chron. 11:10; 2 Chron. 11:11,17; 12:13; 13:21; 17:1; 23:1; 25:3,11; 26:8,15; 29:3; 32:5). The lesson of course was that it is God's Angelic eyes who run to and fro in the land promised to Abraham, "to shew Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chron. 16:9).

2Ch 21:5 Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem-

Putting together 2 Kings 1:17; 3:1; 8:3,16; 2 Chron. 21:5,20, it seems Jehoram became king as regent about two years before Jehoshaphat died.

2Ch 21:6 He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab; for he had the daughter of Ahab as wife: and he did that which was evil in the eyes of Yahweh-

His wife was Athaliah the granddaughter of Omri (2 Chron. 22:2; 2 Kings 8:26). "Athaliah", 'Yah has constrained', may mean that she was bitter that Yahweh had as it were limited her; the same groundless complaint as in 2 Cor. 6:12.

2Ch 21:7 However Yahweh would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that He had made with David, and as He promised to give a lamp to him and to his children always-

That promise was understood by God at this stage as meaning that a descendant of David would continue to reign on David's throne "always", and therefore He did not destroy Judah. However, He did eventually. He reinterpreted and reapplied His words of promise. And He does this often with the various possible futures prophesied. His word is not proven false but He reapplies it, as He continues His purpose with respect for the freewill decisions of man.

2Ch 21:8 In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves-

A sad decline from the situation in his father's time (2 Chron. 17:10).

2Ch 21:9 Then Jehoram passed over with his captains, and all his chariots with him. He rose up by night, and struck the Edomites who surrounded him, along with the captains of the chariots-

We note that horses and chariots were forbidden to Israel's king (Dt. 17:17,18). Yet it seems that his chariots and captains prevailed against those of Edom, even when he was surrounded and about to be defeated. Perhaps this was a repeat of the situations of 2 Chron. 13:15; 18:31, where weak believers in their time of need called to God when surrounded by enemies, and were heard. This reflects God's deep sensitivity to faith in

Him, even in time of desperation. And yet His final judgment is of the state of a person's heart. 2 Kings 8:21 locates the battle as being at Zair.

2Ch 21:10 So Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah to this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time from under his hand, because he had forsaken Yahweh, the God of his fathers-

Libnah was a priestly city (1 Chron. 6:47), but the tribes seem to have given the Levites towns which were not particularly valuable to them, or which were exposed to attack. Contrary to the spirit of David, they offered to God that which cost them nothing. And we must take a lesson from that. Some manuscripts read "Then did the Edomites who dwelt in Libnah revolt". So Libnah had been taken over by Edomites and was formerly only technically under Israelite control.

2Ch 21:11 Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and made the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the prostitute, and led Judah astray-

What a contrast with Ps. 125:2 "As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so Yahweh surrounds His people from this time forth and forever". The hills around Jerusalem are not huge mountains. They are small hills, and this is the picture of God's protection; not hugely visible, but there. But the mountains around Jerusalem became the "high places" of idolatry (1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 23:13; 2 Chron. 21:11); what should have been the symbols of Yahweh's protection became perverted.

2Ch 21:12 A letter came to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus says Yahweh, the God of David your father, 'You have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah-

This confirms our position elsewhere that Elijah was dramatically snatched away into the sky as a sign that Elisha had now replaced him as Yahweh's lead prophet. But that didn't mean that he died or was taken to heaven (cp. Jn. 3:13). He returned to earth, as the sons of the prophets expected him to. Now, as an old man, perhaps still living in the ten tribes, he continued his ministry although on a more low key level. He didn't visit Judah but rather sent the Divine message as a letter. The style of the words recorded here is absolutely that of Elijah the Tishbite, although it is conceivable that this could refer to another prophet called Elijah.

2Ch 21:13 but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the prostitute like the house of Ahab did, and also have slain your brothers of your father's house, who were better than yourself- Clearly enough, we can make others sin. Even though their sin is their responsibility before God, those who lead people into sin are particularly culpable before Him. This is a very common Biblical theme, and we need to analyze our behaviour very carefully in this respect.

2Ch 21:14 Therefore, Yahweh will strike with a great plague your people and your children and your wives, and all your substance-

This continues the theme of :13, that human actions have huge impact upon others. This is a repeated Biblical teaching, and the fact God has structured human experience like this is in order that we should be highly sensitive in our actions towards others. We all have far more influence over others than we might imagine, and will be accountable for it.

2Ch 21:15 and you shall have great sickness by disease of your bowels, until your bowels fall out by reason of the sickness, day by day'-

This description of his sickness, although not medically correct, implied that what was within his innermost being ["bowels" is at times used by metonymy for the heart] will come out, resulting in death. And consistently in these biographies of the kings, it is their hearts which are the basis of their judgment.

2Ch 21:16 Yahweh stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians who are beside the Ethiopians-

This is the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers today, and it was and will be seen in the revival of the dead bones of Israel. Not visible miracles, but internal mental working. And that Spirit can be resisted, as it was by many of the exiles; for we are not mere puppets in God's hand. Yet grace means that God takes the initiative; "He first loved us". That initiative is seen through His working on the human heart in calling us to action (s.w. 2 Chron. 21:16; Is. 13:17; Jer. 50:41; Joel 3:9) and Cyrus was a parade example of this (Is. 41:2,25, 45:13). The hearts of the returnees were likewise stirred up. But this was not some irresistible manipulation of the human person; Zion was called to be stirred up ["awake"], but she refused to be stirred up (Is. 51:17; 52:1 cp. Is. 64:7). Zerubbabel had his mind or "spirit" stirred up to be the king-priest Messianic figure (Hag. 1:14); but he let the baton drop.

2Ch 21:17 They came up against Judah and broke into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also and his wives; so that there was no son left him except Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons-

Ahaziah is Jehoahaz (2 Chron. 21:17), Azariah (2 Chron. 22:6) and Ahaziah (1 Chron. 3:11); a reminder that people carried multiple names, which explains many of the so called contradictions in the genealogies.

2Ch 21:18 After all this Yahweh struck him in his bowels with an incurable disease-

The great "plague" of :14. The claim of Solomon that prayer to or in the temple would cure such plagues (2 Chron. 6:28,29) is therefore again proven to be wrong. His idea that the temple was a kind of talisman was so wrong.

2Ch 21:19 It happened, in process of time, at the end of two years, that his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness, and he died of severe diseases. His people made no burning for him, like the burning for his fathers-

See on :15. Perhaps those two years of sickness were in order to give him the opportunity to repent. For God makes a statement of judgment, but in the gap between that and its fulfilment, there is the possibility of repentance. And then the outcome will be changed. We could take the lesson that God by all means works to try to elicit repentance in the most apparently hopeless of cases. For the good shepherd searches until he finds the lost. We likewise are never to give up with people.

2Ch 21:20 Thirty-two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. He departed without being desired; and they buried him in the city of David, but not in the tombs of the kings-

"But not in the tombs of the kings" (2 Chron. 21:20) contrasts with the Kings record that he "was buried with his fathers". But this shows that to be "buried with ones

fathers' was an idiom for death, and not a literal statement that a person was buried near the remains of their ancestors.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 22

2Ch 22:1 The inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son king in his place; for the band of men who came with the Arabians to the camp had slain all the older ones. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah reigned-

It could be that this band of men had preserved Ahaziah and were seeking for him to be a puppet king for them. LXX "the Arabians of Mazin". The usual rubric "and X his son was king in his place" is not quite followed here. It seems the succession was somehow questionable. And the fact his mother immediately took the throne after his death hints again at this.

2Ch 22:2 Forty-two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah the daughter of Omri-

In fact the granddaughter of Omri. "Athaliah", 'Yah has constrained', may mean that she was bitter that Yahweh had as it were limited her; the same groundless complaint as in 2 Cor. 6:12. Ahaziah was 22 years old when he began to reign (2 Kings 8:26), but 42 in 2 Chron. 22:2. LXX has 20. But in Biblical Hebrew, numbers were expressed by single letters, and *mem*, forty, is very similar in orthography to *caph*, twenty. And that difference is even more probable in ancient Hebrew or 'Samaritan'. So this appears to be a case of where there were indeed slight errors in copying the Divinely inspired text.

2Ch 22:3 He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab; for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly-

His father had done the same (2 Chron. 21:6). So much sin and spiritual failure is due to a refusal to individuate from parental influence and be an independent person before God. "Counsellor" suggests she specifically instructed him in the ways of idolatry; and it was by listening to the wrong counsel that Rehoboam went wrong when the kingdom of Judah first began (s.w. 2 Chron. 10:8,9).

2Ch 22:4 He did that which was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, as did the house of Ahab; for they were his counsellors after the death of his father, to his destruction-

The word for "counsellor" is associated with rulership and kingship; a king's counsellors were effectively the kings (Is. 1:26; 9:6; Ezra 7:28; 8:25; Job 3:14), and often in the Bible, the counsel of men is contrasted with that of God. We feel this tension too; for the counsel of God is so often different and opposed to the counsel of the majority of those looked up to for secular advice and counsel. See on 2 Chron. 25:16.

2Ch 22:5 He walked also after their counsel, and went with Jehoram the son of Ahab king of Israel to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth Gilead; and the Syrians wounded Joram-

Ahaziah was clearly intended to have learned from the experience of Jehoshaphat, who also went to war with Syria at Ramoth Gilead and was nearly slain there. He was only saved by grace, and afterwards experienced God's wrath for going there (2 Chron. 16:2). Circumstances and similarities repeat within our lives, and between our lives and those of people in the Biblical histories, in order that we might learn.

Jehoram is called "Joram" within this same verse, perhaps because the name of God was no longer part of his name in practice.

2Ch 22:6 He returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which they had given him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Jehoram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick-

As noted on :5, Ahaziah failed to perceive the similarities with the situation of Jehoshaphat.

2Ch 22:7 Now the destruction of Ahaziah was of God, in that he went to Joram; for when he had come, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom Yahweh had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab-

There are a number of other passages which mention how "it was of the Lord" that certain attitudes were adopted by men, resulting in the sequence of events which He desired (Dt. 2:39; Josh. 11:20; 1 Sam. 2:25; 1 Kings 12:15; 2 Chron. 10:15; 22:7; 25:20). It is tempting to read Jud. 14:4 in this context, meaning that God somehow made Samson desire that woman in order to bring about His purpose of freeing Israel from Philistine domination. God through His Spirit works to confirm men in the path they wish to go. And this is the huge significance of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives today.

Ahaziah was Ahab's grandson because of the intermarriage between the rulers of Israel and Judah. So Jehu did have a commission to kill him. But it would seem that Ahaziah could have avoided this had he not shown unity with Joram by visiting him when he was sick. Such is the flexibility of God's purpose, with so many potentials built into it, ever respecting the possibility of human repentance.

2Ch 22:8 It happened, when Jehu was executing judgment on the house of Ahab, that he found the princes of Judah, and the sons of the brothers of Ahaziah, ministering to Ahaziah, and killed them-

These were the very men who gave Ahaziah the wrong counsel to go and fight at Ramoth Gilead, and to worship the idols of Israel. There is no guilt by association taught in the Bible, but there is the fairly obvious teaching that we must be separate from the ways of those who are under Divine judgment. We are to come out of Babylon lest we be consumed in the judgment for her sins, we are to be separate from those whose bad company will corrupt us (1 Cor. 15:33).

2Ch 22:9 He sought Ahaziah, and they caught him (now he was hiding in Samaria), and they brought him to Jehu, and killed him-

Putting the records together, it seems that Ahaziah fled in his chariot through the garden house road (2 Kings 9:27), avoiding Jehu's call to slay him in his chariot. He got to Samaria and hid somewhere, Jehu's men searched for him and found him (2 Chron. 22:9), brought him to Jehu who was then "by Ibleam" (2 Kings 9:27), who struck him so hard that he eventually died of it, but he managed to again escape in his chariot to Megiddo, where he died of the wounds inflicted by Jehu.

They buried him, for they said, He is the descendant of Jehoshaphat, who sought Yahweh with all his heart. The house of Ahaziah had no power to hold the kingdom- They perceived the truth of God's overall judgment of Jehoshaphat, that his heart was with Yahweh, but it was his wrong associations with Israel which led to all this judgment upon his descendants.

2Ch 22:10 Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal seed of the house of Judah-

So obsessed was she with personal power that she killed her own relatives, perhaps her own children, in order to establish herself as the only living heir to David's throne. The royal family had already been depleted because of the murders of 2 Kings 10:14; 2 Chron. 21:4,17. She saw the significance of the promises to David, but twisted them into mere religion. For she was an idolater, Jezebel's daughter.

2Ch 22:11 But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons who were slain, and put him and his nurse in the bedroom. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest (for she was the sister of Ahaziah), hid him from Athaliah, so that she didn't kill him-

In a sense, God's entire purpose through the line and seed of David depended upon the quick thinking of a young woman, and was concentrated in this small baby. For "all the royal seed" had been slain (:10). Her name means 'sworn to Jehovah', and this likely represents her later character rather than her birth name. She came from a bad background, but was married to the high priest (although we note Jehoiada is not listed in the list of high priests in 1 Chron. 6). "The bedroom" is better "the chamber of the beds", perhaps a room in the temple (:12) used for the storage of old beds and furniture. Or maybe this was where he was temporarily hidden, before being moved to somewhere in the temple (:12). We marvel at how Jehoiada kept his own faith in Yahweh strong (2 Chron. 23:1), although surely he must have been somewhat of an underground believer at this time.

2Ch 22:12 He was with them hidden in God's house six years; and Athaliah reigned over the land-

The temple was likely relatively disused, as Athaliah was such a strong worshipper of Baal. Therefore Joash later had to majorly repair it. However in 2 Chron. 23:1-8 we do read of its usage, but perhaps not as it was before. It could be inferred from 2 Chron. 23:18 that the burnt offerings were not offered during Athaliah's dictatorship. And 2 Chron. 24:7 is clear: "For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up God's house". See on 2 Chron. 24:13 for the extent of the damage done. So they hid the child in one of the disused chambers for the priests of Yahweh, who likely were not regularly officiating any more at that time. We note how Jehoshabeath and her husband Jehoiada the priest (2 Chron. 22:11) would have had access to both the palace and the temple because of their positions. And although they must have been underground believers to some extent, they used their connections well, to keep alive the line of David. Joash became king at seven, so he was a one year old baby when saved from Athaliah.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 23

2Ch 23:1 In the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, Azariah the son of Obed, Maaseiah the son of Adaiah and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, into covenant with him-

The five men and their followers of 2 Chron. 23:1 match the description of three "third parts" and another "two parts" in 2 Kings 11:5-7. The corroboration between

the records, clearly written by different hands, reflects the Divine inspiration of the record. The names of all these men include the name of God. To overthrow Athaliah was a risky undertaking and their faith and commitment to the Davidic line was very strong. 2 Kings 11:4 says Jehoiada was supported by the "Carites", the Cherethites of 2 Sam. 20:23.

2Ch 23:2 They went about in Judah, and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the heads of fathers' households of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem- This must have all been arranged secretly and without Athaliah's knowledge. The use of both terms "Judah" and "Israel" would suggest there was support for this spiritual revival even amongst the ten tribes. Although Jehoiada and his wife Jehoshabeath (2 Chron. 22:11) would have been underground believers to some extent, they used their connections well to create a wide groundswell of support for the putsch, even amongst the ten tribes. For Jehoshabeath was related to the house of Ahab and had connections there. And so many believers in otherwise very worldly situations have quietly used their connections likewise to forward God's true way upon earth.

2Ch 23:3 All the assembly made a covenant with the king in God's house. He said to them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as Yahweh has spoken concerning the sons of David-

The promise that David would not want a man to sit upon his throne (2 Chron. 6:16; 7:18 etc.) was understood as requiring human faith and action to fulfil. Jehoiada could have reasoned that God would fulfil His promise in His own way, without the help of man. But His purpose is not deterministic, nor is it imposed upon man. The promise that Abraham's seed should eternally inherit the earth requires individual faith and the exercise of freewill from the members of that seed. Paul likewise understood the promise that Messiah would be a light to the Gentiles as requiring him to take that light to the Gentiles.

2Ch 23:4 This is the thing that you shall do. A third part of you, who come in on the Sabbath, of the priests and of the Levites, shall be porters at the thresholds-

Chronicles stresses the role of the Levites (2 Chron. 23:2,4) whereas Kings hardly mentions them in the record. Clearly Chronicles is largely a history of the priesthood and Levites, written up in captivity to encourage the Levites to return to Judah and revive Yahweh worship there. Comparing with :8, the idea is that the Levites had a changeover of shifts that Sabbath. Those who were going off shift were to remain, so that there would be a larger number of them present.

It seems that the Kings records speaks of three battalions of royal guards, one of which was on duty, and the others later brought into the temple by Jehoiada (2 Chron. 23:7). Whereas Chronicles has three battalions of Levitical temple guards / doorkeepers. They could be the same groups, but it seems easier to read them as separate. This would mean that somehow Jehoiada had persuaded even Athaliah's own bodyguards to betray her.

2Ch 23:5 A third part shall be at the king's house; and a third part at the gate of the foundation. All the people shall be in the courts of Yahweh's house-

"The king's house" isn't the royal palace; for in any case, Athaliah was a queen and not a king. It refers to the place where the king Joash was hiding. The Gate of the Foundation was apparently near the valley separating Moriah from the hill opposite it,

literally "the gate of Sur", mentioned in 2 Kings 11:6. But "Svr" may be "Svs", the horse gate, which is that of 2 Chron. 23:15; 2 Kings 11:16.

2Ch 23:6 But let no one come into the house of Yahweh, except the priests, and those who minister of the Levites. They shall come in, for they are holy, but all the people shall follow Yahweh's instructions-

It would have been tempting to plan this putsch through all the people being within the temple, but Jehoiada refused to allow military and political expediency to take away from the need to "follow Yahweh's instructions" and respect His holiness. And that is a lesson for us. See on :9. yet Kings says that the royal guards, apparently non Levites, did enter the temple. This would be one reason for considering the three groups of royal guards to be the same as the three groups of Levitical guards.

2Ch 23:7 The Levites shall surround the king, every man with his weapons in his hand. Whoever comes into the house, let him be slain. Be with the king when he comes in, and when he goes out-

The whole putsch was a risky undertaking, and Jehoiada was aware of the possibility of armed opposition from Athaliah's loyalists. The Levites were armed, presumably with weapons like knives or whatever they could get hold of. Perhaps this command foresaw how Athaliah would come running into the temple (:12) and should therefore be slain.

2Ch 23:8 So the Levites and all Judah did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded. They took every man his men, those who were to come in on the Sabbath, with those who were to go out on the Sabbath; for Jehoiada the priest didn't dismiss the shift-

Comparing with :4, the idea is that the Levites had a changeover of shifts that Sabbath. Those who were going off shift were to remain, so that there would be a larger number of them present. "All Judah" refers to the representatives of all Judah who were present (:2). "All" in the Bible often refers not to literally everybody but to representatives of the "all". The taking of the Gospel to "all the world" must surely be understood in that way. "The Levites and all Judah" is therefore matched in 2 Kings 11 by "the captains over the hundreds".

2Ch 23:9 Jehoiada the priest delivered to the captains of hundreds the spears, large shields and shields that had been king David's, which were in God's house-

Possibly the shields of gold David had taken and dedicated at the time of 2 Sam. 8:7,11. Gold represents faith, and they were probably not very functional for combat. But this whole putsch was on the basis of faith and not secular strength and wisdom. See on :6.

2Ch 23:10 He set all the people, each man with his weapon in his hand, from the right side of the house to the left side of the house, along by the altar and the house, surrounding the king-

This would be the altar of burnt offering in the outer court. "All the people" refers to those other than the priests and Levites who had agreed to help in the putsch.

2Ch 23:11 Then they brought out the king's son and put the crown on him, and gave him the testimony, and made him king. Jehoiada and his sons anointed him; and they said, Long live the king!-

"The testimony" was a copy of the law the king was supposed to write out when he became king, but it had presumably been written out for him (Dt. 17:18-20).

2Ch 23:12 When Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of Yahweh-

See on :7. Any who came into the temple were to be slain, and it seems Jehoiada set her up to do just what she did. That this was all pulled off right under her nose was quite an achievement.

2Ch 23:13 She looked, and, behold, the king stood by his pillar at the entrance- Heb. 'pedestal', a kind of podium, considering he was only seven years old and small.

And the captains and the trumpets by the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew trumpets. The singers also played musical instruments, and led the singing of praise. Then Athaliah tore her clothes, and said, Treason! Treason!- "Treason" is literally "conspiracy". She realized all too late that a huge conspiracy had been going on under her nose.

2Ch 23:14 Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds who were set over the army and said to them, Bring her out between the ranks; and whoever follows her, let him be slain with the sword. For the priest said, Don't kill her in Yahweh's house-

This confirms the suggestion that the command in :7 to slay whoever entered Yahweh's house was planned with Athaliah in view. "The ranks" would likely refer to the ranks of soldiers; or possibly to the temple precincts.

2Ch 23:15 So they made way for her. She went to the entrance of the horse gate to the king's house; and they killed her there-

Making way for her suggests they all restrained themselves from touching her, the unclean, until she was outside the temple. It would have been an awful last walk to her death. I suggested on 2 Chron. 23:5 that "the horse gate" is the same as the "gate of the foundation".

2Ch 23:16 Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and all the people, and the king, that they should be Yahweh's people-

"Between himself" (2 Chron. 23:16) suggests Jehoiada was absolutely representing Yahweh; 2 Kings says the covenant was between Yahweh and the people. The Bible is full of examples of where men function as God and functionally represent Him to man. But this didn't make them God Himself in person. And it is within this context that we must read the passages which likewise speak of the Lord Jesus as functioning as God- without being God Himself.

2Ch 23:17 All the people went to the house of Baal and broke it down, and broke his altars and his images in pieces, and killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars- The allusion is to how "all the people" were to put to death those who incited others to idolatry (Dt. 13:9). It seems that the temple of Baal had been built near the temple, just as Solomon had built such idol temples near to the temple.

2Ch 23:18 Jehoiada appointed the officers of the house of Yahweh under the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of Yahweh, to offer the burnt offerings of Yahweh, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and

with singing, according to the order of David-

This was really a case of reappointing officers to fulfil the original intentions of David for the temple. It could be inferred that the burnt offerings had not been offered during Athaliah's dictatorship.

2Ch 23:19 He set the porters at the gates of the house of Yahweh, that no one who was unclean in any matter should enter in-

The porters would refer to the arrangements David made in 1 Chron. 16. The word can mean porters or gatekeepers. ecclesia is the temple of God. In the past, gatekeepers checked who came in. Yet as time went by, the gatekeepers let Gentiles in, people who were not in God's covenant: and this was the basis of their condemnation (Ez. 44:7,8). Probably they did so in a misguided conception of "love" towards the surrounding world.

2Ch 23:20 He took the captains of hundreds, and the nobles, and the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and brought down the king from the house of Yahweh. They came through the upper gate to the king's house, and set the king on the throne of the kingdom-

"The upper gate" of 2 Chron. 23:20 is in Kings "the gate of the guard".

2Ch 23:21 So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet. Athaliah they had slain with the sword-

Quietness or peace is often associated with obedience. We read of this at least twice during Jehoshaphat's reign. Going God's way is the only way to true peace; although that peace is juxtaposed against the violent slaying of Athaliah which had been necessary to bring it about.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 24

2Ch 24:1 Joash was seven years old when he began to reign; and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba-

He had been hidden six years in the temple (2 Chron. 22:12), and so it follows that he was grabbed to safety when he was a one year old baby. That was how frail was the line of descent from David, for the rest of the male line had been slain by Athaliah (2 Chron. 22:10). The royal family had already been depleted because of the murders of 2 Kings 10:14; 2 Chron. 21:4,17. Beersheba was famed for idolatry at this time (Am. 5:5; 8:14), and the mother's name, meaning 'gazelle', has no mention of God's Name in it.

2Ch 24:2 Joash did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh all the days of Jehoiada the priest-

Joash did right before God whilst the priest Jehoiada was alive, and then apostatized; Uzziah did likewise, with Zechariah the priest (2 Chron. 24:2; 26:5). He didn't reflect upon the personal implications of Divine history. And we too must appreciate that there are Bible characters whose experiences are framed in terms directly relevant to us- for our learning. Interestingly, straight after Jehoiada died, the princes of the land came to Joash with a request, which he wrongly listened to. This has great similarities with the tragic mistake made by Rehoboam after Solomon died (2 Chron. 10:3,4 cp. 24:17). So Joash was given chance

after chance to be directed back to previous examples and be instructed by them- but he went on in his own way.

But when Jehoiada died, Joash listened to, and was influenced by, the wicked princes of Judah (:17). It is clear that for all his apparent strength of character and zeal for God, Joash was simply a product of those he was with. And so it can be that our generation especially, can tend to be people with no real character, their very personalities influenced by others rather than being real, credible people. Insofar as we can break free from all these moulding influences, we will be real, credible persons. And our independence, our realness, is what will attract others to the message of Divine influence which we preach. Those raised in Christian homes need to pay especial attention to the possibility that they are where they are spiritually because of the good influence of others upon them. There is no harm in this; but we need to strive to have a faith that is not merely the faith of our fathers, but a real and personal response to the love of God which we have for ourselves perceived in the man Christ.

2Ch 24:3 Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he fathered sons and daughters-

We wonder why Jehoiada led Joash into polygamy; even though it was not outlawed, it was clearly against God's ideal standards. Perhaps Jehoiada was desperate to see the line of David continue, and given high infant mortality rates and the possibility that the first wife was barren, he took Joash a second wife. Instead of having faith that that the promised seed would come, as Isaac did during the twenty years of Rebekah's barrenness. 2 Kings 12:3 adds that the high places were not taken away, so we get the hint that despite all this initial zeal, things were not spiritually solid with Joash even from the start.

2Ch 24:4 It happened after this that Joash intended to restore the house of Yahweh-

Joash started to take his own initiative in serving God once he was old enough. He had a personal emotional attachment to the temple, seeing that he had grown up hiding in one of its disused side rooms (2 Chron. 22:12). The temple was in a serious state of disrepair at Athaliah's time; she was an idolater, and the daily sacrifices weren't offered (2 Chron. 23:18). The way Joash later desecrates the temple with idolatry is therefore a tragic example of turning away from the faith. No amount of devotion to the things of God's house, or emotional, sentimental feelings towards them, is a guarantee that true faith will be retained in the long term. This restoration of the temple would have been programmatic for the exiles, for whose benefits these historical records were originally written.

2Ch 24:5 He gathered together the priests and the Levites and said to them, Go out to the cities of Judah, and gather money to repair the house of your God from all Israel from year to year. See that you hasten this matter. However the Levites didn't do it right away-

This presumably meant that the half shekel temple tax had not been paid for some time. So Joash urged that it be paid, although unsurprisingly there was reluctance. Plague was threatened for not paying it, but there is no record that this happened.

2Ch 24:6 The king called for Jehoiada the chief and said to him, Why haven't you required of the Levites to bring in the tax of Moses the servant of Yahweh, and of the assembly of Israel, out of Judah and out of Jerusalem, for the tent of the testimony?-

God had never wanted a temple to be built, and had stressed instead that He preferred to live in a tent on the move, rather than in a house of bricks. Such was Jehoiada's spirituality that he had perceived this, and taught Joash to refer to the temple as a tent. And likewise the essence of the ark, Jehoiada had taught him, was the "testimony" within it. For at that time "there was nothing in the ark except the two tables" of stone (2 Chron. 5:10). And it was "the testimony" which Joash had been given by Jehoiada at seven years old when crowned king. Joash was

given the best spiritual upbringing imaginable by Jehoiada; and yet he turned away from it. It is mythical to imagine that parents can in some ways eternally save their children by diligently raising them. All they can do is give their children the basis upon which they must themselves build. Another possibility is that the ark itself had been removed, and within the "tent" of the most holy place there was simply the stones of the covenant. For in :8 Joash commands an ark to be made.

2Ch 24:7 For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up God's house; and they also gave all the dedicated things of the house of Yahweh to the Baals-

And yet it was through the temple being in such a state of disrepair, that Joash could be hidden in it for six years, living as if the child of some homeless woman squatting in one of the disused side rooms (see on 2 Chron. 22:11).

2Ch 24:8 So the king commanded, and they made a chest, and set it outside at the gate of the house of Yahweh-

"Chest" is the Hebrew word usually used for "ark". I suggested on :6 that the ark may have gone missing or even been destroyed by Athaliah, resulting in the rather strange term "tent of the testimony" [the tables of stone] being used for the most holy place. Kings says it was in the court opposite the porch, by the side of the altar of burnt offering. But "outside" may also mean outside of the most holy place. It could be that the chest was stored by the altar, but in the day time was taken to the gate of the temple to receive contributions (see on 2 Chron. 24:11).

2Ch 24:9 They made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in for Yahweh the tax that Moses the servant of God laid on Israel in the wilderness-

GNB "the tax which Moses, God's servant, had first collected in the wilderness". The idea may be that that was the only time they ever really obeyed the law of giving the half shekel. Israel's collective disobedience to the law is quite stunning.

2Ch 24:10 All the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end-

"An end" may mean that whenever the chest was full, it was emptied (see on :11).

2Ch 24:11 It was so, that whenever the chest was brought to the king's officers by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that there was much money, the king's scribe and the chief priests' officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to its place again. Thus they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance-

"Day by day" can mean 'from time to time', suggesting it was done whenever the chest was full. Thus 2 Kings 12:10 "It was so, when they saw that there was much money in the chest...".

2Ch 24:12 The king and Jehoiada gave it to those who did the work of the service of the house of Yahweh. They hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of Yahweh, and also those who worked iron and brass, so as to repair the house of Yahweh-

The language is rather similar to that used of building the tabernacle, as if this rebuilding was really major, seeing Athaliah had consciously "broken up" the temple (:7). 2 Kings 12:15 adds: "Moreover they didn't demand an accounting from the men into whose hand they delivered the money to give to those who did the work; for they dealt faithfully".

2Ch 24:13 So the workmen worked, and the work of repairing advanced in their hands, and

they restored God's house to its proper condition and strengthened it-

Heb. "the work was perfected", a phrase used mainly in the context of the restoration of Zion (Neh. 4:7; Jer. 30:17; 33:6). The Chronicles record was written or rewritten in exile to inspire the exiles with historical precedents for their work. "Proper condition" suggests 'proper size'. The breaking up of the temple by Athaliah had apparently involved the demolition of major parts of the temple, to the point of it needing to be rebuilt to return it to its original size.

2Ch 24:14 When they had finished, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, from which were made vessels for the house of Yahweh, even vessels with which to minister and to offer, and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver. They offered burnt offerings in the house of Yahweh continually all the days of Jehoiada-

Athaliah's destruction had involved taking away the vessels, probably giving them to the Baal sanctuaries (:7). We note a theme in Israel's history; that whenever there was an appeal for money for the temple, they were always more generous than was needed. And yet they were far from God in their hearts. Generous donation towards religious buildings are not the same as true spirituality.

2Ch 24:15 But Jehoiada grew old and was full of days, and he died. He was one hundred and thirty years old when he died-

Numbers are often not used literally in the Hebrew Bible. The language here is similar to that used of the death of Jacob, who died at the same age (Gen. 47:9). The idea may be that Jehoiada too had potentially begun a new Israel. Although Joash must go down in history as a man who wasted huge potential and abused such a good spiritual upbringing. Jehoiada was buried as a king (:16).

2Ch 24:16 They buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and toward God and His house-

Despite the apostasy of the people, they recognized the good he had done. I noted on :15 the similarities between himself and Jacob, as if he had potentially enabled the founding of a new Israel.

2Ch 24:17 Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king listened to them-

The impression given is that Joash was swayed by their obeisance to him. The requests he granted them were related to forsaking the temple and instead serving idols (:18). Joash was easily flattered, and that reflects deeply upon how his earlier apparent zeal for the temple had been but a living out of the expectations of his spiritual father [and uncle] Jehoiada.

2Ch 24:18 They forsook the house of Yahweh, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols. Wrath came on Judah and Jerusalem for this their guiltiness-

Joash had grown up hidden until age seven in a disused storage room in the temple, at the very time that Athaliah was breaking up the building; as noted on :7,13. Jehoiada and his wife, who were his aunty and uncle, had saved his life and cared for him there. And he had followed Jehoiada's example in rebuilding it after what Athaliah had done there. And now, after the flattery of the princes (:17), he desecrates it. The very building which we would have thought had at least sentimental value to him. And this is how fickle human beings can be, and how surface level human faith can be. It could be that the dishonesty of the priests regarding Joash's appeal for the temple tax to be paid led him to skepticism about the priesthood and religious system based around the temple. And that was a more powerful influence upon him than the Godly example of his uncle Jehoiada.

2Ch 24:19 Yet He sent prophets to them, to bring them again to Yahweh; and they testified against them. But they would not listen-

There were a number of prophets around, Elijah was likely still alive, as Elisha and Micah; there was also Jehu, Jahaziel (2 Chron. 20:14) and Eliezer (2 Chron. 20:37). The apostasy of the people was not a sudden change of heart. The reality was that great reformers and spiritual people like Jehoiada were in reality lonely people, who at times managed to get reforms passed. But the hearts of the people didn't change. That is the point. And that is why as soon as the reformer is off the scene, the people openly "return" to idolatry. But their hearts were always with the idols. The impression we get is that there was only a very small minority amongst the people of God who were truly spiritually minded. This is likely the same today, no matter how we define the "people of God". Whether we take them as all baptized into Jesus, all the Christian movement, our own denomination, our own local church... it is likely the same today. For Paul reasons that we dare not say that we are spiritually better than natural Israel.

2Ch 24:20 The spirit of God came on Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest; and he stood above the people and said to them, Thus says God, 'Why do you disobey the commandments of Yahweh, so that you can't prosper? Because you have forsaken Yahweh, He has also forsaken you'-

Standing above the people was because he was in the "higher court" of Jer. 36:10. This was the inner court of the temple, above the outer court where the ordinary people were gathered. Neh. 8:4 has a similar scene. Such major judgment was not because of the failure of a moment. As explained on :19, the people were far from God even whilst Jehoiada was effectively leading them.

2Ch 24:21 They conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of Yahweh-

The conspiracy was likely of the same kind used to give Naboth the death penalty (1 Kings 21:9,10), claiming he had committed blasphemy and apostasy, which merited being stoned to death. They did so "in the court". Possibly the priests and Levites did this, in the same higher court in view of the people from which he had spoken (:20). Or perhaps the ordinary people stoned him in the outer court. See on :25.

2Ch 24:22 Thus Joash the king didn't remember the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but killed his son-

The Jews murdered Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, according to Jewish tradition; Ahab and Jezebel slew Yahweh's prophets (1 Kings 18:4); Joah murdered Zechariah (2 Chron. 24:22). And the Lord alludes to this in Mt. 23:37 and Lk. 11:47. The idea is that despite being given the blessings of obedience to the covenant when they were disobedient to that covenant, they abused that grace and rebelled against Yahweh just as they had done in the wilderness, when they lived under the same grace. And Nehemiah in Neh. 9:26 is accusing the people of his time of despising and abusing Divine grace in just the same way. Chronicles was written for the exiles, and they failed to learn this lesson.

This is a parade example of the human tendency towards ingratitude, in this case, toward the family who had saved him as a fragile one year old baby from the murderous idol worshipper Athaliah.

When he died, he said, May Yahweh witness it, and require it-

This contrasts with the last words of the Lord Jesus and of Stephen, who wished for forgiveness of their murderers rather than judgment. Zechariah will surely be saved, but he

attained a lower level of spirituality and appreciation of grace than that of the Lord and Stephen (Acts 7:60). The parable of the sower shows that the good ground brings forth various degrees of fruitfulness. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The trading of talents leads to more increase in the hands of some believers than others. But they are all saved. This recognition of differing degrees of response is critical to being able to live together in the body of believers. All will not achieve the same levels. And that is implicitly recognized within Bible teaching.

2Ch 24:23 It happened at the end of the year, that the army of the Syrians came up against him. They came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus-

The princes were those who had encouraged Joash to idolatry. We wonder why they spared Joash. Perhaps his extra bit of life was in order to give him the chance of repentance. But he turned it down.

2Ch 24:24 For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men; and Yahweh delivered a very great army into their hand, because they had forsaken Yahweh, the God of their fathers. So they executed judgment on Joash-

This is expressed in the terms of what would happen to Israel if they were disobedient to the covenant. 2 Kings 12:17,18 says that Joash bought off the Syrians with all the hallowed things of the temple. It could be that this effectively means that he saved his life by paying them off, after they had already entered Jerusalem and slain the princes (:23).

2Ch 24:25 When they had departed from him (for they left him very sick), his own servants conspired against him for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and killed him on his bed, and he died; and they buried him in the city of David, but they didn't bury him in the tombs of the kings-

We wonder whether his servants were so loyal to Yahweh that they killed him for what he had done to the sons of Jehoiada. "Sons" means that he murdered more than just Zechariah. Although these servants were apparently secular Gentiles (:25), perhaps even they were disgusted at his deep ingratitude. Or it could mean that their conspiracy against Joash was meant by God as punishment for his conspiracy against Zechariah (:21). Joash was killed on his bed, probably his sick bed, "at the house of Millo, on the way that goes down to Silla" (2 Kings 12:20). This may have been the equivalent of a hospital.

2Ch 24:26 These are those who conspired against him: Zabad the son of Shimeath the Ammonitess and Jehozabad the son of Shimrith the Moabitess-

We wonder whether these servants were in fact his sons by Gentile wives. If so, then even before the death of Jehoiada he had shown his unspirituality by marrying Gentiles, for all his avowed devotion to the rebuilding of the temple. This is why there was specific commentary written about "his sons" (:27).

2Ch 24:27 Now concerning his sons, and the greatness of the burdens laid on him, and the rebuilding of God's house, behold, they are written in the commentary of the book of the kings. Amaziah his son reigned in his place-

This "commentary" may not necessarily be the same as the books of Kings which we have in our Bibles. "The burdens" refer to the prophecies made against him in :19. Hence RVmg. "the burdens uttered against him".

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 25

2Ch 25:1 Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem-
Amaziah's father Joash died at 47, so Joash would have been 22 when Amaziah was born. His mother, 'pleasing to Jehovah', was one of the wives chosen for Joash by his Godly uncle Jehoiada. He would have lived under the Godly influence of Jehoiada for some time, and witnessed his father's apostasy and gross ingratitude to Jehoiada shown by murdering his sons.

2Ch 25:2 He did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, but not with a complete heart-
There is a common phrase in the record of the Kings of Judah which I admit to being unable to conclusively interpret: "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord". Many of the men of whom this was said were not very righteous, and some were punished for their later apostasy. Possible explanations are that they repented at the end, although unrecorded; or that they were initially righteous; or that God counted them as righteous although they did wrong things. I find problems with each of these alternatives. So I am left with the possibility that a man can *do* (and perhaps this is the word that needs emphasis) what is right in God's eyes, but still ultimately be condemned because his *heart* is far from God; which is the teaching of 1 Cor. 13; Mk. 7:6-9 and many other Scriptures. Amaziah *did* that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like (i.e. he didn't do his works like) David his father" (2 Kings 14:3) must be paralleled with 2 Chron. 25:2: "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart". Working for God as David did, therefore involved doing the works with a perfect heart, the open conscience which David so often displayed in the Psalms. But Amaziah was deceived by the fact he was doing good works, and the real essence of his relationship with God was thereby overlooked. And we too can project a shadow-self to others, an image of spirituality, which eventually we come to believe ourselves; when our heart is far from God. This feature of human nature explains why a man or woman can reach such heights of devotion and then turn round and walk away from it all, out into the darkness of the world.

2Ch 25:3 Now it happened that when the kingdom was established to him, he killed his servants who had killed the king his father-
This continues a theme, of the kings of Judah strengthening or establishing themselves, often when they first became king; but then having that human strength tested by God or removed. The same word is used repeatedly (1 Chron. 11:10; 2 Chron. 11:11,17; 12:13; 13:21; 17:1; 23:1; 25:3,11; 26:8,15; 29:3; 32:5). The lesson of course was that it is God's Angelic eyes who run to and fro in the land promised to Abraham, "to shew Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chron. 16:9).

2Ch 25:4 But he didn't put their children to death, but did according to that which is written in the law in the book of Moses, as Yahweh commanded saying, The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers; but every man shall die for his own sin-

Overall this man appears to have spiritually failed. But he as it were grabs hold of one commandment and religiously obeys it. We see this kind of thing all the time in 'religious' approaches to Christianity. But it is the heart which God is looking at, and it was in this that Amaziah failed, ultimately. Chronicles was written for the exiles, and perhaps they needed

reminding of this principle (as in Ez. 18:20) because of their wrong idea that they were being unjustly punished for the sins of their fathers.

2Ch 25:5 Moreover Amaziah gathered Judah together, and ordered them according to their fathers houses, under captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, even all Judah and Benjamin. He numbered them from twenty years old and upward, and found them three hundred thousand chosen men, able to go forth to war, who could handle spear and shield- After the humiliating defeat by a small army of Syrians, which led to his father's sickness and death, Amaziah wished to strengthen the military might of Judah. But he rather misses the point; his father had more soldiers than Syria, but a small Syrian army defeated Judah's military might because they were not devoted to Yahweh (2 Chron. 24:24). He failed to appreciate that an Israel obedient to the covenant would win victories against far superior forces. His strength numerically was that in Asa's time (2 Chron. 14:8).

2Ch 25:6 He hired also one hundred thousand mighty men of valour out of Israel for one hundred talents of silver-

"Thousand" often means a kind of military division, and not literally 1000. He failed to recognize that faith in Yahweh rather than numbers was significant (see on :5). He failed to learn the lessons of Biblical history, that military cooperation with the ten tribes had never brought anything but disaster.

2Ch 25:7 A man of God came to him, saying, O king, don't let the army of Israel go with you; for Yahweh is not with Israel, with all the children of Ephraim-

The implication was that Yahweh was "with" Judah, but would be with them if Israelite forces were with them. Yet this being "with" Judah was by grace alone, for all the evidence is that the mass of the people were not at all with Him but had forsaken Him. But God perhaps wished to give them just this simple test of obedience regarding not taking the Israelite forces with them, without tackling the myriad other spiritual issues they had. We marvel that He did not turn away from them, seeing they had forsaken Him, but instead worked so patiently to reform them, one baby step at a time. See on :11.

2Ch 25:8 But if you will go, go and take action, be strong for the battle. God will overthrow you before the enemy; for God has power to help, and to overthrow-

There are times when God has influenced men not to respond to the evidently wise words of other men, in order to fulfill His purpose (e.g. 1 Kings 12:15; 2 Chron. 25:20). God was willing to confirm and even encourage Amaziah in a wrong way- if this was Amaziah's choice. Therefore God has the power to influence the minds of men in this way, and He uses it. "He takes away the heart of the chief of the people, and causes them to wander" (Job 12:24 cp. 42:7). And God uses this ability to make men refuse to respond to the evident Truth of His word (e.g. 1 Sam. 2:25). Yet in all this, God is only confirming men in the path they choose to tread.

2Ch 25:9 Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? The man of God answered, Yahweh is able to give you much more than this-

I suggest on :17 that this test was repeated when these mercenaries sacked some cities of Judah, and Amaziah then demands compensation from Israel for this. This abiding desire for compensation reflects his lack of faith in the prophetic words to him. We may apparently respond rightly to a test, but not from the heart. And so it is repeated, and we fail. The

situation also repeated at the time of 2 Chron. 28:13,14, where the victorious Israelites were told to release the captives they had apparently legitimately taken in war.

2Ch 25:10 Then Amaziah separated them, the army that had come to him out of Ephraim, to go home again. Therefore their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in fierce anger-

This was on one hand great obedience to the prophetic word. And yet their anger may reflect the fact that Amaziah actually demanded the payment be returned. For that would explain why they pillaged Judah in revenge (:13). His obedience was therefore partial, and so he was tested again in this matter (see on :17) and failed.

2Ch 25:11 Amaziah took courage, and led forth his people, and went to the Valley of Salt, and struck ten thousand of the children of Seir-

This was where David had won a great victory (1 Chron. 18:12). Amaziah was being guided to follow in David's footsteps. This, as noted on :7, was another baby step taken to try to reform him.

2Ch 25:12 The children of Judah carried away ten thousand alive, and brought them to the top of the rock, and threw them down from the top of the rock, so that they all were broken in pieces-

Comparing with the Kings record, we learn that these people were from the fortress garrison of Sela, which Amaziah captured after the victory of :11. Sela may well be Petra, the apparently impregnable rock top of Jer. 49:16.

2Ch 25:13 But the men of the army whom Amaziah sent back, that they should not go with him to battle, fell on the cities of Judah, from Samaria even to Beth Horon, and struck of them three thousand, and took much spoil-

Samaria and Beth Horon may instead be read as the border cities of Zemaraim (2 Chron. 13:4; Josh. 18:22) or Ephraim / Ephron (2 Chron. 13:19 cp. Josh. 15:9). I suggested on :10 that they did this because perhaps Amaziah didn't in fact pay them or demanded his payment be returned.

2Ch 25:14 Now it happened, after that Amaziah had come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense to them-

The imperfect tense suggests he continued this bowing down to them. This is a common Biblical theme; that men worship the very gods which have been proven powerless, and which God has demonstrated to them to be so, through observed experience. But we have the same human nature. For example, we all learn by observed experience that wealth doesn't bring happiness, and we lament families ruined by the possession of wealth. But many still eagerly worship the idol of wealth.

2Ch 25:15 Therefore the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Amaziah, and He sent to him a prophet who said to him, Why have you sought after the gods of the people, which have not delivered their own people out of your hand?-

GNB "from your power". "Amaziah" means 'power of Yah'. The word play is intentional. The prophet is saying that Amaziah has denied his own name, the personality and character which was potentially to be his. There is likewise a personal path mapped out for each of us, which we can deny by our lack of faith and apostasy.

2Ch 25:16 It happened, as he talked with him, that the king said to him, Have we made you one of the king's counsellors? Stop! Why should you be struck down? Then the prophet stopped, and said, I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this, and have not listened to my counsel-

"Counsellors" is the same Hebrew word translated "determined". It occurs again in :17 ("consulted"). The word for "counsellor" is associated with rulership and kingship; a king's counsellors were effectively the kings (Is. 1:26; 9:6; Ezra 7:28; 8:25; Job 3:14), and often in the Bible, the counsel of men is contrasted with that of God. We feel this tension too; for the counsel of God is so often different and opposed to the counsel of the majority of those looked up to for secular advice and counsel. Amaziah wanted a prophet who counselled as he wished it to be (as did Ahab before him). He was not humble to God's word. We too need to somehow clear ourselves of all preconceptions and come to God's word with a second naïveté, willing to be counselled by it; rather than wanting to appoint our own counsel.

2Ch 25:17 Then Amaziah king of Judah consulted his advisers, and sent to Joash, the son of Jehoahaz the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us face off against each other- The soldiers he had hired were apparently mercenaries. They had been paid, but not used in the battle. And so they had gotten offended and sacked cities of Judah (:13). And Amaziah was demanding compensation for this. By so doing he demonstrated that his apparent willingness to lose the money paid for them was not a decision taken from the heart. He was still after compensation for his losses, rather than believing that God could give him all riches (see on :9).

2Ch 25:18 Joash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon saying, Give your daughter to my son as his wife. Then a wild animal that was in Lebanon passed by, and trampled down the thistle- This is similar to the parable of the trees in Jud. 9:7-15, which also talks of the land of Israel as "Lebanon" (Jud. 9:15). The king of Israel presents himself and Amaziah as both living in the same land, and considered himself to be the glorious cedar and Amaziah merely a thistle. It was quite inappropriate, he felt, for Amaziah to provoke him over the fact mercenaries from his country had ransacked towns in Judah over an argument about money and payment. He is saying that it is as inappropriate as a poor man asking a wealthy man to give him his daughter to marry the poor man's son. And he threatens to act not just as an elegant cedar, but to morph into a wild beast who would trample down Amaziah. Perhaps Amaziah had indeed provoked Joash by making a marriage proposal which he knew Joash would turn down.

2Ch 25:19 You say to yourself that you have struck Edom; and your heart lifts you up to boast. Now stay at home. Why should you meddle with trouble, that you should fall, even you, and Judah with you?-

Literally, "You say", but he meant as interpreted by NEV, "to yourself". The importance of self talk is repeatedly emphasized in the Bible. For this is the basis of true spirituality. The victory against Edom was from God, but by accepting the vanquished gods of Edom, Amaziah shows that he trusted in his own strength rather than that of Yahweh. So often the victories God gives, be it passing an exam or military victory, lead to pride and boasting.

2Ch 25:20 But Amaziah would not listen; for it was of God, that He might deliver them into the hand of their enemies, because they had sought after the gods of Edom-

See on :8. There are a number of other passages which mention how "it was of the Lord" that certain attitudes were adopted by men, resulting in the sequence of events which He desired (Dt. 2:39; Josh. 11:20; 1 Sam. 2:25; 1 Kings 12:15; 2 Chron. 10:15; 22:7; 25:20). It is

tempting to read Jud. 14:4 in this context, meaning that God somehow made Samson desire that woman in order to bring about His purpose of freeing Israel from Philistine domination. The fact a man does something "of the Lord" doesn't mean that he is guiltless. In the same context of God's deliverance of Israel from the Philistines, men who did things "of the Lord" were punished for what they did (Dt. 2:30; 1 Sam. 2:25; 2 Chron. 22:7; 25:20). God through His Spirit works to confirm men in the path they wish to go. And this is the huge significance of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives today.

2Ch 25:21 So Joash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah confronted each other at Beth Shemesh, which belongs to Judah-

This was on the border of Judah and Dan, the frontier of Judah. The pagan name, "house of the sun", had not been changed; and reflects Judah's abiding penchant for idolatry.

2Ch 25:22 Judah was defeated by Israel; and they fled every man to his tent-

This was not because Israel were more spiritual or faithful, but because God has a special interest in judging pride. Victories of secular people must be understood in this context. The giving of victory by God (in whatever context) is multi factorial and is not simply a reflection of His pleasure with the victor.

2Ch 25:23 Joash king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash the son of Jehoahaz-

"Jehoahaz" is also called Ahaziah (2 Chron. 21:17).

At Beth Shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, four hundred cubits-

This is s.w. Neh. 1:3; 4:7, and would have helped remind the exiles how the walls of Jerusalem had come to be so broken down. It would seem by the implication of Jer. 31:38; Zech. 14:10 that this gate was on the north of Jerusalem. Depending how we define a cubit, this would have been between 600 and 700 feet.

2Ch 25:24 He took all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in God's house with Obed-Edom, and the treasures of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria-

This faithful family who had cared for the ark had been entrusted with caring for the gold and silver in the temple. But Joash had given much of this to the Syrians previously.

2Ch 25:25 Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Joash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel fifteen years-

The implication may be that he was given ample opportunity to repent; and we have noticed that in the lives of other kings.

2Ch 25:26 Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, first and last, behold, aren't they written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel?-

This may not necessarily be the same books of Kings which we have in our Bible.

2Ch 25:27 Now from the time that Amaziah turned away from following Yahweh, they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem-

Athaliah, Joash and Amaziah each died due to a conspiracy. Surely Amaziah was intended to learn from the deaths of his predecessors, but the great theme of Biblical history is that so few learn from it. And that is the challenge to us. The planning of the conspiracy apparently took at least 15 years (:25).

He fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish, and killed him there-
Perhaps he was trying to flee to Egypt, ever representative of human strength which fails. For Lachish was on the road there.

2Ch 25:28 They brought him on horses, and buried him with his fathers in the city of David-
Horses were forbidden to the kings of Israel (Dt. 17:16) so this is an appropriate end for an unfaithful man who trusted in human strength.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 26

2Ch 26:1 All the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the place of his father Amaziah-

Those who conspired against Amaziah were apparently stopped by the people from taking power. And they insisted upon the line of David continuing, through Uzziah. Despite their general unspirituality. "Uzziah", 'strength of Jehovah', has a very similar meaning to the name of his father Amaziah, 'power of Jehovah'. Yet Amaziah had not lived up to that (see on 2 Chron. 25:15. He may have named his son similarly in a hope that he would succeed where he failed.

2Ch 26:2 He built Eloth and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers-
Amaziah his father had defeated Edom, and Eloth was in Edom. This explains the comment that Uzziah did this after his father died. But in doing so he was really living out the ghost of his father and fulfilling parental expectation; for he repeated the works for Yahweh which his father had done (:4). Those raised in believing families must ever probe the degree to which their faith and works are possibly just living out parental expectation.

2Ch 26:3 Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jechiliah of Jerusalem-

This means that he was born about the time that his father Amaziah turned away from Yahweh (2 Chron. 25:25-27). His spirituality may therefore have been due to his mother, 'Yah will enable'.

2Ch 26:4 He did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, according to all that his father Amaziah had done-

God's judgment of Amaziah was that he *did* what was right, but his heart was not consistently with God. So the meaning of this may be that Uzziah likewise *did* what was right, he did something which were right, as Amaziah did. But there is no comment at this point about the all important judgment of God about his state of heart. And I suggested on :2 that he began by simply living out parental expectation. See on :16. We note from 2 Kings 15:4 that "the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places". "Taken away" is the same word as 'depart from' in 2 Kings 15:9. The way of Jeroboam was not departed from, and so the high places were not departed from. The suggestion is that they were associated with the calf worship.

2Ch 26:5 He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the vision of God. As long as he sought Yahweh, God made him to prosper-

This Zechariah may be the anonymous prophet who had rebuked his father Amaziah. Joash did right before God whilst the priest Jehoiada was alive, and then apostatized; Uzziah did likewise, with Zechariah the priest (2 Chron. 24:2; 26:5). He didn't reflect upon the personal implications of Divine history. And we too must appreciate that there are Bible characters

whose experiences are framed in terms directly relevant to us- for our learning. Interestingly, straight after Jehoiada died, the princes of the land came to Joash with a request, which he wrongly listened to. This has great similarities with the tragic mistake made by Rehoboam after Solomon died (2 Chron. 10:3,4 cp. 24:17). So Joash was given chance after chance to be directed back to previous examples and be instructed by them- but he went on in his own way. And Uzziah failed in a similar way.

2Ch 26:6 He went forth and warred against the Philistines, and broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod; and he built cities in the country of Ashdod and among the Philistines-

In Amaziah's time, the walls of Jerusalem had been broken down, and Uzziah would have remembered growing up with this shameful reminder every day of his youth, as he surveyed the broken down walls which represented his father's humiliation (2 Chron. 25:23). His apparent zeal against the Philistines and breaking down of their walls must surely be read in this light. And we must ask to what degree our works for the Lord are merely psychological reactions and responses to our experiences, and to what degree they are purely motivated by faith.

2Ch 26:7 God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians who lived in Gur Baal and the Meunim-

Gur Baal is 'the abode of Baal' and we wonder whether this reflected Uzziah's zeal for Yahweh as opposed to Baal. The Angelic *elohim* "helped" Uzziah in his battles; and yet within the same context we read that his human armies "helped" him (2 Chron. 26:7,13). The Angelic armies in Heaven are seen reflected in the human armies of Israel upon earth. The human armies are described as helping Uzziah with "mighty power", a phrase elsewhere used about the mighty power which God alone gives (the same two words occur in this context in Dt. 8:18; Zech. 4:6). The allusion is to the meaning of Uzziah's name, 'strength of Yah'. And David learnt all this in practice, when he reflected how human armies *alone* lack this 'mighty power'- all human strength is not strength at all unless it's operating in tandem with God's Angelic strength: "There is no king saved by the multitude of a host: A mighty man is not delivered by great strength" (Ps. 33:16).

2Ch 26:8 The Ammonites gave tribute to Uzziah. His name spread abroad even to the entrance of Egypt; for he grew extremely strong-

Ammon was far east of Jordan, and to control them as far as Egypt was very considerable influence and power.

2Ch 26:9 Moreover, Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate and the valley gate, and at the turning of the wall, and fortified them-

This would have been to try to permanently reverse the shameful breaking down of the walls of Jerusalem which he had grown up beholding (2 Chron. 25:23; see on :6). But as discussed on :6, we wonder whether his apparent zeal in doing this was true zeal for God, or rather merely psychological reaction and response to his earlier shame based experiences. And we must enquire of our own motives in the same way.

2Ch 26:10 He built towers in the wilderness, and dug out many cisterns, for he had much livestock; in the lowland also, and in the plain. He had farmers and vineyard keepers in the mountains and in the fruitful fields; for he loved farming-

We see similarities with Solomon's descriptions of all the things he tried doing in Ecclesiastes. But like Solomon, Uzziah did all these things because he loved doing them,

serving God in so far as it reinforced his own personality type and interests. And again we must enquire of the motives for our works, and to what extent we are truly carrying a cross for the Lord Jesus rather than serving Him in ways convenient to us.

2Ch 26:11 Moreover Uzziah had an army of fighting men, who went out to war by bands, according to the number of their reckoning made by Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the officer, under the hand of Hananiah, one of the king's captains-

All these men had God's Name in their names, but there was a total lack of understanding that an Israel obedient to the covenant would defeat far greater forces despite their small numbers. And again, they had failed to learn the lesson from David's numbering of Israel's fighting men.

2Ch 26:12 The whole number of the heads of fathers' households, even the mighty men of valour, was two thousand six hundred-

We get the impression of a highly organized army with wonderful military technology. But all this was to be revealed as ultimately the opposite of true spirituality.

2Ch 26:13 Under their hand was an army, three hundred and seven thousand five hundred, who made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy-

Uzziah was forgetting the meaning of his name, 'power of Yah'. Be aware that 'thousand' often refers to a military division rather than a literal 1000.

2Ch 26:14 Uzziah prepared for them, even for all the army, shields, spears, helmets, coats of armour, bows and stones for slinging-

Here and in :15 we get the impression that Uzziah loved technology and science, and perhaps invented new weaponry which was previously unknown in the area. But this was all revelling in human strength. It was a denial of his name which reflected his intended spiritual achievement, 'power of 'Yah'.

2Ch 26:15 He made in Jerusalem engines, invented by skilful men, to be on the towers and on the battlements, with which to shoot arrows and great stones. His name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, until he was strong-

This continues a theme, of the kings of Judah strengthening or fortifying themselves, often when they first became king; but then having that human strength tested by God or removed. The same word is used repeatedly (1 Chron. 11:10; 2 Chron. 11:11,17; 12:13; 13:21; 17:1; 23:1; 25:3,11; 26:8,15; 29:3; 32:5). The lesson of course was that it is God's Angelic eyes who run to and fro in the land promised to Abraham, "to shew Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chron. 16:9).

2Ch 26:16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against Yahweh his God; for he went into Yahweh's temple to burn incense on the altar of incense-

After several verses describing his strength, we come to this intended anticlimax. Although he did right things (:4), it is faith and the state of a man's inner heart which are the critical issues in God's judgments of a person. And pride in the heart is a sin which no number of good works can somehow compensate for.

2Ch 26:17 Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him eighty priests of Yahweh, who were valiant men-

To resist a proud and very powerful king was a brave act. It is perhaps because of this that

they are called "valiant". They "resisted Uzziah" (18), literally they withstood him, physically barring his access to the incense altar.

2Ch 26:18 They resisted Uzziah the king, and said to him, It isn't for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to Yahweh, but for the priests the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary; for you have trespassed; neither shall it be for your honour from Yahweh God-

We observe that David acted as a priest, and was blessed for it. He saw beyond the veil of mere legislation, to the spirit of things. But Uzziah's motives were pride, self glorification rather than glorifying God. And so the same external actions were judged so differently by God. And we are not to judge because we cannot judge, seeing we see only the outward actions and not the heart. It seems as noted on :17 that Uzziah didn't actually get to the incense altar, although he had the censer in his hand (:19). But he was still counted as having committed the sin. Because intentions are counted as the sin, as the Lord makes clear in Mt. 5-7.

2Ch 26:19 Then Uzziah was angry; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was angry with the priests, the leprosy broke forth in his forehead before the priests in the house of Yahweh, beside the altar of incense-

The idea of him being beside the altar but before the priests confirms the suggestion on :17 that they literally blocked his access to the altar. The leprosy in his forehead represented the disease of his mind. It broke forth as his anger broke forth. This was the anger of hurt pride, and revealed that he had no spiritual sincerity at all. If he had truly wanted God's glory through offering incense, if he truly saw in it a symbol of acceptable prayer to Him, then it would have made no difference who placed the censer on the altar.

2Ch 26:20 Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked on him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out quickly from there. Yes, he himself hurried also to go out, because Yahweh had struck him-

Death was the prescribed penalty for a non priest coming to the altar (Num. 18:7). And he was refusing to give any weight to the Biblical precedent of the destruction of the rebels who offered incense (Num. 16:35). We wonder whether there was also an earthquake at this time. Isaiah was contemporary with him (Is. 1:1), and we wonder whether this earthquake is the scene of Is. 6:1.

2Ch 26:21 Uzziah the king was a leper to the day of his death, and lived in a separate house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of Yahweh; and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land-

This living in a separate house indicates obedience to God's law. For Naaman was a leper and yet had an active place in Syrian society, and Uzziah and Judah might have adopted their attitude to leprosy. The fact Uzziah didn't seek to get around this could perhaps indicate that he accepted his judgment and may have repented. But see on :23.

2Ch 26:22 Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, wrote-

We wonder why the record of such a book is retained in the inspired text, when we don't have access to the book. We can conclude that this was written for the exiles, who maybe did have access to this book.

2Ch 26:23 So Uzziah slept with his fathers; and they buried him with his fathers in the field

of burial which belonged to the kings; for they said, He is a leper. Jotham his son reigned in his place-

They were hyper sensitive to the Mosaic legislation about leprosy (see on :21), and yet Isaiah says that Judah at that time were spiritually so leprous, and they didn't even realize it. They focused upon external obedience to the law when it concerned others, but failed to see that they in essence were just as bad as those whom they were carefully separate from. And this again is an abiding lesson for us. We note that sleeping with fathers doesn't have to mean being buried next to them.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 27

2Ch 27:1 Jotham was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerushah the daughter of Zadok-

Zadok, righteousness, is a typical priestly name; so we wonder whether this was another example of the kingly and priestly lines uniting.

2Ch 27:2 He did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, according to all that his father Uzziah had done. However he didn't enter into Yahweh's temple. The people still did corruptly-

Isaiah prophesied at this time (Is. 1:1), and condemns the people and their leadership as being deeply corrupt and spiritually leprous. The same word is used of the corruption of the land in the lead up to the flood (Gen. 6:11,12), so we are being set up to expect the coming of judgment. The same word is that used for 'destruction' (2 Chron. 26:16). Corruption was its own judgment, it was self destruction. And this is the nature of human sin; it is its own judgment. Jotham did good works as his father did, but there is no commentary about God's judgment of the state of his heart. And this is the all important factor.

2Ch 27:3 He built the upper gate of the house of Yahweh, and on the wall of Ophel he built much-

This was the gate which led from the king's palace to the temple. The fact the king rebuilt it would reflect his desire for access to the temple and a wish to show solidarity with the temple. "Ophel" is "the swelling ground", referring to the land between the Kidron and the Tyropean valley.

2Ch 27:4 Moreover he built cities in the hill country of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers-

Many of the kings are described as opening their reigns by doing similar things to those done by their fathers. In this case, replicating the building passion of his father. We are therefore invited to ponder whether this was simply a function of psychological response to his father, or from a motive of personally wanting to serve God. We note the absence of any Divine comment upon the state of his heart (:2). This is to make us ponder, but not judge, what it might have been.

2Ch 27:5 He fought also with the king of the children of Ammon, and prevailed against them. The children of Ammon gave him the same year one hundred talents of silver, ten thousand measures of wheat and ten thousand of barley. The children of Ammon gave that much to him in the second year also, and in the third-

His father Uzziah had also fought with Ammon and got tribute out of them (2 Chron.

26:8). And Jotham surely seeks to replicate the actions of his father, as discussed on :4. We notice he did these things immediately after his father died, which is the usual psychological response of a son after a father dies. But this raises the question as to whether our motivations for Divine service are simply psychological reactions, or motivated by personal devotion toward God.

2Ch 27:6 So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before Yahweh his God-

If a man prepares his way after God's principles (2 Chron. 27:6; Prov. 4:26), then God will 'prepare' that man's way too (Ps. 37:23; 119:5), confirming him in the way chosen. His power might appear to have been because of bravery in military action and hard work, but it was rather from preparing his paths before God. We read this word for preparing or establishing in the context of the heart. Perhaps his "ways" refer to the ways of his heart. Or it could be that reference to the heart is purposefully omitted, and instead we are told that he prepared his ways before Yahweh, aware of His presence and observation in absolutely all he planned.

2Ch 27:7 Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars and his ways, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah-

This may not necessarily refer to the books of Kings which we now have in our Bibles.

2Ch 27:8 He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem-

He died at 41, which is a number which repeats at least three other times in the history of the kings (1 Kings 14:21; 15:10; 2 Kings 14:23). We can only ponder whether this is all some kind of Divinely arranged program, the exact function of which we cannot understand although we perceive it as existent.

2Ch 27:9 Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David; and Ahaz his son reigned in his place-

The description of death as sleeping with fathers is clear evidence that death is seen as a sleep, unconsciousness, and not as the start of an immortal soul going to heaven or 'hell'. Good and bad, David and Solomon, are gathered together in death. The division between them will only therefore come at the resurrection of the dead, and the granting of immortality at the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 28

2Ch 28:1 Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: and he didn't do that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, as David his father did-

Isaiah, Hosea and Micah all prophesied during his evil reign and provide more details about the awful nature of his sins.

2Ch 28:2 but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and additionally made molten images for the Baals-

Although Israel is often described as the source of Judah's apostacy, we must give due weight to Ezekiel's word that Judah was in fact more wicked than Israel. This could have been

because Judah fell further, from greater spiritual potential. Or maybe because sinners can provoke people to sin worse than they do.

2Ch 28:3 Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom Yahweh cast out before the children of Israel-

Hezekiah his son somehow survived this, but may have reacted to his father's murder of his brothers by turning right against such idolatry. This means that his apparent zeal for Yahweh [remembering that he turned away from Him in the end and raised Manasseh] was partly due to a psychological reaction against his father and traumatic childhood experiences. For he would have lived in constant fear that he would also be offered, at the whim of the gods of his father. It was common to make children pass through fire as a kind of dedication ceremony; but he actually burnt his children in the fire, such was his obsession.

The valley of Hinnom, Ge Hinnom, was to later be known as Gehenna, and became a symbol used by the Lord for complete destruction (Mt. 5:22). As they burnt their children there, to destruction, so sinners would be burnt to destruction in that same place.

2Ch 28:4 He sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places and on the hills, and under every green tree-

Large, flourishing green trees weren't so common in the landscape, and they therefore came to be seen as the presence of fertility gods. This is the huge significance of the old covenant promising fertility from Yahweh- for most of the pagan gods were seen as fertility gods, and this is why they were worshipped by largely agricultural people.

2Ch 28:5 Therefore Yahweh his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they struck him, and carried away from him a great multitude of captives, and brought them to Damascus. He was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who struck him with a great slaughter-

Heb. 11:16 says that God was not ashamed to be called the God of His faithful people. The implication is that He has been ashamed of some who call Him their God, and Ahaz would be a parade example. The problem with Israelite idolatry was that they still considered Yahweh as their God. But Yahweh wanted his reformation, and repeated situations twice in this area- He "delivered" him to his enemies, who "struck" him. But still he didn't learn. "He", Ahaz, was "struck with a great slaughter". But he didn't die himself; other people did. Lots of them. We see here the nature of sin; that it brings suffering to others. Although in this case it is confirmed that "they" who were struck in this great slaughter had themselves forsaken Yahweh (:6). This would explain why R.V. has the correct but otherwise strange rendering: "carried away of his a great multitude of captives". If we enquire why Ahaz himself wasn't struck down, the answer surely is that God wanted him to repent; but he didn't. See on :7. Kings adds that the Syrians took Elath, and also shut up Ahaz in Jerusalem, presumably by siege.

2Ch 28:6 For Pekah the son of Remaliah killed in Judah one hundred and twenty thousand in one day, all of them valiant men; because they had forsaken Yahweh, the God of their fathers-

The large numbers we read of are nearly all in the context of military men being slain. This is because a "thousand" was not a literal 1000, but a name for some kind of military unit, even quite a small one, perhaps the size of a modern 'fire team' of up to five men.

2Ch 28:7 Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, killed Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam the

ruler of the house, and Elkanah who was next to the king-

As pondered on :5, we wonder why Ahaz somehow escaped. The reason ultimately was that through this salvation by grace, when he was not at all believing, Ahaz was being appealed to. Just as Manasseh was. It worked with him, eventually, but not with Ahaz. Truly God took the initiative with that man, time and again, over many years.

2Ch 28:8 The children of Israel carried away captive of their brothers two hundred thousand, women, sons and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria-

Again, "thousand" may mean something like 'families' or some group definition, and not literally 1000. This was in studied disobedience to 2 Chron. 11:4: "You shall not... fight against your brothers". Yet God empowered them to defeat Judah, because that was part of His agenda. We see here just something of the amazingly multi factorial manner in which God operates in human affairs.

2Ch 28:9 But a prophet of Yahweh was there, whose name was Oded. He went out to meet the army that came to Samaria and said to them, Behold, because Yahweh, the God of your fathers, was angry with Judah, He has delivered them into your hand, and you have slain them in a rage which has reached up to heaven-

The allusion is how the blood of Abel, slain by his brother, was a vice which reached to heaven (Gen. 4:10). As noted on :8, God works in a very complex manner with people. He empowered Israel to defeat Judah, but then He was angry with them for murdering their brothers and now abusing their families as slaves. Just as Assyria was used by God to punish Judah but was then punished for doing so. It would be a willfully simplistic person who accuses God of injustice here. This kind of multi factorial judgment and action is going to be typical of a Divine being, and it is obvious that tiny man, seeing only some fragments of His operations on earth, is not going to get the full picture nor completely understand. Those who vent against the supposed injustice of God are really guilty of arrogance before the court of Heaven.

2Ch 28:10 Now you purpose to oppress the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondservants and bondmaids for yourselves. Aren't there even with you trespasses of your own against Yahweh your God?-

The implication was that they were justifying oppression of their brethren because those brethren had sinned against Yahweh. But they had themselves done so, indeed it is Israel who are represented as having led Judah into sin. All oppression and abuse of brethren arises from this failure to realize that we are all sinners. "Oppress" is s.w. "bring into bondage" in Neh. 5:5. Chronicles was written from the exiles, and they had failed to learn from this historical example that they were not to "oppress" their brethren.

2Ch 28:11 Now hear me therefore, and send back the captives, that you have taken captive from your brothers; for the fierce wrath of Yahweh is on you-

As discussed on :8,9, Israel were used by God to punish Judah, but they went too far, as did Assyria. And the fierce wrath of God is upon all those who abuse people. The idea of taking the families captive "from your brothers" could be arguing that they were effectively breaking up families; although it could be pointing out the inappropriacy of having our brother in captivity to us in any sense.

2Ch 28:12 Then some of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of

Hadlai, stood up against those who came back from the war-

They were brave and humble to do this, because in their culture, killing the men and taking the families captive was the done thing. And so they had to 'stand up against' men returning from the battlefield in triumph. When they who withstood them had not been on the front line. But this is the kind of bravery we have to show in standing up against abuse of brethren.

2Ch 28:13 They said to them, You shall not bring in the captives here; for you purpose that which will bring on us a trespass against Yahweh, to add to our sins and to our trespass; for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel-

The basis of the appeal was that, as Oded had told them, they were serious sinners. And there would be fierce wrath, indeed that wrath was already against them, unless they immediately dropped their plans. The situation recalls how Amaziah paid money for Israelite mercenaries, but was told not to use them, and lose his money (2 Chron. 25:9). So often, spiritual argument means apparent loss of what is legitimately ours, in secular terms. We notice that sin can be 'added to'. There are degrees of sin, and God is sensitive to every sin, even in the lives of those who appear far gone in sin.

2Ch 28:14 So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the assembly-

"The armed men" are mentioned because it would have been so difficult for all concerned, to just allow the loss of war booty won in armed combat. The soldiers were being told by those who had not fought at the front to now resign their booty; and the soldiers agreed. Even though Israel were idolatrous, there was a conscience within them about their own sins. And this should encourage us in our witness to apparently conscienceless people. In fact, somewhere, everyone has a conscience which we can appeal to.

2Ch 28:15 The men mentioned by name rose up and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all who were naked among them, dressed them, gave them sandals, and gave them something to eat and to drink, anointed them, carried all the feeble of them on donkeys, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brothers. Then they returned to Samaria-

Jericho was apparently a border town between Israel and Judah. The war booty which was to be resigned was not just the captives, but the clothes they had taken. And clothing was valuable in those times, being a form of wealth (2 Kings 5:5,22). The giving of food to captives and sending them back is exactly what happened in 2 Kings 6:23. The Israelites of 2 Chron. 28:15 were intended to learn from the grace which had been shown to the Syrian captives. This is a great theme of the historical books; that situations in essence repeated, because God's people are expected to learn from Biblical history. And that is the relevance of these records for us today.

2Ch 28:16 At that time king Ahaz sent to the kings of Assyria to help him-

To Tiglath-pileser III (2 Kings 16:7). "Kings" therefore may be an intensive plural for 'the one great king'. 2 Kings 16:7-9 says that he paid Assyria with the gold stripped from the temple. 2 Kings 16:7 "Syria" is LXX "Edom". Although Kings then records the Assyrian attack upon Syria. So perhaps the idea is that the Edomites of :17 were in fact under the control of Syria.

2Ch 28:17 For again the Edomites had come and struck Judah, and carried away captives-

As explained on :16, it seems Edom was under the control of Syria. And so Ahaz paid Assyria to attack Syria. Or it could be [putting the Kings record together with this] that Ahaz paid Assyria to help him against Edom, but Assyria instead attacked Syria, claiming that was

good enough work done for the money. Even though Assyria had their own agenda for attacking Syria (Aram).

2Ch 28:18 The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the lowland, and of the South of Judah, and had taken Beth Shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Soco with its towns, Timnah with its towns, Gimzo also and its towns; and settled there-

The continual experience of attack and loss of people and territory was surely intended to teach Ahaz something. It kept on happening, and he kept on in his sins, stubbornly refusing to accept these things as God's knocking on his personal door. The achievements of others in subjugating Edom (2 Chron. 25:11,14) and the Philistines (2 Chron. 26:6,7) was all undone due to the stubbornness of Ahaz. One man brought so much suffering to so many. And yet God allowed him to continue, because He was so intent on searching for the lost sheep until He found him. Which He did not, in the end.

2Ch 28:19 For Yahweh brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he had dealt wantonly in Judah, and trespassed severely against Yahweh-

Ahaz king of Judah is called king of Israel, perhaps because he followed their idolatry. And yet the term is also used of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 21:2), and may reflect how God ultimately did not recognize the division of His people into Judah and Israel; just as He doesn't recognize the artificial divisions of His true people today, thanks to the sin of denominationalism.

Flesh must be humbled- either we do it now, we humble ourselves that we may be exalted in due time; or it will have to be done to us through the terror of rejection. Time and again 'bringing low' or 'humiliation' is the result of condemnation (Dt. 28:43; 2 Chron. 28:19; Job 40:12; Ps. 106:43).

2Ch 28:20 Tilgath Pilneser king of Assyria came to him and distressed him, but didn't strengthen him-

Giving God's money to Gentile powers never achieved anything but only ever made matters worse (2 Chron. 16:2; 2 Kings 12:18; 18:15). But even Hezekiah refused to learn this clearly taught theme in the history of God's people.

2Ch 28:21 For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of Yahweh, and out of the house of the king and of the princes, and gave it to the king of Assyria: but it didn't help him-

"It didn't help him" was to be Judah's later experience in seeking help from Egypt against Babylon (s.w. Is. 31:1; Lam. 4:17). Again, they failed to learn the lessons from history, unwilling to see that these historical situations spoke directly to their own situations and lives. We too can fail to perceive this. In fact the choice of histories and biographies we have in the Bible have been carefully selected in order that man need never feel alone; in essence, every life situation has been met at some point and time in the past.

2Ch 28:22 In the time of his distress, he trespassed yet more against Yahweh, this same king Ahaz-

The "time of distress" is the phrase used in Neh. 9:27; but there the point is made that in the time of distress, a sinful Judah had called to God and He had answered them. So the even worse trespass of Ahaz was that in his distress he did not repent and turn to Yahweh, but rather devoted himself even more to idolatry (:23).

2Ch 28:23 For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus which struck him. He said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, so I will sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But

they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel-

As discussed on :22, the increasing distress upon Ahaz was intended to elicit his repentance and turning to Yahweh. But instead he turned even more to idolatry. This mad obsession with idolatry is described in Ezekiel and Hosea as like a kind of sexual addiction, whereby the more partners a sex addict has, the more they require. Most nations had a set of national gods, and they only changed them if they were conquered by other nations and forced to accept their gods. But God's people had an obsession with every kind of god, until the Jerusalem temple was filled with all manner of shrines to various gods at the time of its destruction. And the bizarre thing was that Syria was to fall at this time to Assyria (2 Kings 16:9); their gods didn't ultimately help them, and in fact Ahaz had paid money to Assyria to attack the Syrians.

"And of all Israel" may be an example of where God calls Judah "Israel" because He never recognized the division amongst His people, as He doesn't today. Or the idea could be that Ahaz of Judah did what Israel had done, and worshipped the gods of Syria.

2Ch 28:24 Ahaz gathered together the vessels of God's house, cut in pieces the vessels of God's house, and shut up the doors of the house of Yahweh; and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem-

The destruction of the vessels was not complete as some were retained, perhaps for worshipping Yahweh in the name of the idols (2 Chron. 29:18,19). The cutting in pieces perhaps solely referred to the cutting off of the bases of the laver (2 Kings 16:17). This closure of the temple was presumably because he thought that the other gods wouldn't like the idea of a huge temple devoted to another god. But perhaps 2 Kings 16:18 helps understand this as meaning that he shut up one door or gate of the temple and devoted it to the idols of Assyria; without meaning that all the doors or gates of the temple were closed. It's doubtful Ahaz resigned all belief in Yahweh, but rather wanted to treat all his gods equally. Lest he offend any of them. The fundamental teaching that Yahweh is one, the one and only God, was ignored. The 'gathering together' of the vessels may mean he melted them down. However 2 Kings 16:17 implies this was only done to the huge supports of the laver. I suggest Ahaz retained some level of belief in Yahweh, for the temple services continued on some level (2 Kings 16:13,15), although Ahaz had brought idols into the holy place of the temple (2 Chron. 29:5). He had mixed Yahweh worship with idolatry, which in essence is the temptation we all have. Scientific atheism, a total rejection of our God, is likely not our biggest temptation; rather is it to mix His ways with those of the flesh and the secular world.

2Ch 28:25 In every city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods, and provoked to anger Yahweh, the God of his fathers-

This was the situation which continued until Jer. 2:28, and led to their final destruction. God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us.

2Ch 28:26 Now the rest of his acts, and all his ways, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel-

His "last" ways were so significant, for God had set him up to repent- but he didn't. Manasseh is an example of a similarly evil man, who at the end of his life did repent. Clearly it had been God's hope that Ahaz would be a similar case.

2Ch 28:27 Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem; for they didn't bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel; and Hezekiah his son reigned in his place-

Kings says Ahaz was "buried with his fathers", but 2 Chron. 28:27 says he was not brought into the tombs of the kings of Israel. This suggests that sleeping or being buried with ones' fathers was therefore an idiom for death, which should not be taken literally.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 29

2Ch 29:1 Hezekiah began to reign when he was twenty-five years old; and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah-

Hezekiah reigned 29 years, and the sickness after which he was given 15 years therefore happened in the 14th year of his reign- the very same time that Assyria invaded (Is. 38:1). Trials so often come together, in such an intense and extreme way that the situation can only be of God rather than mere bad luck or coincidence.

2Ch 29:2 He did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, according to all that David his father had done-

Hezekiah fell away from Yahweh in the last 15 years of his life. This rubric about doing what was right as David had done is used in the records about men who were ultimately evil. For the righteous kings, there is usually a comment that he held to Yahweh *in his heart*. But there is no such comment at this point, when we would expect it. All we learn from this is that he did some things which were right, as David. But the emphasis is upon his *doing* deeds; there is no comment at this point upon his overall heart and faith, which is the critical issue as far as God's ultimate judgment is concerned.

2Ch 29:3 In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of Yahweh, and repaired them-

"Repaired" is "strengthened". This continues a theme, of the kings of Judah strengthening or fortifying themselves, often when they first became king; but then having that human strength tested by God or removed. The same word is used repeatedly (1 Chron. 11:10; 2 Chron. 11:11,17; 12:13; 13:21; 17:1; 23:1; 25:3,11; 26:8,15; 29:3; 32:5). The lesson of course was that it is God's Angelic eyes who run to and fro in the land promised to Abraham, "to shew Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chron. 16:9).

2Ch 29:4 He brought in the priests and the Levites and gathered them together into the broad place on the east-

The same large space near the entrance to the temple of 2 Chron. 32:6.

2Ch 29:5 and said to them, Listen to me, you Levites! Now sanctify yourselves, and sanctify the house of Yahweh, the God of your fathers, and carry all the abominations out of the holy place-

It seems that Ahaz had set up idols even within the holy place of the temple. Ahaz didn't totally reject Yahweh worship(see on 2 Chron. 28:24). He had mixed Yahweh worship with idolatry, which in essence is the temptation we all have. Scientific

atheism, a total rejection of our God, is likely not our biggest temptation; rather is it to mix His ways with those of the flesh and the secular world.

2Ch 29:6 For our fathers have trespassed and done that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh our God, and have forsaken Him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of Yahweh, and turned their backs-

"Our fathers..." suggests Hezekiah admits that what he is doing is in reaction to how deeply he detested his own father, who had burnt his own siblings to his idols. See on :17. Ezekiel was to soon see the men of Judah in the sanctuary likewise with their backs towards the sanctuary, worshipping the sun. All this zealous reformation was to be very short-lived, and that fact confirms the suggestion on :17 that an element of the motivation in it may have been a psychological reaction to the way their fathers had sacrificed their siblings to idols. Rather than a deep, core heart devotion to Yahweh. For that never comes overnight, or "suddenly" (:36).

2Ch 29:7 Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel-

I suggest that offerings were offered there, but to Yahweh through the pagan gods. But this was not therefore offering to the God of Israel, who demands totally devotion to Himself as the only true God. For the temple services continued on some level (2 Kings 16:14-16), although Ahaz had brought idols into the holy place of the temple (2 Chron. 29:5). 2 Kings 16:18 helps understand this shutting the porch doors as meaning that he shut up one door or gate of the temple and devoted it to the idols of Assyria; without meaning that all the doors or gates of the temple were closed.

2Ch 29:8 Therefore the wrath of Yahweh was on Judah and Jerusalem, and He has delivered them to be tossed back and forth, to be an astonishment and a hissing, as you see with your eyes-

I suggest that 2 Chron. 32:25 refers to the reason why wrath came upon Judah, Jerusalem and Hezekiah himself. That wrath wasn't just threatened, it actually "came"(AV), there "was wrath" (NEV). For wrath to 'come' means that it was experienced- not just threatened. And we are specifically told there, with the same Hebrew phrase used, that the Assyrians came up against Hezekiah, Judah and Jerusalem because "God's wrath" was upon them, and Hezekiah's generations were seeing that "with your eyes" (2 Chron. 29:8). And there in 2 Chron. 32:25 we are told that this happened because of Hezekiah's pride and not returning to God what had been given him. That pride, therefore, doesn't apply to the time of the Babylonian ambassadors.

The idea of deferral of fulfilment is common enough in Scripture once you look for it. "The wrath of the Lord was upon Judah" in Hezekiah's time; but he made a covenant with God and cleansed the temple "that his fierce wrath may turn away from us" (2 Chron. 29:8,10). But this day of the Lord's wrath was in fact not removed entirely, as Hezekiah fell away; but it was deferred until 90 years later (Zeph. 1:18; 2:2).

2Ch 29:9 For, behold, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this-

We have read in 2 Chron. 28 of a series of captivities, by Israel, Edom, the Philistines

and Assyria. Clearly this verse would have rung a bell with the exiles, who were likewise in captivity for these same reasons.

2Ch 29:10 Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with Yahweh, the God of Israel, that His fierce anger may turn away from us-

Ps. 78:38; 85:3 seem to suggest God Himself controlled His anger, Himself turning that anger away, rather than being like a pagan deity whose anger was appeased by blood sacrifice. God turned from His anger due to Moses' intercession (Ex. 32:12 s.w.), but this is not to say that He cannot in any case turn away His anger, simply by His grace. Just as we may control our anger from within ourselves, or at other times we may do this because of the appeal of another to us, or because there is repentance from the one who provoked us. And there were times when this was the case with God (s.w. Num. 25:4; Josh. 7:26; 2 Chron. 12:12; 29:10; 30:8). For we are made in His image.

2Ch 29:11 My sons, don't be negligent now; for Yahweh has chosen you to stand before Him to minister to Him, and that you should be His ministers, and burn incense-

Although only 25 (:1), Hezekiah addresses the Levites and priests as if he is their elder. They had been lacking in fatherly spiritual guidance and so he attempts to fill that role, as many young people have been forced to. For the need is the call. The emphasis may be upon "His" ministers; for the priests of Yahweh had been used to burn incense to false gods, under the program of mixing Yahweh worship with paganism practiced by Ahaz.

2Ch 29:12 Then the Levites arose, Mahath son of Amasai, and Joel son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites; and of the sons of Merari, Kish son of Abdi and Azariah son of Jehallelel; and of the Gershonites, Joah son of Zimmah and Eden son of Joah-
The 14 Levites now to be mentioned represent the complete family of Levites; two from each of the three sons of Levi; two from the Kohathite family of Elizaphan; and two from each of the three divisions of the singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun (1 Chron. 25:1).

2Ch 29:13 and of the sons of Elizaphan, Shimri and Jeuel; and of the sons of Asaph, Zechariah and Mattaniah-

This may be the Elizaphan of Ex. 6:22. As with "Asaph", we are reading of their descendants, rather than any statement that men called Asaph and Elizaphan existed at Hezekiah's time.

2Ch 29:14 and of the sons of Heman, Jehuel and Shimei; and of the sons of Jeduthun, Shemaiah and Uzziel-

These were the chiefs of the singers and musicians. They were not so taken up with the eclectic wonder of music that they were not also practical.

2Ch 29:15 They gathered their brothers and sanctified themselves, and went in, according to the commandment of the king by the words of Yahweh, to cleanse the house of Yahweh-

"By the words of Yahweh" could mean the implications of His previously recorded words, or some special revelation from a prophet. Hezekiah's zealous cleansing of the temple (2 Chron. 29:12-16) would have been a conscious attempt Ps. 69:9 "The zeal

of Your house has eaten me up”- and yet these words are applied to the Lord’s cleansing of the temple and His death in the first century. Hezekiah failed to be the Messianic figure he potentially could have been, and so they became true of the Lord Jesus. Could it not be that He cleansed the temple fully understanding these things, and seeking like Hezekiah to defer God’s wrath upon Judah, to give them a chance to repent? And it was delayed- in that there was no immediate wrath from Heaven against the Jews for murdering the Son of God. And yet the days were shortened as well as deferred for the elect’s sake. An amazing Father somehow builds all these various factors into His time periods. Truly everything happens in our lives at the ‘right’ time!

2Ch 29:16 The priests went in to the inner part of the house of Yahweh to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in Yahweh’s temple into the court of the house of Yahweh. The Levites took it, to carry it out abroad to the brook Kidron-

"The inner part" could refer to the most holy place where Ahaz had placed idols. Perhaps the extent of the blasphemy was so great the record prefers not to state it was the most holy place, but rather refers to the "inner part of the house". The Levites weren't allowed in to the most holy place, but were allowed into the court. Hence the priests carried these idols from the most holy place to the court, and their servants the Levites carried them from there to the Kidron. This shows that despite the desecration of the most holy place by Ahaz, they still considered that spot to be holy, and the laws of sanctity concerning it were still to be obeyed by them so far as they could.

2Ch 29:17 Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of Yahweh. They sanctified the house of Yahweh in eight days, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end- Eight days were spent sanctifying the court, and eight days the temple itself. LXX has "on the thirteenth day of the first month". If that is correct, then this was done in time for Passover, and the cleansing was done in the spirit of searching the home for leaven before keeping the Passover. See on :20.

We may well enquire as to Hezekiah's motives in this outburst of sudden zeal the moment his father died. Bearing in mind that he was to turn away from Yahweh in the end. Hezekiah had somehow survived Ahaz burning his children to idols (2 Chron. 28:3). So he may have reacted to his father's murder of his brothers by turning right against such idolatry. This means that his apparent zeal for Yahweh [remembering that he turned away from Him in the end and raised Manasseh] was partly due to a psychological reaction against his father and traumatic childhood experiences. For he would have lived in constant fear that he would also be offered, at the whim of the gods of his father.

2Ch 29:18 Then they went in to Hezekiah the king within the palace and said, We have cleansed all the house of Yahweh, and the altar of burnt offering, with all its vessels, and the table of showbread, with all its vessels-

The destruction of the vessels by Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:24) was not complete as some were retained, perhaps for worshipping Yahweh in the name of the idols. For this mixture of true and false worship was his characteristic failure, as it has always been for God's people. The cleansing may have been through sprinkling of water (from the reestablished laver, see on :19), and a prayer rededicating them to Yahweh's service. For they had apparently been used in worshipping idols through adapting Yahweh's

rituals to those of idolatry. We must learn the lesson; that we cannot serve God through doing our own sinful thing, which is essentially idolatry.

2Ch 29:19 Moreover all the vessels which king Ahaz in his reign threw away when he trespassed, have we prepared and sanctified; and behold, they are before the altar of Yahweh-

"Prepared" is literally 'set up', perhaps referring to how Ahaz had cut off the bases of the laver (2 Kings 16:17). Some of the vessels were thrown away, others cut up or melted down (2 Chron. 28:24), and others, it seems, were used for the worship of idols and needed to therefore be cleansed. The specific desecration of the laver by Ahaz shows how he despised the whole idea of having to be cleansed in order to come before Yahweh; and perhaps that is why now there was so much emphasis upon cleansing. Perhaps the reestablished laver was used to cleanse the items desecrated by Ahaz.

2Ch 29:20 Then Hezekiah the king arose early, and gathered the princes of the city, and went up to the house of Yahweh-

This particular day when he rose early may have been the 14th day of the first month, Passover. See on :17.

There is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages, this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Joshua (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10); Gideon (Jud. 6:38; 7:1); Samuel (1 Sam. 15:12); David (1 Sam. 17:20; 29:11); Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:35; 2 Chron. 29:20). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. This can be a figure for being zealous (Ps. 127:2; Pr. 27:14; Song 7:12; Is. 5:11; Zeph. 3:7). God Himself rises up early in His zeal to save and bring back His wayward people (2 Chron. 36:15; Jer. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4). Yet the above examples all show that men literally rose up early in their service to God; this was an expression of their zeal for God, in response to His zeal for us. I'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

2Ch 29:21 They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom and for the sanctuary and for Judah. He commanded the priests the sons of Aaron to offer them-

I suggested on :17 that this may have been the time of Passover. But Hezekiah alters the rituals, although retaining the offering of lambs, because of the deep sense of sin which was felt. The offering "for the kingdom" refers to the royal family.

On the altar of Yahweh-

Rather than on the new idol altar of Ahaz (2 Kings 16:11).

2Ch 29:22 So they killed the bulls, and the priests received the blood, and sprinkled it on the altar. They killed the rams, and sprinkled the blood on the altar: they killed also the lambs, and sprinkled the blood on the altar-

I suggested on :17 that this may have been the time of Passover. And this would explain why the Hebrew word translated "sprinkled" doesn't mean that; it is the word for "dashed", as the blood of the Passover lamb was to be dashed upon the door posts on Passover night. Clearly Hezekiah was adapting the Passover rituals to the situation

before him at the time. There is indeed a spirit of the law which is far more important than the letter.

2Ch 29:23 They brought near the male goats for the sin offering before the king and the assembly; and they laid their hands on them-

The "they" who laid hands on the animals were the representatives of the people, the princes of :20. They were identifying the people with the sin offerings, placing the sins of the people upon them. This was all a modification of Mosaic ritual, and a big modification of the Passover rituals. But the spirit of it was absolutely correct. For the Passover could hardly be kept, celebrating deliverance from pagan Egypt, with such a weight of sin hanging over the people.

2Ch 29:24 and the priests killed them, and they made a sin offering with their blood on the altar, to make atonement for all Israel; for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel-

Literally, "they made a reconciliation". This collective forgiveness of a whole people, some of whom may not have been at all repentant, raises questions as to what degree we can attain forgiveness for others. Within invisible limits, there is a sense in which this is possible even today (Mk. 2:5; James 5:15). But there is to be individual response to this experience of group forgiveness; see on :31.

2Ch 29:25 He set the Levites in the house of Yahweh with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer and Nathan the prophet; for the commandment was of Yahweh by His prophets-

I discussed on 1 Chron. 28:19 the possibility that not all that David claimed to have received by Divine commandment in relation to the temple ordinances was in fact from God. Some of it was of his own device and design. This is the first we hear of Gad and Nathan giving prophecies about these things. But there is the possibility that the commandments of David, and apparently Gad and Nathan, were just that- their commandments. Not inspired by God. But now the commandment to "set the Levites in the house of Yahweh" was given by Yahweh through His prophets at the time of Hezekiah. We noted on :15 the possibility that there were such prophets in operation at this time, guiding Hezekiah in the cleansing process.

2Ch 29:26 The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets-

This could refer to the instruments David had ordered to be used, or to actual musical instruments made by him (1 Chron. 23:5; Am. 6:5).

2Ch 29:27 Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering on the altar. When the burnt offering began, the song of Yahweh began also, and the trumpets, together with the instruments of David king of Israel-

Praise and sacrifice are often connected. The noise of the songs would have risen up as the smoke of the offerings did. They began at the same time. True praise is not merely musical performance enjoyed and indulged in for its own eclectic sake, but a form of "the sacrifice of praise" (Ps. 54:6; Jer. 33:11; Heb. 13:15). And we are asked to offer this sacrifice (Heb. 13:15). The allusion must surely be to this dramatic time when sacrifice and praise were so visibly connected together.

2Ch 29:28 All the assembly worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded. All this continued until the burnt offering was finished-

The praise was exactly timed to start and finish with the burning of the animals. It started when the animals first began to burn, and ended precisely when the carcass was pronounced consumed. See on :27.

2Ch 29:29 When they had made an end of offering, the king and all who were present with him bowed themselves and worshipped-

The musical accompaniment ended as soon as the offering was consumed (:28). And now came the real worship. People with bowed heads, suggesting confession of sin, worshipping God through that contrite repentance. For that is the essence of worship.

2Ch 29:30 Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praises to Yahweh with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. They sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped-

After the musical presentation which coincided with the offering (see on :27,28), there was the time of bowed heads in personal confession of sin which was also the true worship (:29). And now the singers sing joyful praise in the words of David and Asaph. And with the gladness which can only come from true contrition and confession of sin. Joy in worship cannot just be switched on and off at will. It must have a basis, and ultimately that basis is in the experience of repentance and forgiveness.

2Ch 29:31 Then Hezekiah answered, Now you have consecrated yourselves to Yahweh; come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of Yahweh. The assembly brought in sacrifices and thank offerings; and as many as were of a willing heart brought burnt offerings-

Although forgiveness and reconciliation were achieved on a group basis (see on :24), there was to be individual response.

Ps. 51:11,12 speaks of God's "free spirit" [or 'willing spirit' ASV], paralleling it with God's Spirit, His "presence", the "joy of thy salvation". All those terms are parallel. The spirit of God is His presence, His salvation, joy, freedom. The Hebrew translated "free" really means 'generous'- the generosity of God's Spirit / mind / ways is shown in His forgiveness and saving of us. If God's spirit is His character, then, it is free, joyous, generous etc. Human beings can also have a "free heart" - the same Hebrew word appears translated like this in 2 Chron. 29:31 etc.- i.e. a spirit of generosity. When we have this, we are reflecting the "free spirit" / attitude of God. Whenever we are generous, His Spirit, with all its generosity, dwells in us and becomes our spirit. It is in this sense that I see a window into understanding the gift of God's spirit into the heart / mind / attitude of the believer. If God's spirit is free / generous, then so is ours to be; if His Spirit is joyous, just, true etc., then so is ours to be. In this sense we receive of His Spirit by reflecting His free and generous mind to others.

Realizing that what we appear to own in life is not actually ours but God's brings with it a great sense of freedom. No longer is there the endless anxiety about what is 'ours', and the need to keep it for ourselves. As noted above, the Hebrew word translated "free" is also that translated "liberal" or "generous". Hence in 2 Chron. 29:31 we find that "as many as were of a free heart [offered] burnt offerings". Actually that Hebrew word is usually translated "prince", the idea being that princes

were wealthy enough to be 'free' and therefore generous if they wished. But *any* of us can have this noble / free heart, we can act like wealthy people whatever our poverty, in that we are free from the ties of materialism which bind so tightly.

2Ch 29:32 The number of the burnt offerings which the assembly brought was seventy bulls, one hundred rams, and two hundred lambs. All these were for a burnt offering to Yahweh-

I will suggest on :32 that in addition to these, there were then afterwards a larger number of animals offered as peace offerings. For the usual order is sin offering, burnt offering [a promise of dedication] and then the peace offerings which celebrated the peace with God achieved through following the path of forgiveness and dedication leading to peace and fellowship with God. It could be argued that this was not a large number, although if :33 is the tithe of the peace offerings, then the total number of sacrifices was significant.

2Ch 29:33 The consecrated things were six hundred head of cattle and three thousand sheep-

This could refer to the sacrifices which were to be given to the priests to eat (Lev. 21:22; 22:2,3,15); but their number is far greater than the number of cattle offered in :32. Perhaps there were additional offerings in addition to those of :32, and this was the tithe of them. It could be that these were the tithe of the thank offerings / peace offerings which were offered separately to the burnt offerings of :32. In which case there was far more celebration of peace with God than there was attention to dedication to Him. In this case, we have a warning against celebrating peace with God in worship without due attention to the dedication required to get to that point. Much modern worship is severely lacking in this.

2Ch 29:34 But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt offerings. Therefore their brothers the Levites helped them, until the work was ended, and until the priests had sanctified themselves; for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests-

As noted several times already in this chapter, the letter of the law had to be broken by the spirit of the whole situation. The implication is that "the priests were too few" in that too few of them had sanctified themselves, whereas the servant Levites had more amongst them who had sanctified themselves.

2Ch 29:35 Also the burnt offerings were in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings, and with the drink offerings for every burnt offering. So the service of the house of Yahweh was set in order-

This would have required a large amount of wine (Num. 15:5-10). There is no mention of this being offered when Solomon offered his huge numbers of burnt offerings. "So the service... was set in order" is a phrase used only of the time of Hezekiah's reformation (2 Chron. 29:35) and of that of Josiah (2 Chron. 35:10,15,16). It seems Josiah was inspired by the record of Hezekiah's reformation, and sought to follow it. Just as we too in our own contexts are to be inspired by the spirit of these reformers.

2Ch 29:36 Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, because of that which God had prepared for the people; for this was done suddenly-

I suggested on :17 that this very sudden outburst of devotion to Yahweh was partly a

psychological reaction of Hezekiah to the death of his father. And it was not necessarily a sign of a heart devoted to Yahweh. We need to consider to what extent our apparent devotion to the Lord is the outworking of psychological factors in our earlier lives or childhood.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 30

2Ch 30:1 Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of Yahweh at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to Yahweh, the God of Israel-

I suggested on 2 Chron. 29:17,18 that in fact Hezekiah did keep a kind of Passover on the 14th day of the first month, but majorly modified. The weight of sin hanging over everything needed to be dealt with before they could all rejoice in remembering God's great deliverance of them from pagan Egypt. We note Hezekiah's vision of uniting Judah and Israel in this Passover. He had no fear of guilt by association or contamination by communion. For the ten tribes were deeply apostate, and had influenced Judah into apostasy. He makes no attempt to apply some test of doctrinal or practical purity, but simply offered an open table welcome. And those who accepted it showed thereby their basic commitment to what the Passover represented. And that is the basis upon which I advocate an open table at the Lord's supper. Acceptance of the invitation to partake is the only requirement.

2Ch 30:2 For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the assembly in Jerusalem, to keep the Passover in the second month-

"The assembly in Jerusalem" presumably refers to the group in 2 Chron. 29 who had assembled at the time of the Passover in the first month. Numbers 9 allowed for those who were distant or travelling to keep the Passover a month later. But that legislation doesn't cover the eventuality here- that the priests were unclean. Likewise in 2 Chron. 30:18, "yet they ate the Passover otherwise than it is written". So we see how God's laws were not seen as a leash, as a letter that had to be literalistically obeyed. By contrast, contemporary Hittite laws condemned any failure to keep a festival on its specified day. The law of Moses is hereby shown to be open to interpretation and obedience according to spirit and not letter. Perhaps it was this perception of Divine flexibility that led Hezekiah to reason with God to change His plan that Hezekiah should die.

2Ch 30:3 For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient number, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem-

The implication of 2 Chron. 29:34 is that "the priests were too few" in that too few of them had sanctified themselves, whereas the servant Levites had more amongst them who had sanctified themselves. The priesthood had been used by Ahaz to combine the worship of Yahweh with that of idols, and so they perhaps didn't immediately change to a sole commitment to Yahweh. It was not the constraint of either time nor numbers which meant they were not of "sufficient number". See on :15.

The context is the cleansing of the temple recorded in the previous chapter: "The priests went in to the inner part of the house of Yahweh to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in Yahweh's temple into the court of the house of Yahweh. The Levites took it, to carry it out abroad to the brook Kidron. Now they

began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of Yahweh. They sanctified the house of Yahweh in eight days, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end. Then they went in to Hezekiah the king within the palace and said, We have cleansed all the house of Yahweh, and the altar of burnt offering, with all its vessels, and the table of showbread, with all its vessels" (2 Chron. 29:16-18). Passover was on the 14th day of the first month, but the sanctification process continued until the 16th day. They missed it by two days, as it were. Hezekiah must have been urging them on to get the job done, but it seems there were too few priests and Levites willing to work in clearing out the idols. Hezekiah had various possibilities before him. He could have just kept the Passover in homes, or on an altar made of earth. The fact he didn't rather indicates that he over valued the temple building. There was nothing in the original Passover legislation that required the Passover to be kept in the temple. Rather the intention was that each family should sacrifice it. But rather as many prefer a Cathedral to a house church, so Hezekiah veered the way of religion. Had he not done so, all the angst about the temple being unclean would have been unnecessary.

Or Hezekiah could have just changed the day. But instead he chose, in line with Num. 9, to keep the Passover still on the 14th, but, in the second month. Time and again in the account of his Passover, the letter of the law was not kept and Hezekiah felt confident enough of his relationship with Yahweh to amend things and to believe that God was open to dialogue. This came to full term 14 years later when he felt able to reason with God about his terminal illness- and God changed His plan. We too are led through such steps of experience to intimacy with God.

There is a telling allusion to the provision of Numbers 9 in 2 Chron. 30:3, which states that the majority of people came to keep Passover in the second month "because they could not perform it at that time". This is repeating the essence of Num. 9:6, "and they could not perform the Passover on that day" because they were unclean from touching a dead body. But Hezekiah extrapolates further, and prays that those who were actually unclean could still acceptably partake of the Passover. This is not to say that we can extrapolate the essence of things to allow anything. But clearly we are meant to see that even being unclean doesn't stop fellowship with God, and His desire to fellowship the unclean. His beloved Son likewise broke His bread with the unclean.

2Ch 30:4 The thing was right in the eyes of the king and of all the assembly-

This "assembly" may refer to the assembled elders, but likely it specifically refers to the group in 2 Chron. 29 who had assembled at the time of the Passover in the first month. I suggested on :3 that God's way of keeping Passover was not the way that Hezekiah was going about things. He was obsessed with his plan for a very "religious", central point obedience to commandments intended to be obeyed by individual families. Perhaps this is the implication behind the statement that he did what seemed right to him and to the people- not necessarily what was right in God's eyes.

2Ch 30:5 So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover to Yahweh, the God of Israel, at Jerusalem; for they had not kept it in great numbers in the manner that is written-

Israel's general lack of obedience to the Mosaic law is quite stunning. This verse seems to imply that they had never actually kept the Passover "in great numbers",

neither "in the manner that is written". And yet God still fellowshiped with them and sought their reformation. To disfellowship people for "long continued absence from the Lord's table" was obviously not something God practiced nor approved of. He remained actively seeking relationship with Israel.

2Ch 30:6 So the couriers went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king saying, You children of Israel, turn again to Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that He may return to the remnant that have escaped of you out of the hand of the kings of Assyria-

This implies that the majority had gone into captivity. The "remnant" were intended to become the spiritual remnant through whom the Kingdom could be reestablished on earth. "Return" is the word for "repent". Their repentance, or returning, would lead to God's returning to them. Again we note that Hezekiah had no parochial interest in merely reforming Judah, but his vision was of a reunited people of God, unified through the common experience of repentance and forgiveness. And in practice, that is the only true basis for unity amongst God's people, rather than any written statement of theological propositions and positions.

2Ch 30:7 Don't be like your fathers, and like your brothers, who trespassed against Yahweh, the God of their fathers, so that He gave them up to destruction, as you see- It was critical in their culture to defend the tradition of the male relatives, fathers and brothers. To break with them was some kind of social suicide. But the call to repentance demanded just that from them, as it does today. The phrase 'given up to destruction' has just been used about Judah specifically (2 Chron. 29:8). And this is what God would finally do to Judah (s.w. Jer. 25:18; 29:18). The exiles for whom Chronicles was written were intended to realize that the tragedy which had happened to them had been so avoidable.

2Ch 30:8 Now don't be stiff-necked, as your fathers were-

Hebrew thought and language tends not to use abstract terms but rather uses language which alludes to physical body parts- e.g. 'look' becomes 'to lift up the eyes' (Gen. 22:4), anger is 'to burn in the nostrils' (Ex. 4:14), to reveal something is to 'unstop someone's ears' (Ruth 4:4), to be without compassion is to be 'hard hearted' (1 Sam. 6:6), stubbornness is to be 'stiff necked' (2 Chron. 30:8), to prepare oneself is to 'gird up the loins' (Jer. 1:17), to determine to go somewhere is 'to set one's face' (Jer. 42:15; Lk. 9:51).

But yield yourselves to Yahweh, and enter into His sanctuary which He has sanctified forever-

"Yield yourselves" is literally 'give your hand to'. And the same phrase is used in :12 of how God's hand gave them a heart to obey His commandments. This was in response to their giving their hands to Him.

Serve Yahweh your God, that His fierce anger may turn away from you-

Ps. 78:38 seems to suggest God Himself controlled His anger, Himself turning that anger away, rather than being like a pagan deity whose anger was appeased by blood sacrifice: "He, being merciful, forgave iniquity, and didn't destroy them. Yes, many times He turned His anger away, and didn't stir up all His wrath. He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes away, and doesn't come again". His turning away of His anger isn't solely because of His people turning to Him. He wishes for that. But at times He turns away legitimate wrath in the hope His people therefore

might turn to Him: "You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin. Selah. You have taken away all Your wrath, You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger. Turn us, God of our salvation" (Ps. 85:2-4).

God turned from His anger due to Moses' intercession (Ex. 32:12 s.w.), but this is not to say that He cannot in any case turn away His anger, simply by His grace. Just as we may control our anger from within ourselves, or at other times we may do this because of the appeal of another to us, or because there is repentance from the one who provoked us. And there were times when this was the case with God (s.w. Num. 25:4; Josh. 7:26; 2 Chron. 12:12; 29:10; 30:8).

2Ch 30:9 For if you turn again to Yahweh, your brothers and your children shall find compassion before those who led them captive, and shall come again into this land: for Yahweh your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away His face from you if you return to Him-

The majority of the ten tribes had not gone into formal captivity at this point, but many had already been taken. The predicted destruction of Samaria by Assyria could have been averted had the Passover been kept properly by the ten tribes at this point. Will some be in the Kingdom only due to the efforts of a third party? The husband can save his wife... Noah saved his family. The spirituality of those in the land could affect the fate of the others in captivity (2 Chron. 30:9- and these words are applied to us in James 4:8). Indeed, if *Judah* had turned back to the Lord fully, then the 10 tribes who about 10 years previously had been taken into captivity in Assyria, they would have found "compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land" (2 Chron. 30:9). But they became 'the lost 10 tribes' because Judah didn't respond as fully to Hezekiah's reformation as they should have done.

The exiles particularly were shown "pity" by the powers of their day, allowing them to return to Zion and rebuild it (s.w. Neh. 1:11 "mercy"). This "pity" or "mercy before them that lead you captive" was specifically predicated upon their repentance (s.w. 2 Chron. 30:9). But they didn't repent; and yet they were shown this mercy / pity. That was the grace of it all. This "pity" was the pity of God who would according to that pity / mercy regather them (s.w. Is. 54:7; Zech. 1:16). He showed them that pity despite their impenitence; and yet most of them preferred to spurn it by remaining in exile.

2Ch 30:10 So the couriers passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even to Zebulun; but there they were ridiculed and despised-

The Lord uses this idea in His parable of the vineyard, where God's servants the prophets are ridiculed when they come asking for fruit from the vineyard (Mt. 21:34-36). Zebulun was now effectively the northern border because north of there had been desolated by the Assyrians.

2Ch 30:11 Nevertheless certain men of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem-

These "certain men" are the "many" of :18. Perhaps the idea is that only a few came, relative to the population invited. But they were "many" to God. It's the same paradox with the path and gate to eternity being found by "few", with "many" not finding it; and yet those "few" are as many as the stars of the sky, such is the wonder of salvation.

2Ch 30:12 Also on Judah came the hand of God to give them one heart, to do the

commandment of the king and of the princes by the word of Yahweh-

"Yield yourselves" in :8 is literally 'give your hand to'. And the same phrase is used here of how God's hand gave them a heart to obey His commandments. This was in response to their giving their hands to Him. This experience of an acceptive mutuality between God and man is surely at the very core of our spirituality; it should be part of an inner spiritual shell that nothing, *nothing* can shake: aggression from our brethren, disillusion with other Christians, persecution from the world, painful personal relationships... Israel were to give their hand to God, and His hand in turn would give them a heart to follow Him further.

Those who turn from Him and put His word into second place in their lives are confirmed in this, until they are progressively caught up in a downward spiral of declension. On the other hand, those who try to be lead by God's word are progressively lead ever higher in an upward spiral of spirituality, whereby God eases the way to obedience, shields them from temptation, and opens their minds to the Truth of His word (e.g. 2 Chron. 30:12; Ps. 119:173; Prov. 16:3; 2 Thess. 2:17).

Hezekiah's insistence that the Passover must be slain by ritually clean Levites in the temple was not according to God's law. But He accepted Hezekiah's project of a Passover kept by all Israel and thus it became His word. We see how open God is to working with men, even if they go off at a religious tangent and become obsessed with their own project. We are left with impression that He is eager to work with the few who want to do something for Him. Even if it is His Plan D.

2Ch 30:13 Many people assembled at Jerusalem to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great assembly-

As discussed on :13,18, they were "many" compared to the wonder of what they were doing. But "few" relative to the overall population.

2Ch 30:14 They arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kidron-

The large mass of people (:13) inspired each other to further purge the results of Ahaz's apostasy. The temple had been cleansed, but the crowd now purged the city of Jerusalem of the altars which were apparently everywhere. And yet we have to note that this was done under the influence of a group psychology, for it was only once the great crowd formed to keep the Passover that this was done. And relatively soon afterwards, the people of Jerusalem were to return to their idolatry. For true spiritual reformation must be in individual hearts, and not the result of a group psychology. This may have inspired Josiah, who likewise destroyed idolatry in the Kidron and then called for the Passover to be celebrated.

2Ch 30:15 Then they killed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the second month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought burnt offerings into the house of Yahweh-

The implication of 2 Chron. 29:34 is that "the priests were too few" in that too few of them had sanctified themselves. See on :3. We wonder why they were only now ashamed and sanctified themselves, whereas a month previously they had not done so. I suggest it was the presence of the large crowd of people who had come to Jerusalem to keep the Passover (:13,14) which made them ashamed that they could not help them because they were not cleansed. And so it was the presence of the crowd of apparently zealous worshippers who shamed them into sanctifying themselves. I read it this way because we know that very soon, both priesthood and people were to return

to idolatry. And so I see in this revival and reformation a large element of group psychology, getting caught up in the spirit of the crowd, rather than on an individual level, heart by heart, each person repenting and remaining changed.

2Ch 30:16 They stood in their place after their order, according to the law of Moses the man of God, and the priests sprinkled the blood which they received of the hand of the Levites-

The sprinkling of blood at Passover was upon the door posts, and was a reminder of their salvation from death at the exodus. It was each family group who were to do this, not priests. The law never required that. But the ritual was modified here, just as the date of Passover had been modified. The blood was sprinkled upon the people to symbolize their cleansing.

2Ch 30:17 There were many in the assembly who had not sanctified themselves: therefore the Levites were in charge of killing the Passovers for everyone who was not clean, to sanctify them to Yahweh-

The unclean nature of the people may be a reference to their not having observed the commands about avoiding leaven or contact with unclean things (Num. 9:6). They perhaps were ignorant of the Passover regulations. Or the uncleanness may refer to idolatry; hence the note that they were now to be sanctified "to Yahweh". And so they were cleansed by the sprinkling of blood in :16. This looked forward to how the blood of Christ saves from both wilful and ignorant disobedience to the letter of the law.

There is no commandment that a man must be ritually clean to keep the Passover. But the people assumed this were the case, and so they wanted Levites to keep the Passover for them. Num. 9:10,11 seems to see uncleanness as a barrier to eating the Passover only if there had been contact with a dead body: "Say to the children of Israel, 'If any man of you or of your generations is unclean by reason of a dead body, or is on a journey far away, he shall still keep the Passover to Yahweh. In the second month, on the fourteenth day at evening they shall keep it'. Yet Hezekiah appears to have extrapolated from this to consider any contact with idols as making unclean, even though he had declared the bronze serpent idol merely Nehushtan, a piece of brass. On one level he got it, but then his religiosity took over and he ended up burdening the people and the Levites with a sense of guilt for uncleanness which they need not have taken.

Although it was God's original intention that each family leader sanctified themselves and slew the Passover lamb personally, they came to delegate this to their priests (so 2 Chron. 30:17 implies). Israel totally failed to live up to God's desire that they should be a *Kingdom* of priests. They left it all to their priests. They *didn't* teach every man his neighbour and his brother, saying, Know the Lord (Heb. 8:11; even though when He re-accepts them, God will count them as if they did). Had Hezekiah kept the spirit of the Passover, without such insistence upon the Levites and priests killing it, and doing so in the temple rather than at home, then all the angst over priests being ritually unclean would not have arisen. The original Passover legislation said nothing about the need for ritual cleanliness when eating it. Nor were Levites required to kill the lambs. And yet despite burdening himself with all this religiosity and legalism, Hezekiah still comes over as a man of integrity who did his best to live rightly before God despite those self imposed burdens. And we see this in so many "religious" people who are all the same believers.

2Ch 30:18 For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun-

They were many compared to the wonder of God's acceptance of them, but relatively few in another sense; see on :11.

Had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than it is written. For Hezekiah had prayed for them saying, May the good Yahweh pardon everyone-

See on :17. Their being unclean may not only refer to a lack of obedience to the commands about yeast, but to the uncleanness of the immediate context at this time- which was idolatry. The people who attended would have been idolaters as well as worshippers of Yahweh. Hezekiah obtained forgiveness and acceptance for those who kept the Passover "otherwise than it was written"- thanks to his prayer. The spirituality of third parties can save people who wish to be saved, within invisible limits (Mk. 2:5; James 5:15). All Israel had to repent to avert total destruction- but even though they didn't, the prayer of Hezekiah saved the nation (Jer. 26:13,19). And later, all of Jerusalem would have been forgiven if there was even one that truly executed judgment, after the pattern of Phinehas (Jer. 5:1- or is this a reference to Messiah?).

"The good Yahweh" may be better rendered "The Lord pardon the good" (as in 2 Chron. 19:11), and this then leads on smoothly in thought to the next verse which defines 'goodness'.

2Ch 30:19 who sets his heart to seek God, Yahweh, the God of his fathers, even if they aren't clean according to the purification of the sanctuary-

The 'goodness' of :18 (Heb. "Yahweh pardon the good") is defined as a matter of having a heart set upon God. And the state of the heart trumped ritual, legalistic purity. Seeking God, wanting to get to Him, is seen as the critical thing. And the Sermon on the Mount likewise pronounces blessedness upon those who hunger after righteousness, who weep for their sins... those who haven't made it, but want to.

2Ch 30:20 Yahweh listened to Hezekiah, and healed the people-

The reference may be to the threat of destruction, perhaps by plague, for those who defiled the sanctuary by their uncleanness (Lev. 15:31 "so they will not die in their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle that is in their midst"). But all this could have been avoided if Hezekiah had quit his religiosity and allowed the people to keep the Passover at home, well away from the temple. For there was no Mosaic requirement to eat Passover at the sanctuary. The people were laded with false guilt by Hezekiah's desire to go the way of religion rather than personal spirituality; and this happens so often. Hezekiah was not wrong to want to have a collective Passover in one place, but there again we see him considering God's law open to human negotiation. And this stood him in good stead when 14 years later he asked for his sentence of death to be lifted or delayed, and God responded. As discussed on :18, the prayer and spirituality of one person can affect outcomes for others. This is a huge inspiration to continue earnestly in prayer, knowing that prayer makes a real difference for those prayed for. The language of healing could imply that plague began to break out. Although so much had been done within the spirit of the law, the danger was that there would be the impression given that God was simply not serious about His law. And so perhaps plague did begin, but was halted by Hezekiah's prayer. See on :27. An alternative is to understand 'healing' as simply meaning forgiveness as

in Jer. 3:22 ["I will heal your backsliding"], Hos. 14:4 ["I will heal their waywardness"], Ps. 41:4 ["Yahweh, have mercy on me! Heal me, for I have sinned against You"]. Because there was no plague threatened for keeping the Passover unclean, so it is hard to understand 'healing' as referring to physical plague being healed. In which case, we have an example of prayer resulting in the sin of third parties being forgiven as in Mk. 2:5.

Hezekiah here prayed for those who kept the Passover whilst unclean, and they were "healed" according to his prayer (2 Chron. 30:20 "Yahweh listened to Hezekiah, and healed the people"). Hezekiah is later "healed" (s.w. 2 Kings 20:5,8) but he never requests that healing. We wonder why he doesn't specifically request his own healing? Perhaps he was too depressed. Or just willing to accept God's will. Or perhaps it was that the peoples' plague was due to infringement of Divine law, whereas he wrongly felt he had not sinned. He therefore felt he didn't deserve his death, and pleads with God to remember his spotless life. Something is clearly wrong here in his thinking, as it is in the thinking of all who consider death to be somehow unfair.

2Ch 30:21 The children of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites and the priests praised Yahweh day by day, singing with loud instruments to Yahweh-

We note how the Levites [servants of the priests] are mentioned before the priests. This may be because they were more truly committed to Yahweh (see on 2 Chron. 29:34), or to show that in God's service, all are equal and the servant is as significant as his master.

2Ch 30:22 Hezekiah spoke to the heart of all the Levites who had good understanding in the service of Yahweh. So they ate throughout the feast for the seven days, offering sacrifices of peace offerings, and making confession to Yahweh, the God of their fathers-

We note the continued emphasis upon the work of the Levites, rather than the priests. It could be that many priests were still not willing to separate from their old roles of being priests to the idols as well as Yahweh (see on 2 Chron. 29:34). The mention of peace offerings shows how again the original Passover feast was being expanded, showing how Hezekiah perceived the openness of God.

2Ch 30:23 The whole assembly took counsel to keep another seven days; and they kept another seven days with gladness-

This is of course commendable, but given how soon the people reverted to idolatry, we have to consider that there was a large factor of group psychology in all this. We are wired as social creatures, taking energy and direction from each other, and therefore like sheep going astray; and also being led to better ways if that is where the group is headed. So we get the sense here that they were on a huge roll, and were feeding off each other. Again we see how spirit triumphs over the letter of the law. The joy from knowing that they as unclean people had been accepted... led them to go beyond the letter of the law and go further. Truly Divine law is not a chain, but rather a springboard to independent freewill service of God. The whole of Hezekiah's Passover could be described as a "rush". It was forced through quickly, the people from the ten tribes were invited last minute, requiring them to quit what they were doing and come immediately. And then the decision to keep another seven days was made on the cusp of the moment. Such enthusiasm to serve Yahweh is presented here

as commendable, and contrasts with the caution of conservative approaches- which would've said "Let's plan to do this next year..."

2Ch 30:24 For Hezekiah king of Judah gave to the assembly for offerings one thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the assembly a thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep-

These huge numbers of sacrifices seem intended to imitate Solomon's dedication of the temple. But this was not a good example to follow. For God did not want rivers of blood and thousands of sacrifices, but rather, broken and contrite hearts. There were no bulls offered as part of the Passover, and yet 2000 were now offered. It all seems to have tended towards the pole of religious mania rather than spirituality. And again we note that offering bulls was not required for the Passover ritual.

And a great number of priests sanctified themselves-

As noted on :3,15, the priests were slow to sanctify themselves, to dedicate themselves slowly to Yahweh; although their servants the Levites were quicker to do so. It seems that now we have another group of priests who did this, swept along in the group psychology of the situation. But that is not to say that their sanctification to Yahweh alone was insincere or unacceptable. For this phrase is quoted in Acts 6:7 "a great number of priests were obedient to the faith" in Christ. They too were likely caught up in group psychology, as are Sunday School students and others when they accept baptism as a group, seeing their friends and relations all doing it. But this doesn't make their conversion of itself invalid. But it is the long run which decides who is sincere, and that was to be the case with this fervour for Yahweh which was progressively engulfing the priests at this time.

Is. 10:9-11 speaks specifically of Rabshakeh's taunts: "Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?". It is clear that Hezekiah's reforms and the idol smashing of 2 Chron. 30, 14 years earlier, were all of a surface level. The Jerusalem under siege by Assyria in Hezekiah's time was full of idols. And Is. 2 lamented that the land of Judah was "full of idols".

2Ch 30:25 All the assembly of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the assembly who came out of Israel, and the foreigners who came out of the land of Israel, and who lived in Judah, rejoiced-

"Foreigners" could refer to Gentiles. The fact they are mentioned separately shows that they were not fully absorbed into Israelite society, and I see this as another example of where after the first Passover in Egypt, Gentiles were welcome to participate in the Passover. It was an open table, as it is in liberal Judaism today. Although it seems the majority of the ten tribes refused the invitation to come to Jerusalem and keep the Passover, maybe some of the other nations whom the Assyrians had transplanted to Israel now responded, as it were instead of Israel. This would be unsurprising, and would be looking ahead to the Gentiles accepting the crumbs of the Messianic feast which the Jews rejected at the Lord's time. But "foreigners" may also be a technical term which Judah had come to apply to the ten tribes.

2Ch 30:26 So there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem-

There is no reference to Solomon keeping Passover, but rather to his offering huge numbers of animals at the dedication of the temple. This itself was not what God wanted; He wanted broken hearts rather than thousands of animals. But the religious verve caught up everybody, and they rejoiced together. Although given their later apostasy, we must enquire how well motivated was this "great joy", and whether it was not partly the result of a psychological reaction against the misery of Ahaz's reign.

2Ch 30:27 Then the priests and the Levites arose and blessed the people; and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to His holy habitation, even to heaven- "Their prayer came up..." suggests the idea of human words ascending all the way up to the very habitation of God. The words that ascended were seeking blessing, or forgiveness, upon others. And God is really sensitive to this. The temple and ark are sometimes referred to as the heavens (2 Sam. 15:25 cp. 1 Kings 8:30; Ps. 20:2,6; 11:4; Heb. 7:26). The church is the new temple, and is therefore at times referred to as the heavenlies in the New Testament. However this continues the theme discussed on :18,20- that the prayer of one party can save and bring eternal blessing upon other parties. This is a wonderful feature of God's system of working with men; for it inspires us to true prayer and deep pastoral effort for others, knowing that we can make an eternal difference.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 31

2Ch 31:1 Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah, and broke in pieces the pillars, and cut down the Asherim, and broke down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned each man to his possession, into their own cities- we see the progression. Firstly the temple had been cleansed and the idols taken out of it and broken. Then, the crowd of fired up worshippers at Passover had done the same to the idols in the streets of Jerusalem. And now the people went out into the cities of the provinces and did the same. We note the usage of the phrase "all Israel", celebrating the fact that some from the ten tribes had attended the Passover and were united with Judah in a revulsion at Ahaz's idolatry. But the language is exaggerated. For only a few from the ten tribes had attended, with the majority mocking the invitation to keep a Passover to Yahweh (2 Chron. 30:10,11). And it is unlikely that all the altars in "Ephraim and Manasseh" as well as Judah were destroyed. We don't get the impression king Hoshea of Israel joined in with this For idolatry returned to Judah very soon after this. Judah reached a new low of idolatry at the time of their next king Manasseh. The impression that "all" Israel did this is the same usage of language noted on 2 Chron. 30:11,18, whereby only a few came from Israel to the Passover, but they are called "many", relative to the wonder and significance of their coming. And likewise here, the wonder of what was done by some in breaking down the high places and idols is talked up as if it was larger than it was. But in understanding the nature of how Semitic language functions, we see no unethical exaggeration nor factual error.

Israel were told to "throw down", "break in pieces" and "utterly destroy" the idols and altars of Canaan. There were times during their history when they obeyed this command by purging themselves from their apostasy in this. The Hebrew words used scarcely occur elsewhere, except very frequently in the context of how God "broke

down", "threw down" and "destroyed" Israel at the hands of their Babylonian and Assyrian invaders as a result of their not 'breaking down' (etc.) the idols. "Throw down" in Ex. 34:13; Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chron. 31:1 is the same word in 2 Chron. 36:19; Jer. 4:26; 31:28; 33:4; 39:8; 52:14; Ez. 16:39; Nah. 1:6. "Cut down" in Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chron. 31:1 later occurs in Is. 10:33; Jer. 48:25; Lam. 2:3. So Israel faced the choice: either cut down your idols, or you will be cut down. The stone will either fall on us and destroy us, or we must fall on it and become broken men and women (Mt. 21:44). For the man untouched by the concept of living for God's glory, it's a hard choice. God will conquer sin, ultimately.

2Ch 31:2 Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and the Levites after their divisions, each man according to his service, both the priests and the Levites, for burnt offerings and for peace offerings, to minister, to give thanks and to praise in the gates of the camp of Yahweh-

This speaks of Jerusalem and especially the temple as the city of the hosts or military camp of Yahweh- as if the Angelic hosts were especially present in the temple. See on Ps. 78:60.

2Ch 31:3 He appointed also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of Yahweh-

Hezekiah was keen to lead by example, with a public, visible offering of sacrifices specifically in his name.

2Ch 31:4 Moreover he commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might give themselves to the law of Yahweh-

We note this was just in Jerusalem, and we wonder whether in fact there was not so much commitment in the rest of the land. Or perhaps Hezekiah wanted the literate priests in Jerusalem to specifically make a study of the law, and to not have to worry about where their food was coming from.

2Ch 31:5 As soon as the commandment was published, the children of Israel gave in abundance the first fruits of grain, new wine, oil and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly-

See on :10. The idea is that they generously interpreted the tithe and brought all they could for the priests and Levites, far beyond the requirements of Num. 18:8,9. A theme of the Hezekiah narrative is that of living by the spirit and not the letter of the law. And this was something helpful for the exiles, whose situation precluded them from keeping the letter of the law.

2Ch 31:6 The children of Israel and Judah, who lived in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of cattle and sheep, and the tithe of dedicated things which were consecrated to Yahweh their God, and laid them by heaps-

The command for tithes to be brought had been specifically made in the context of supporting the Jerusalem priesthood (:4). This is why the people from other towns now brought their tithes to Jerusalem. We note that people from "Israel and Judah... lived in the cities of Judah". Continually in the Hezekiah narrative we get the impression of unity between the faithful in both Israel and Judah, based around a

common experience of repentance, forgiveness and restoration. This was to be the pattern for the exiles. There was likewise a prophetic vision of a new people of God being formed, from both Israel and Judah, as well as repentant Gentiles. Chronicles was written for the exiles, and so it is being stressed that something like this did [briefly] happen in Hezekiah's time. It was not unthinkable nor impossible.

2Ch 31:7 In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month-

The idea may be that these piles of food grew over those four months. But we wonder why they stopped after that; and we naturally wonder whether the enthusiasm for tithing waned. Although it may be that after that they began tithing to their local priests and Levites in their own provincial areas. But it should be noted that the grain harvest was in the third month (Pentecost), and harvest continued until the end of the fruit harvest in the seventh month (Tabernacles / ingathering). So the idea may be that they had a good harvest that year and generously tithed it to the Levites.

2Ch 31:8 When Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed Yahweh and His people Israel-

The praise of Israel for their generosity is understandable; note how again the united faithful of Israel and Judah are called "Israel", even though most of the donors were likely from Judah. A new, united Israel was being potentially formed. But why praise Yahweh for the generosity of His people? I conclude that this was because He through His Spirit had given them this desire to be generous and obedient. So again we see God's direct action upon the human heart, leading us to spirituality- if we are open to it.

2Ch 31:9 Then Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps-

The size of the heaps was such that Hezekiah wondered why the Levites and priests hadn't used them (:10); and the answer was that they had well eaten, but there was far too much food donated. The exiles were to have a different experience with "heaps" (s.w. Hag. 2:16), and to be rebuked for not being generous with tithes and offerings.

2Ch 31:10 Azariah the chief priest, of the house of Zadok, answered him and said, Since people began to bring the offerings into the house of Yahweh, we have eaten and had enough, and have left plenty; for Yahweh has blessed His people. That which is left is this great store-

Whenever Israel were specifically asked for contributions, they always responded very generously. But their hearts were often very far from God. Ez. 20 says that Israel took the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea; and yet when asked to donate towards the building of the tabernacle, they responded with stellar generosity. We simply learn that generous giving is not necessarily the same as spirituality.

2Ch 31:11 Then Hezekiah commanded them to prepare rooms in the house of Yahweh; and they prepared them-

These chambers around the temple court were where the holy vessels and tithes were stored (1 Chron. 28:12; 2 Chron. 31:5,11,12; Neh. 13:4-9). It could be to these rooms which the Lord Jesus alludes when He says that in God's house / temple, there are many such rooms and He will go to die on the cross to prepare them for our use, as Hezekiah prepared them here (Jn. 14:1-3). He clearly has in view the temple as a spiritual house, comprised of people not bricks. The idea is that His death achieved

for us not only salvation, but eternal service as priests within God's "house", being about God's work and business for the sake of others' salvation and implementing their relationship with God. This is what eternity will be about. And it is in this life which we develop our desire to do these things, so that the Kingdom will be a time when all the frustrations and barriers to such service are removed.

2Ch 31:12 They brought in the offerings, the tithes and the dedicated things faithfully. Conaniah the Levite was ruler over them, and Shimei his brother was second- Again we see the prominence of a Levite; for rather than a priest, a Levite was the manager of this work. Not only were the servant class exalted in God's eyes, but it seems the Levites were more committed than the priests (2 Chron. 29:34).

2Ch 31:13 Jehiel, Azaziah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath and Benaiah were overseers under the hand of Conaniah and Shimei his brother, by the appointment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of God's house-

Most of these names have God's name in them or have some spiritual meaning. Yet they would all have been born in the time of Ahaz. Perhaps these are not their birth names, but names they came to have in reflection of their faith and hope in Yahweh subsequently. In total, there were 12 such overseers- again hinting at the desire to unite all 12 tribes of Israel in this new, reformed and revived kingdom.

2Ch 31:14 Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the porter at the east gate, was over the freewill offerings of God, to distribute the offerings of Yahweh and the most holy things-

The freewill offerings were tithed to the Levites, but the question was always as to who got what. And so a Levite, not a priest, a humble porter or gatekeeper (Ps. 84:10), was chosen to oversee this. And the spirit of it continues in the charge to appoint the least esteemed to judge in the church (1 Cor. 6:4).

2Ch 31:15 Under him were Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah and Shecaniah, in the cities of the priests, in their office of trust, to give to their brothers by divisions, both to the great and small-

We too have been entrusted with the Gospel, Paul says. The Father and Son have turned over the mission of saving men to the church; and they have truly turned it over. This means that if men and women reject Him because we are the face of Jesus to them, and they don't think much of it...then this is solely our fault. There is no indication that God will rush in and save us from the mess we have made of His work. He has delegated to us genuine authority and meaningful independence, just as the Levites were given a "trust" to do the Lord's work (2 Chron. 31:15,18 RVmg.). He is prepared to work with us in assistance, but we are entrusted with the work (Gal. 2:7 RV)- just as a naughty pupil may be given a responsible job to do by a teacher, and the sheer wonder of having been thus entrusted makes him perform the duty reliably. This is a thought so demanding and unnerving; for we would all prefer to think that we are just insignificant pawns in a game that is being played out by God against this world, whether or not we chose to participate.

2Ch 31:16 Also under him were those who were reckoned by genealogy of males, from three years old and upward, even each one who entered into the house of Yahweh, as the duty of every day required, for their service in their offices according

to their divisions-

It seems another record of the priests was made, along with the schedule according to which they went up to the temple to serve; so that there would be a just distribution of the tithes amongst them all.

2Ch 31:17 and those who were reckoned by genealogy of the priests by their fathers' houses; and the Levites from twenty years old and upward, in their offices by their divisions-

See on :16. Some of the tithes could only be eaten by the priests in the holy place, so it seems this was factored in to the distribution of the tithes amongst the Levites.

2Ch 31:18 and those who were reckoned by genealogy of all their little ones, their wives, their sons and their daughters, through all the congregation. In their office of trust they sanctified themselves in holiness-

As noted on :16, a list of all Levites and their children was drawn up, to ensure the fair distribution of the tithes amongst them according to the sizes of their families. We could infer that unjust distribution of tithes was a reason why the priesthood had become so dysfunctional.

2Ch 31:19 Also for the sons of Aaron the priests, who were in the fields of the suburbs of their cities, in every city, there were men who were mentioned by name, to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all who were reckoned by genealogy among the Levites-

The arrangements for justly sharing out the tithes, considering the number of people in each family, how many of them ate tithes in the holy place when on duty in Jerusalem etc., is described here somewhat repetitively (:16-19). It is a major emphasis. And yet after some centuries of supposed obedience to the Mosaic law, this seems the first time that this question of equal distribution of tithes amongst the Levites had been considered. It is another indication that the people were so very far from obedience to God's law, although that was the basis of their covenant relationship with Yahweh. And yet despite that disobedience, He patiently remained their God. Such was and is His earnest desire to build covenant relationship even with a people who didn't really want to respond to it.

2Ch 31:20 Hezekiah did so throughout all Judah; and he worked that which was good and right and faithful before Yahweh his God-

He did 'truth' (Heb.). To commit violence to others' persons is to live a lie (Hos. 12:1). Truth is not therefore merely a set of doctrines; it refers to an obedient life, and covenant relationship with God. The LXX uses the phrase 'to do truth', which John uses in the NT, in passages like 2 Chron. 31:20 (about Hezekiah's obedience to commandments), or in Gen. 47:29; Is. 26:10 to describe simply doing and living what is right. The fact truth must be *done* indicates it is *not* merely correct academic interpretation of doctrine.

2Ch 31:21 In every work that he began in the service of God's house, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered-

Again, the state of the heart is the basis of God's judgment of him. The reference to the work "that he began" could hint that all this was just at the beginning of his reign; for it seems in his last 15 years he turned away from God.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 32

2Ch 32:1 After these things, and this faithfulness-

A parade example of how faithfulness to God doesn't necessarily result in an easy, problem free life- contrary to Pentecostal teaching.

Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fortified cities, and thought to win them for himself-

He succeeded in taking all of Judah apart from Jerusalem. Isaiah describes the invasion as a flood of waters which engulfed Judah "up to the neck", the surviving head referring to Jerusalem and Hezekiah.

2Ch 32:2 When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come, and that he was set to fight against Jerusalem-

The fall of Jerusalem at this time in judgment for Judah's sins at the time had been clearly foretold (Is. 22:14-19; 29:2-4). That this didn't happen was only because of God's willingness to change His timetable of judgment in response to human faith and repentance, as happened with Nineveh. Hezekiah had tried to buy off the Assyrians with money, even cutting off the gold of the temple to give them (2 Kings 18:14-16). But now he sees / realizes that this had all been in vain. Sennacherib intended to take Jerusalem.

2Ch 32:3 he took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the springs which were outside of the city-

Hezekiah's attempts to resist the fall of Jerusalem which had been prophesied (:2) were surely taken in faith that God would amend those prophecies of judgment. Or we could read this as one more attempt by Hezekiah to bring about salvation by human strength and wit. He is mocked for trusting in such "counsel and strength" (2 Kings 18:20). Isaiah had earlier warned against trust in human "counsel" (s.w. Is. 5:19; 19:3). Woe was pronounced upon those (like Hezekiah?) who took counsel from men rather than God (Is. 30:1 s.w.). Prov. 25:28 LXX advises doing things with "counsel". As explained on Prov. 25:1, this may be a justification of Hezekiah, who dealt with the Assyrian crisis by saying he trusted in God's counsel to overcome the Assyrians (2 Kings 18:20 AV). Like Solomon, Hezekiah's Proverbs are all Divinely inspired and true, but he seems to insert into them a subtext of self justification.

And they helped him-

But Hezekiah's name means strengthened / helped by Yah. So we may get the impression that he was still trying to achieve salvation in his own strength rather than Yahweh's.

2Ch 32:4 So many people gathered together, and they stopped all the springs, and the brook that flowed through the midst of the land saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water?-

LXX "Through the midst of the city". These attempts to defend Jerusalem in his own strength, by the work of "many people", are condemned in Is. 22:9-11 as a lack of faith in Yahweh. There appears now to be no such stream, the topography having changed over the centuries.

2Ch 32:5 He took courage-

AV "strengthened himself", rather than living out the truth of his own name 'Hezekiah', 'Yah will strengthen'. This continues a theme, of the kings of Judah strengthening or fortifying themselves, often when they first became king; but then having that human strength tested by God or removed. The same word is used repeatedly (1 Chron. 11:10; 2 Chron. 11:11,17; 12:13; 13:21; 17:1; 23:1; 25:3,11; 26:8,15; 29:3; 32:5). The lesson of course was that it is God's Angelic eyes who run to and fro in the land promised to Abraham, "to shew Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chron. 16:9).

And built up all the wall that was broken down, and raised it up to the towers, and the other wall outside, and strengthened Millo in the city of David-
Is. 22:9-11 specifically condemns this work for being done without looking to Yahweh in faith. The RV of that passage says that two walls were built up [here "the wall that was broken down... and the other wall outside"] with a reservoir for water in between them.

And made weapons and shields in abundance-
Is. 22:8 says that the people "looked to the armour in the house of the forest" [of Lebanon], but not Yahweh; and when called [by Isaiah?] to repent and fast, instead they feasted (Is. 22:9-14).

2Ch 32:6 He set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the broad place at the gate of the city, and spoke to their hearts saying-
Presumably the reference is to the gate facing the Assyrian army, perhaps "the gate of Ephraim" or maybe "the comer gate".

2Ch 32:7 Be strong and courageous, don't be afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude who is with him; for there is a greater One with us than with him-

There is a marked contrast between this call to faith in Yahweh (and the people trusting Hezekiah's words, :8) and the condemnation of the people for their lack of faith at this time (Is. 22:9-14). But this is no contradiction. For faith and unbelief can all too easily be present in the human mind. Being "dismayed and terrified" is the term used of how Israel generally were terrified of Goliath, whereas David by faith wasn't (1 Sam. 17:11). The same phrase is also used in urging the people of Judah in Hezekiah's time to consider the Assyrians to be as a Goliath which they like David could vanquish (2 Chron. 32:7). The exiles likewise were urged not to be dismayed and terrified at the reproach of men (Is. 51:7; Jer. 30:10), very clearly making the history with Goliath relevant to their times.

2Ch 32:8 With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is Yahweh our God to help us, and to fight our battles. The people rested themselves on the words of Hezekiah king of Judah-

As discussed on :7, this was said when the people generally were not at all really believing in Yahweh but rather in their own strength (Is. 22:9-14). Perhaps having finished all the defensive work, Hezekiah's conscience smote him for not having done it in faith, and now he openly appeals to the people to simply believe in Yahweh to save them.

Hezekiah's confident assurance that the Assyrians were an arm of flesh compared to Yahweh (2 Chron. 32:7,8) is hard to square with his own apparent lack of faith at this time. One solution is to recognize that faith and unbelief can co-exist in a "believer", and yet when speaking to others, we may give a stronger exhortation to faith than we personally believe ourselves.

2Ch 32:9 After this, Sennacherib king of Assyria sent his servants to Jerusalem, (now he was before Lachish, and all his power with him), to Hezekiah king of Judah, and to all Judah who were at Jerusalem saying-

"All his power" sets us up for the conflict between human strength and Divine power. We have just read and discussed how Hezekiah had matched this with *his* human strength, although perhaps observing the superior strength of Assyria, he has just urged the people to throw themselves in faith upon Yahweh alone.

2Ch 32:10 Thus says Sennacherib king of Assyria, In whom do you trust, that you remain under siege in Jerusalem?-

Sennacherib knew full well the very difficult living conditions they were enduring under siege. Is. 36:5 adds: "Now in whom do you trust, that you have rebelled against me?". That Hezekiah was trusting in someone or something else apart from his own strength was so obvious; and there may have been a genuine element of curiosity in the question, as well as it being a rhetorical question. Hezekiah's rebellion against Assyria was because of his trust in Yahweh; Zedekiah rebelled later against Babylon and yet Jerusalem fell (s.w. Jer. 52:3). Zedekiah attempted to copy the external behaviour of Hezekiah but without trust in Yahweh, and so it didn't work out. And so there abides a lesson for all of us who are tempted to imitate the external faith and action of others without having the same internal faith and trust.

2Ch 32:11 Doesn't Hezekiah persuade you-

It seems Hezekiah was singlehandedly seeking to persuade the people to totally trust in Yahweh.

To give you over to die by famine and by thirst by saying, 'Yahweh our God will deliver us out of the hand of the king of Assyria?'

2 Kings 18:26,27 explain how this appeal was made directly to the ordinary people. Rabshakeh spoke in Hebrew and appears to have been an apostate Jew, for he was well aware of the situation within Jerusalem, and the words of Hezekiah about Yahweh. The Assyrian invasion is used as a basis upon which Jerusalem's latter day invasion will happen, and perhaps Rabshakeh will have his equivalent in the last days.

Hezekiah's faith that the city wouldn't fall was presumably based upon Isaiah's prophetic words; and yet Isaiah also speaks as if the city would fall, unless there was repentance in Judah. Perhaps Hezekiah really believed that the repentance of a minority would be counted by God as enough, and that their prayers would ensure the salvation of Zion. And this huge faith in Divine grace was rewarded.

Is. 36:14 adds: "Thus says the king, 'Don't let Hezekiah deceive you; for he will not be able to deliver you'. This was part of his narrative, that the gods of the nations were "not able to deliver" them from the Assyrians (s.w. 2 Chron. 32:15). He encouraged them to see the one true God as just another god, another source of secular strength as good as anything else. Yahweh the one true God is not, however, just another religious system. There is something awesomely and radically different. Rabshakeh's words recognize that Hezekiah alone was seeking to lead the people to totally trust in Yahweh. His influence was considered hugely significant. As we noted on Is. 1:1, the reforms of Hezekiah were largely ineffective in encouraging the general populace towards spirituality. In accordance with that, Rabshakeh perceived Hezekiah as effectively seeking alone to persuade the people to trust Yahweh.

2Ch 32:12 Hasn't the same Hezekiah taken away His high places and His altars, and

commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, You shall worship before one altar, and on it you shall burn incense?-

Rabshakeh argues as if the high places and altars to the idols were actually used for Yahweh worship. And that was true. Judah justified their idol worship by claiming it was a form of Yahweh worship; and that is an abiding temptation for God's people of all ages. Rabshakeh mocked at the idea of a religion which had only one altar and high place; although that was indeed appropriate to the worship of the one true God who had given one specific way of approach to Him.

2Ch 32:13 Don't you know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of the lands? Were the gods of the nations of the lands in any way able to deliver their land out of my hand?-

The historical account emphasizes that Rabshakeh continually reminded them of the strength of the hand of the Assyrians; the phrase occurs six times in 2 Chron. 32:13-15 alone. The hand of *Yahweh* is an Angelic title; as if he was really mocking the Angel of Israel. There are also many references in Isaiah to the arm of the Lord delivering Israel at this time, which is again an Angelic title. Similarly, the latter day Assyrian will be destroyed by the arm of the Lord, as manifest in Christ and the Angels with Him.

2Ch 32:14 Who was there among all the gods of those nations which my fathers utterly destroyed, that could deliver his people out of my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you out of my hand?-

The point of course was made: Who or what indeed were any of those gods compared to Yahweh. And the true Israel of God were unlike any other nation.

2Ch 32:15 Now therefore don't let Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you in this way, neither believe him; for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of my hand, and out of the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you out of my hand?-

Is. 36:19 gives more detail: "Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria from my hand?". Rabshakeh, knowing the prophecies of Isaiah, may be alluding to the common prophetic theme that Judah were in fact no better than Israel, and would face the same judgment. And he knew that Samaria, the ten tribes, had trusted in the gods of the surrounding nations. Hamath and Arpad were in Syria, and so probably Sepharvaim was likewise. Is. 8 and Is. 10:9-11 had condemned Israel for their trust in Syria against Assyria, and clearly their covenant with Syria had involved taking on the worship of their gods.

2Ch 32:16 His servants spoke yet more against Yahweh God, and against His servant Hezekiah-

Hezekiah as Yahweh's servant is contrasted with Rabshakeh and his gang who were Sennacherib's servants. The whole scene is a showdown between Yahweh and Sennacherib, who was playing God.

2Ch 32:17 He also wrote letters insulting Yahweh, the God of Israel, and to speak against Him saying, As the gods of the nations of the lands, which have not delivered their people out of my hand, so shall the God of Hezekiah not deliver His people out of my hand-

Goliath's defiance of Israel is a major theme (s.w. 1 Sam. 17:10,25,26,36,45). David's

victory over Goliath was inspirational to other Israelites, just as the Lord's triumph on the cross should be to us. The history of Goliath would have been inspirational when the Assyrians likewise insulted or defied the living God, and again this is a theme of the record (2 Kings 19:4,16,22,23; 2 Chron. 32:17 s.w.). But I suggest the equivalent to David in all this was not Hezekiah but Isaiah. It was his faith and prayers which won the day.

2Ch 32:18 They cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten them, and to trouble them; that they might take the city-

This very loud voice becomes the prototype for the great voice of Babylon (Jer. 51:55), akin to the great voice of Goliath the Philistine / Palestinian, which is to be answered by the far greater voice of Yahweh in the last days commanding the Angels to unleash judgment upon the latter day Assyrian confederacy (Joel 2:11; Rev. 16:1; 18:2). But in the immediate context, this "loud voice" is that of Is. 29:6 bringing destruction and judgment upon Jerusalem; they were condemned, but were saved by grace and God's respect of the prayers and repentance of a small minority. The loud voice of the "great king" of Assyria (Is. 36:13) is being set up as a parody of that of Yahweh, who is the supreme "great king" (s.w. Ps. 47:2; 95:3; Mal. 1:14).

2Ch 32:19 They spoke of the God of Jerusalem, as of the gods of the peoples of the earth-

This is the classic challenge to faith; no other god achieved anything, therefore, the one true God can't either. But the point is that the gods of this world didn't achieve anything precisely because they are not God. The 'utter destruction' of conquered lands by Assyria is historically well attested. But the word has the sense of 'sanctified' in a religious sense; like the latter day "king of the north", the invader thought that they were serving their God by destroying people, and the barbarity of the destruction was a sign of how far they had devoted people and lands to their God. Jihadist Islam exactly fits this scenario.

Which are the work of men's hands-

Passages like this almost define God by reason of His being uncreate. Whatever is created, is not God. And it follows that if we think that we have truly created anything, or that we are anything that God didn't create, then we are in fact playing God. Understanding God as creator, in its true, deep and thought-through sense, leads to an understanding of grace. That all we have, are, were, shall ever be, is purely His gift. Likewise, to take for ourselves what is God's is to play God. Materialism and selfishness are in this sense playing God.

2Ch 32:20 Hezekiah the king, and Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz, prayed because of this, and cried to heaven-

Is. 37 records the prayer in more detail; see notes there.

2Ch 32:21 Yahweh sent an angel-

Is. 37:36 "The angel of Yahweh went out". He went out from the throne room of heaven, where the case had been as it were considered; see on Is. 37:4. Isaiah 37 is shot through with allusions to the Angel cherubim destroying the Assyrian host. The Angel went out- perhaps referring to Him physically going forth out of the temple where He dwelt to slay the Assyrians outside the walls of Jerusalem. This phrase 'went out' is nearly always used about literal physical movement, which we have seen

is what Angels literally do. Thus in the Ezekiel visions of the cherubim, they and the lightnings "went forth", physically and literally, in performing God's work. "Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence (Angelic language); let Thine eyes (Angels) behold the things that are equal", seeing they are involved with the 'coming forth', according to the parallelism of this verse. Similarly Job's satan Angel "went forth" from the presence of the Lord (Job 1:12). And so it happened that there were Angels on earth, as it were. Zech. 2:3 also has an Angel going forth to answer the prayers concerning restoring the fortunes of Jerusalem (see Zech. 5:5 too). Ps. 81:5 describes the Angel going out through the land of Egypt in order to "remove (Israel's) shoulder from the burden". Ps. 81 is 'Angelic', following Ps. 80, which is another such Psalm. Heb. 1:14 also offers support: the Angels are "sent forth" to minister to us- by answering prayers offered in the spirit of Hezekiah's prayer here?

Who cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains, in the camp of the king of Assyria-

Not all were destroyed. The bodies of those who were, were spoiled by the Jerusalem Jews (Is. 33:4). The agent of destruction appears to have been fire and hail (Is. 29:6; 30:30), both of which may be used in the last days too.

So he returned with shame of face to his own land-

This was because "I will put a spirit in him" (Is. 37:7). Sennacherib retreated because God "put a spirit in him". The AV has: "I will send a blast / spirit upon him". Was it not that the Angel who later destroyed his army came upon him and put a spirit / disposition of mind within him that made him want to retreat? We see how God can directly affect the human spirit / mind. He can give a holy spirit, or an evil spirit. The Old Testament sets us up to understand that God can work directly on the human spirit, and then the New Testament says that He can give us a holy spirit, working again directly on the human mind and perception.

Is. 37:7 says that "He will hear news, and will return to his own land. I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land". The "news" could have been of the destruction of Rabshakeh's army; or of the approach of Tirhakah, or some other threat to his empire. The situation points ahead to how the latter day "king of the north" will likewise hear "news" (s.w. Dan. 11:44 "tidings"). The Lord 'caused' Sennacherib to fall by the sword in that He put a spirit of jealousy in his sons, resulting in his murder.

When he had come into the house of his god, those who came forth from his own bowels killed him there with the sword-

He was killed as he was worshipping (Is. 37:38), about 20 years later; worshipping a god who had spectacularly failed him. We see here the terrible power of religion in blinding men to spiritual reality.

2Ch 32:22 Thus Yahweh saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side-

LXX "gave them rest" from all the surrounding nations (as in 2 Chron. 20:30). Assyria had not been Hezekiah's only enemy (2 Kings 18:7,8). The idea is of the "rest" of the Kingdom of God. There was perhaps the potential possibility for Isaiah's kingdom prophecies to have had fulfilment, just as the destruction of the latter day Assyrian will presage the establishment of the Kingdom of God. But this didn't happen, because Hezekiah turned away from faith to pride.

2Ch 32:23 Many brought gifts to Yahweh to Jerusalem, and precious things to Hezekiah king of Judah; so that He was exalted in the sight of all nations from

thenceforth-

The Kingdom prophecies of Ps. 68:29; Is. 18:7; Hag. 2:7,8 could now have had their fulfilment; but Hezekiah became lifted up in pride and precluded it, leaving them to have their major fulfilment in the last days.

2Ch 32:24 In those days Hezekiah was sick even to death. He prayed to Yahweh; and He spoke to him, and gave him a sign-

This was in the same year as the invasion, but not necessarily at the same time. In this section we are reading a Divine summary of His take on Hezekiah. See on :25,56. It seems that unlike his father Ahaz, Hezekiah had asked for this sign (2 Kings 20:8). It is apparent that the experiences of believers are often suggestive of those of other believers. Insofar as we appreciate this, we will find strength to go the right way. Consider how Hezekiah was intended to see the similarities between himself and the earlier king Ahaz his father, and learn the lessons. They were both threatened by invasion and tempted to turn to human help (Is. 7:2; 37:1); Visited by Isaiah and told to not fear (Is. 7:4-9; 37:6,7). Ahaz was unfaithful by "the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the fuller's field" (Is. 7:3); and in just the same place Hezekiah's faith was tested and he learnt the lessons of Ahaz' failure (Is. 36:2). Both were given a sign by God and promised deliverance (Is. 7:14; 37:30). Ahaz refused to ask for a sign when offered one (Is. 7:11); whereas Hezekiah learnt, and asked for a sign (Is. 38:7,22). Thus his asking for a sign was not a sign of faithlessness but rather his seeking to not be like Ahaz. "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform it" was spoken to both Ahaz (Is. 9:6) and Hezekiah (Is. 37:32).

2Ch 32:25 But Hezekiah didn't render again according to the grace done to him. His heart was lifted up; therefore there was wrath on him, and on Judah and Jerusalem-

This is a similar idea to Ps. 40:5: "Many, Yahweh my God, are the wonderful works which You have done, and Your thoughts which are toward us. They can't be declared back to You. If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered". Yet through the Bathsheba Psalms, David is indeed declaring God's grace to him (see on Ps. 40:10). But he says he does so with a great sense of inadequacy; for he cannot render back to God according to the grace shown him. Hezekiah is criticized for this here. And yet David admits this is how man is, faced with the extent of God's grace to him. We have here another example of how two men may do the same thing [here, not rendering back according to God's grace], and yet be judged differently according to their attitude of mind.

The standard approach in interpretation is to assume that this lifting up with pride was the situation which occurred after the Babylonian ambassadors visited Hezekiah (Is. 39). Hezekiah was threatened with God's wrath, but humbled himself, and so it was delayed until the next generation. Is. 39:8 is then meant to mean that Hezekiah accepted the truth of God's word of judgment upon him as "good", but rejoiced that there would be peace and truth in his own days: "Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, Yahweh's word which you have spoken is good. He said moreover, For there will be peace and truth in my days".

But I suggest that a bit of deeper thought will find this unsatisfactory, and I have suggested throughout Is. 39 that Hezekiah 'lost it' spiritually at the time of the visit of the ambassadors. The awful apostasy of his own son Manasseh would then corroborate that. The "But..." with which the verse opens is not in the Hebrew. Translators added it in a mistaken effort to connect with the previous verse. The material here in these concluding thoughts about Hezekiah isn't chronological. Thus 2

Chron. 32:24 is clearly about a time *before* that of 2 Chron. 32:23. So I suggest that :25 refers to the reason why wrath came upon Judah, Jerusalem and himself. That wrath wasn't just threatened, it actually "came"(AV), there "was wrath" (NEV). For wrath to 'come' means that it was experienced- not just threatened. And we are specifically told, with the same Hebrew phrase used, that the Assyrians came up against Hezekiah, Judah and Jerusalem because "God's wrath" was upon them, and Hezekiah's generations were seeing that "with your own eyes" (2 Chron. 29:8). And here in 2 Chron. 32:25 we are told that this happened because of Hezekiah's pride and not returning to God what had been given him. That pride, therefore, doesn't apply to the time of the Babylonian ambassadors, but rather his pride in his own strength and devices to defend Jerusalem, as commented upon on :3-6. See on :26. The grace done to Hezekiah was his healing, for the sickness was in the same year as the invasion, but not necessarily at the same time. Because of his lack of adequate response to it, he had to be humbled by the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem. And this elicited the appropriate humility. But when the ambassadors came afterwards, his heart was again lifted up in pride.

"Render again" is the common Hebrew word for 'repent'. Hezekiah was shown grace, but didn't repent. God shows grace in order to lead us to repentance; but some just take the grace and don't repent. Hezekiah had been told he would die, he arrogantly protested his innocence, but God gave him 15 years. And he then thanks God for casting his sins behind His back. But he still doesn't come to repentance.

2Ch 32:26 Notwithstanding, Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of Yahweh didn't come on them in the days of Hezekiah-

As discussed on :25, I suggest that this pride of heart was before the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem. Hezekiah's dressing in sackcloth when Jerusalem is surrounded (2 Kings 19:1) was a sign of repentance. He humbled himself at that point. Therefore Jerusalem was surrounded, but Hezekiah's repentance, along with that of "the inhabitants of Jerusalem", meant that the intended "wrath" was deferred. This approach also explains why it was specifically "the inhabitants of Jerusalem" who repented along with Hezekiah. If the reference is to proud attitudes towards the Babylonian ambassadors, then we would rather expect Hezekiah personally to be the one who needed to repent. And if the people needed to repent, then we would expect to read of all Judah repenting, rather than specifically "the inhabitants of Jerusalem".

The same language of God relenting of disaster is found in the context of Hezekiah's repentance averting the Assyrian destruction of Jerusalem at that time- and not about any repentance concerning his pride afterwards: "Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah and he said to all the people of Judah: "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'Zion will be plowed as a field; Jerusalem will be a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house as a wooded height.' Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? Did he not fear Yahweh and entreat the favor of Yahweh, and did not Yahweh relent of the disaster that he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring disaster upon ourselves" (Jer. 26:18,19).

2Ch 32:27 Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour and he set up treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all kinds of goodly vessels-

The same terms "spices... gold... precious stones" is used of what the queen of Sheba

brought to Solomon, and what was brought to Hezekiah after his healing (2 Chron. 32:27). Perhaps the conversion of the queen of Sheba to Israel's God meant that her people continued to be sympathetic to Judah even in Hezekiah's time, and they were the source of these things in his time. But the similarity sets us up to expect that Hezekiah like Solomon would then turn away from God, disallowing the potential of being the king of God's gloriously established kingdom in Israel; and this is what happened.

Hezekiah's father, King Ahaz, had stripped the Temple of all its silver and gold, as well as all the gold and silver in the palace treasury, and sent it to Tiglath-Pileser (2 Kings 16:8,9). But only 30 years later, Hezekiah was able to give 30 talents (or 900 kg) of gold and 800 talents (or 24,000 kg) of silver to Sennacherib. He had built up considerable wealth quite quickly- especially bearing in mind he is recorded as undertaking huge building and fortification projects, repairing the Temple, providing huge numbers of sacrificial animals for the Passover, funding a campaign against the Philistines and having enough wealth to try to buy Egyptian military support against Assyria.

This suggests Hezekiah was materialistic and on the look out for wealth. He believed his wealth could save him- he offered money to Egypt to help him, and paid a huge amount to Assyria to leave him alone. All of which was criticized by God through Isaiah. When his wealth revived after the Assyrian defeat, again it was his undoing- because he boasted of it to the Babylonians, who clearly were covetous and thence planned to come and take it by force. Which Isaiah says, God would empower them to do because of Hezekiah's pride. That pride arose from his great and sudden wealth, which was given to him by God: "Hezekiah enjoyed immense riches and honour. He built himself treasuries for gold, silver, precious stones, spices, jewels and every kind of desirable object, as well as storehouses for his returns of grain, new wine and olive oil, and stalls for all kinds of cattle and pens for the flocks. He also provided himself with donkeys in addition to his immense wealth of flocks and herds, since God had made him immensely wealthy" (2 Chron. 32:27-29). The promised blessing upon the land, producing "of itself", seems to have been responsible for the agricultural prosperity. The lands around him had been ravaged by the Assyrian scorched earth policy. They perhaps traded their wealth for food. But we note that this wealth led him to proudly show it off to the Babylonians, who came to find out about "the wonder that was done in the land" (2 Chron. 32:31, i.e. the amazing agricultural blessing). We now understand better why God is careful about giving wealth; because it typically leads to pride and loss of spirituality.

2Ch 32:28 storehouses also for the increase of grain and new wine and oil; and stalls for all kinds of animals, and flocks in folds-

This recalls the language of Solomon's building store cities for his wealth (see on :27 for another allusion to Solomon). But the connection with Solomon is not a good one; for all this wealth of his was not associated with his spirituality, but rather with his apostasy. And so it was to be with Hezekiah.

2Ch 32:29 Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him very much substance-

This continues the allusion to Solomon, who likewise built store cities for his wealth; but see on :28.

2Ch 32:30 This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper spring of the waters of Gihon,

and brought them straight down on the west side of the city of David. Hezekiah prospered in all his works-

Some manuscripts read "the east side". The current Pool of Siloam is to the South East of modern Jerusalem, but it could have been south west of the old "city of David". "Prospered" is yet another allusion to Solomon's prospering (s.w. 1 Chron. 29:23; 2 Chron. 7:11); but see on :28.

2Ch 32:31 However concerning the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent to him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land-

Hezekiah's positive comment in his Proverbs (see on Prov. 25:1) about faithful ambassadors must be read in the context of the fact that Prov. 25:13 was one of the Proverbs rewritten in Hezekiah's time. He sinned with regard to the ambassadors of Babylon (2 Chron. 32:31), but perhaps he was led into this by willfully misreading this Proverb of Solomon, or at least getting it rewritten with the subtext of justifying what he did. "The wonder done in the land" was I suggest the sun being eclipsed by a greater light, which made the shadow go back. This offered the possibility of fulfilment for Isaiah's prophecies about a great light arising in Zion, to which the Gentiles would come.

God left him-

This is the word for 'forsaking', and is used about God forsaking those who turn away from Him (Dt. 31:17). We are left to wonder whether this was in response to Hezekiah forsaking Him. Or perhaps it makes him a type of the Lord Jesus, who was also apparently forsaken by God in order to reveal what was in His heart (Mt. 27:46). There are times when God's presence does apparently leave us, and He no longer holds us back from sin as He does at other times- in order to reveal to ourselves what is truly in our deepest hearts.

To try him, that He might know all that was in his heart-

Hezekiah asks for a sign "to prove" [s.w. test / try] that God's predicted cure of him was going to happen. And when given the option of the shadow of the sun jumping forward by ten degrees, he almost mocks that as too 'easy'. Yet this is the man with the accolade that no King believed in God like he did. Perhaps he reached his heights of faith through having these low moments. 'Putting God to the test' as it seems Hezekiah did is seen in Scripture as not fully believing in Him (Num. 14:20-24; Dt. 6:16; Is. 7:12; Lk. 11:33-36). Maybe God left Hezekiah to test him in the matter of the ambassadors from Babylon as a kind of response- 'You put me to the test, I'll put you to the test'.

2Ch 32:32 Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his good deeds, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz, in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel-

This may refer to some writing of Isaiah which we don't have, and the "book of the kings" may not refer to the books of Kings we have in our Bibles. Or it could mean that the historical record of Isaiah in Is. 36-39 is incorporated in the record we have in 2 Kings.

2Ch 32:33 Hezekiah slept with his fathers-

This repeated phrase indicates death is unconsciousness, like sleep; and the idiom surely requires a resurrection of the body to judgment at some future date, which we know to be the time of the Lord's return to earth. If the Bible taught reward at death or an immortal soul [which it doesn't], then this idiom would not be used.

And they buried him in the ascent of the tombs of the sons of David; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. Manasseh his son reigned in his place-

That Hezekiah raised such an evil son in the last 15 years of his life is another hint that he would have been better dying when he was intended to, without a descendant, rather than getting more life with which he turned away from God and raised an evil son.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 33

2Ch 33:1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem-

"Causing to forget" is a strange name for a child unless the father [like Joseph] had a previous life he wanted to forget. Manasseh was born three years into Hezekiah's final 15 years of life in which he turned away from God. So I suggest that his name reflects Hezekiah's desire to 'forget all that God stuff' and get on with 'enjoying' his last 15 years without God. And this was naturally reflected in the way he raised a son who was one of Israel's most evil rulers.

2Ch 33:2 He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, after the abominations of the nations whom Yahweh cast out before the children of Israel-

We may wonder why God let such an evil man live and reign for 55 years (:1), the longest reigning of any king. Surely if he had been slain for his wickedness, as other men were, then he would have led fewer people astray? I suggest the answer is that God worked for decades towards this evil man's repentance- and it paid off. He did repent in the end. And we can look forward to eternity together with him. We see in this the huge meaning and value God places upon the individual person, and how He will not give up searching for the lost until He finds them. Manasseh would be the parade example of that.

2Ch 33:3 For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; and he reared up altars for the Baals, and made Asheroth, and worshipped all the army of the sky, and served them-

This revival of idolatry would not have been possible unless the people generally were eager and willing for it. I suggested previously that Hezekiah's reforms were largely on the cusp of his becoming king. They were partly a psychological reaction against the misery of Ahaz's reign, and the reforms of 2 Chron. 31 were often a result of group psychology rather than personal reformation of the heart. They were all too sudden and spontaneous, at the same moment, to have been the outcome of all the concerned individuals having the same heart response. There was a group psychology there, a going with the crowd. And so it is unsurprising that they all turned away relatively soon afterwards.

2Ch 33:4 He built altars in the house of Yahweh, of which Yahweh said, My name shall be in Jerusalem forever-

This was precisely the behaviour of his grandfather Ahaz. I suggest that this was only done by persuading themselves that these altars were in fact a form of Yahweh worship. For there is never any specific statement that Judah formally renounced Yahweh. And this continues to be the abiding weakness of God's people; to justify

wrongdoing by claiming it is part of worshipping God. Such as justifying luxury homes and goods in the name of needing them to serve God with.

2Ch 33:5 He built altars for all the army of the sky in the two courts of the house of Yahweh-

These were the court of the priests, and the court of the common people (2 Chron. 4:9). The priesthood were surely complicit in this. For when Uzziah had tried to offer incense himself, 80 faithful priests resisted him. But there is no record of any such resistance to Manasseh. The priests in Hezekiah's time had been reticent to devote themselves solely to Yahweh (1 Chron. 29:34). I suggested that this was because they were accustomed to being priests both of Yahweh and of the pagan gods. This means that they took a cut from all the offerings to all the gods.

2Ch 33:6 He also made his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom-

This would have meant that his surviving children would have hated him for slaying their siblings; although passing through the fire may have been a dedication ceremony rather than actually burning them to death. 2 Kings 21:6 has "his son", 2 Chron. 33:6 has "his children". As he had more than one son, we are to infer surely that this focus upon "his son" meant that one of his sons in particular passed through the fire, and that could imply that he sacrificed his son [maybe his firstborn]. Israel should have removed from amongst them a man who did this (Dt. 18:10), and the fact they didn't suggests they therefore passively supported him in his apostasy.

The valley of Hinnom, Ge Hinnom, was to later be known as Gehenna, and became a symbol used by the Lord for complete destruction (Mt. 5:22). As they burnt their children there, to destruction, so sinners would be burnt to destruction in that same place.

And he practised sorcery and used enchantments, and practised witchcraft and dealt with those who had familiar spirits, and with wizards-

AV "a familiar spirit" is misleading, and many of the modern versions give something like "witch" or [ESV, GNB] "a medium". LXX has "a divining spirit". It doesn't mean she did actually have any such spirit; but that she was considered as having this. Such people were thought to be able to be possessed by the spirit of dead people, and to therefore speak in their name. But the Bible clearly teaches that the "spirit returns to God" (Ps. 146:4; Ecc. 12:7), and that death is unconsciousness. The spirit of dead persons don't enter other people. I would go so far as to say that the record of the witch at Endor, who supposedly had a "familiar spirit", is deconstructing this belief. For Samuel himself appears, and speaks directly to Saul, and not through the "medium". The woman therefore screamed in shock when Samuel actually appeared. He was resurrected, briefly, in order to give God's final message to Saul. The people claiming to have "familiar spirits" lay on the ground and mumbled hard to understand words in a voice seeking to imitate the dead person (Is. 29:4) but Samuel appeared in person and spoke clearly to Saul, directly. We also note that Samuel appeared to Saul standing upright, because Saul bowed before him: "Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and showed respect" (1 Sam. 28:14). This was quite different to how the mediums lay on the ground and mumbled words into the dust.

He worked much evil in the sight of Yahweh, to provoke Him to anger-
God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented

as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us.

2Ch 33:7 He set the engraved image of the idol, which he had made, in God's house, of which God said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put My name forever- Manasseh is criticized for placing an idol in the very place where God's Name of Yahweh was meant to dwell, "the graven image of Asherah" (2 Kings 21:7 RV). He replaced the invisible things- the more abstract things of the characteristics of God which the Name speaks of- by something material and visible. We make the same mistake when we turn away from true spirituality and become lost in physical works. If Judah had not forgotten the Name [and this must refer to their lack of appreciation of it rather than forgetting the letters JHWH], then they wouldn't have served Baal and other gods (Jer. 23:27). It is this particular idol which it seems was returned to the temple just prior to the destruction of the temple (Ez. 8:3), despite Manasseh himself removing it on his repentance.

2Ch 33:8 neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from off the land which I have appointed for your fathers, if only they will observe to do all that I have commanded them, even all the law and the statutes and the ordinances given by Moses-

This is apparently (:7) a quotation from what God said to David and Solomon. But it appears to be an adaptation about the promises to the singular seed, that he must continue in obedience if the promises were to be fulfilled through him. But just as Abraham's seed is both the Lord Jesus and all those in Him, the true Israel of God, so the promises about David's seed also have a collective dimension.

2Ch 33:9 Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that they did more evil than the nations did whom Yahweh had destroyed before the children of Israel-

God's tolerance of Judah in His land was therefore by grace, and in hope of their repentance. Their doing "more evil" than the Gentiles could refer to the fact that as in covenant relationship with God, they were the more responsible for their sins. Or the idea may be that most Gentiles were faithful to their set of gods, only changing them if that was enforced upon them by the military dominance of a neighbour. But Judah went running madly to every god they could, described by Hosea under the figure of sexual addiction.

2Ch 33:10 Yahweh spoke to Manasseh, and to his people; but they gave no heed- "They gave no heed", or 'did not listen', is a phrase used in the later prophets as they appeal to the exiles (Neh. 9:34; Zech. 1:4). The sins of Manasseh in 'not listening' to God's word are cited as the main reason for the exile. We note that refusing to listen to God's word is the essence of all the sins of idolatry etc. It is the spurning of relationship with God which appears to hurt Him even more than the list of sins which Manasseh was also guilty of.

2Ch 33:11 Therefore Yahweh brought on them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh in chains, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon-

Literally, "in thorns", but the idea is of rings or hooks, probably in his nose. For it was like this that Assyria was to be treated by God, and the latter day Assyrian led by Gog will likewise effectively be Yahweh's captive servant with rings in his nose (2 Kings 19:28; Ez. 38:4). Or it could be that Manasseh was taken "in the thorns", hiding in a thorn bush.

Albert Barnes notes: "Esarhaddon mentions Manasseh among his tributaries; and he was the only king of Assyria who, from time to time, held his court at Babylon".

2Ch 33:12 When he was in distress, he begged Yahweh his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers-

There is no lack of evidence that later Bible characters found inspiration in Samson, especially in their weakness. Manasseh is an example (2 Chron. 33:12,13 = Jud. 16:19,28). The intensity of Samson's repentance was quite something. It must have inspired Manasseh (2 Chron. 33:11), who like Samson was bound (Jud. 16:21) and humbled (Jud. 16:5,16,19 AVmg.)- and then repented with a like intensity. And Zedekiah went through the same basic experience, of capture by his enemies, having his eyes put out, his capture attributed to false gods; and he likewise repented (2 Kings 25:7).

2Ch 33:13 He prayed to Him; and He was entreated by him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that Yahweh was God-

Manasseh's repentance and forgiveness was associated with his knowing Yahweh. He prayed to Yahweh, but only on experiencing forgiveness did he come to know Him (2 Chron. 33:13). To really know the Name elicits forgiveness, and the experience of that forgiveness leads to knowing the Name yet further. Job went through the same; when he truly saw / perceived God, he repented and 'loathed his words' (Job 42:6 RVmg.).

Humanly speaking, the return of Manasseh to Judah would have been because Assyria wanted to turn Judah into a vassal, buffer state between them and the mighty power of Egypt, which they feared. But this coincided with Manasseh's repentance.

2Ch 33:14 Now after this he built an outer wall to the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entrance at the fish gate; and he encircled Ophel with it, and raised it up to a very great height; and he put valiant captains in all the fortified cities of Judah-

This wall seems to have been on the north east of the city, from the modern Damascus gate across the Gihon valley to the "fish gate" at the north east of the "city of David". These defensive actions suggest he started to break away from servitude to Assyria, even though that was probably the basis of his return from exile (see on :13). Building projects like these were typically recorded as being done at the beginning of the reigns of kings of Judah, and so it's as if he was born again, and was trying to start out afresh.

2Ch 33:15 He took away the foreign gods, and the idol out of the house of Yahweh, and all the altars that he had built in the mountain of the house of Yahweh, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city-

This seems largely to have been his personal repentance, because the people continued their idolatry (:17) and were clearly devoted to idols in their hearts. The idols were apparently not destroyed, for in Josiah's time they had to be destroyed. To

undo damage caused is a key feature of repentance, and truly Manasseh had fruits appropriate for repentance. He is really a stellar example of repentance. For his sin is repeatedly stated as being of leading Judah to idolatry. To so openly admit he had been wrong was truly a sign of abiding humility.

2Ch 33:16 He built up the altar of Yahweh, and offered thereon sacrifices of peace offerings and of thanksgiving, and commanded Judah to serve Yahweh, the God of Israel-

This would imply he had at least partially destroyed the altar of Yahweh, in favour of altars to other gods. There are a number of other Old Testament examples of preaching the word after becoming aware of the depth of one's own sins. Consider Jonah preaching the second time, with the marks in his body after three days in the whale, admitting his rebellion against Yahweh, pleading with them to respond to His word. Reflect how when his head was wrapped around with seaweed, at the bottom of the sea at the absolute end of mortal life, he made a vow to God, which he then fulfilled, presumably in going back to preach to Nineveh (Jonah 2:9). His response to having confessed his sins and daring to believe in God's forgiveness, turning again towards His temple even from underwater, was to resolve to preach to others if he was spared his life. And this he did, although as with so many of us, the pureness of his initial evangelical zeal soon flaked. Or consider Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. 19:3 cp. 18:31; 19:2; Josiah, 2 Chron. 34:29,32; Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 3:29; 4:2.

2Ch 33:17 Nevertheless the people sacrificed still in the high places, but only to Yahweh their God-

The essence of Judah's apostasy, then and now, was to combine service of Yahweh with that of idols. And so this is not a good comment. For sacrifice should have been made in the temple, and not in the idol shrines. We need to constantly ask ourselves whether we are serving our own idolatry in the name of serving God. This mixture of truth and error is seen not only in practical ways but also in the way so many Christian doctrines such as the trinity are in fact a mixture of paganism with truth.

2Ch 33:18 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel, behold, they are written among the acts of the kings of Israel-

Manasseh's prayer is recorded in various uninspired writings. But it is not in the volumes we know as 1 and 2 Kings. I have therefore cautioned that the common concluding statement that the deeds of a king are "written in the book of the kings" should not be taken as necessarily referring to the books of Kings in our Bibles.

The words of the prophets who appealed to him are recorded in 2 Kings 21:11-15.

2Ch 33:19 His prayer also, and how God was entreated of him, and all his sin and his trespass, and the places in which he built high places, and set up the Asherim and the engraved images, before he humbled himself: they are written in the history of Hozai- This history, presumably written by a prophet called Hozai, isn't preserved. The LXX stresses that this included a geographical inventory of "the spots on which he built the high places, and set there groves and graven images". This list was presumably produced by Manasseh as part of his repentance, and would have been the basis of his practical attempt to put right what he had done wrong. Writing an inventory of people we've hurt or the ways in which others have suffered from our sins is something used

in counseling alcoholics in the 12 step program, and it has value for all repentance.

*2Ch 33:20 So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house; and Amon his son reigned in his place-
LXX "in the garden of his house".*

2Ch 33:21 Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign; and he reigned two years in Jerusalem-
He had been raised in the spirit of his father's apostacy, and was apparently unimpressed by Manasseh's amazing repentance.

2Ch 33:22 He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, as did Manasseh his father; and Amon sacrificed to all the engraved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them-

Manasseh had removed the images, but not apparently destroyed them. The history of the kings abounds with such references to idolatry being reformed, and then so quickly revived. The speed of its revival reflects the fact that the heart of the people generally was with the idols. And we must assess our own episodes of apparent repentance in this light. Manasseh had repaired the temple (:16), but by Josiah's time it needed repairing again; so it could be that Amon also desecrated and damaged the temple yet further.

2Ch 33:23 He didn't humble himself before Yahweh, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but this same Amon trespassed more and more-

Manasseh goes down in the record as the parade example of a man who manages to put the brakes on as he slides downhill to destruction. For the antithesis to Manasseh's humility and repentance is that Amon sinned "more and more". "Humble himself" is parallel with 'repentance' (LXX uses the term 'repentance' here). This is the essence of repentance- self humbling.

2Ch 33:24 His servants conspired against him, and put him to death in his own house-

There seems a special stigma and shame attached to being murdered in ones' own home, rather than on a battlefield or dying from old age.

2Ch 33:25 But the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his place-

Josiah means 'foundation of Yah'. It's unlikely this was the name Amon gave him, although a repentant Manasseh may have influenced it. However, at no point did even kings like Amon and Manasseh formally deny Yahweh. They worshipped Him, so they thought, through worshipping idols. So it is not impossible that indeed this was Josiah's birth name. And from that we can take yet another warning, to serve Yahweh with our whole hearts; and not assume that our service of the flesh is serving Him.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 34

2Ch 34:1 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem-

Josiah means 'foundation of Yah'. It's unlikely this was the name Amon gave him, although a repentant Manasseh may have influenced it. However, at no point did even

kings like Amon and Manasseh formally deny Yahweh. They worshipped Him, so they thought, through worshipping idols. So it is not impossible that indeed this was Josiah's birth name. And from that we can take yet another warning, to serve Yahweh with our whole hearts; and not assume that our service of the flesh is serving Him.

2Ch 34:2 He did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, and walked in the ways of David his father, and didn't turn aside to the right hand or to the left-

And yet Josiah died in spiritual weakness and at a point of disobedience to God's word (2 Chron. 35:20-24). The rubric 'He did what was right...' is found even of kings who clearly departed from Yahweh. The truly righteous ones such as Jehoshaphat have a clause added to their summary, saying that they had followed Yahweh in their hearts. But this is lacking in the case of Josiah. We note too that he raised evil sons. And so we wonder whether the record is acknowledging the good works which he did at some points in his life, and it concludes with this too (2 Chron. 35:26). But there is a notable absence of any statement to the intent that he was judged as having a heart right with God. And the state of the heart was and is the critical indicator in God's final judgment of men.

2Ch 34:3 For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father. In the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the Asherim, and the engraved images, and the molten images-

Kings places this reformation after the repair of the temple, whereas Chronicles puts it before that. However, Manasseh had repaired the temple just a few years earlier (2 Chron. 33:16) and that may be what Kings has in mind. Or the temple may have been repaired in stages. However the chronological problems are avoided if we accept a confusion in copying between "eighth" and "eighteenth" (2 Kings 22:3).

We note that Amon had revived Manasseh's images in the two years of his reign, and it seems the people worshipped them for the first 12 years of Josiah's reign. Again we have the impression that the removal of idolatry was something done by the reformist kings, but the hearts of the people were generally with the idols. And this was why they were condemned relatively soon after Josiah's time. The timing of Josiah's reformation (2 Chron. 34:3) coincides with the prophecies of Jer. 2,3; he heard them, and responded. Hence Jeremiah wept when Josiah died, remembering how as a teenager, Josiah had heard his prophecies and immediately responded to them.

2Ch 34:4 They broke down the altars of the Baals in his presence. He cut down the incense altars that were on high above them. He broke in pieces the Asherim, and the engraved images, and the molten images, and made dust of them, and strewed it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them-

We note the contrast between altars being cut down "in his presence", and he himself cutting others down. We get the impression of total personal involvement and commitment, just at the age of 20. He put their dust on the graves of their worshippers who were buried near to the idols, referring maybe to the children offered to them, or to the fact that some were so devoted to idols that they gave their lives to them and were willing human sacrifices.

2Ch 34:5 He burnt the bones of the priests on their altars, and purged Judah and Jerusalem-

It was done specifically at Bethel (2 Kings 23:15,16). This implies he murdered the priests and burnt their bones on the altars, or it could refer to the exhuming of their bodies buried near the altars (:4) and burning their bones. This would have been seen as permanently desecrating the altars. This was done because God said that He would do this if His people broke covenant (Lev. 26:30), and Josiah is recognizing that indeed they had broken covenant and were worthy of such things. However, it would seem from :15 that Josiah was ignorant of those curses for disobedience; so it may be that he intuitively did what was written in them without specifically being aware of them. This is the spirit of Rom. 2:14.

2Ch 34:6 He did this in the cities of Manasseh and Ephraim and Simeon, even to Naphtali, in their surrounding ruins-

Simeonites lived in Judah (1 Chron. 4:28). But even in the ruined northern tribes, ruined because of the Assyrians, they were still worshipping idols and had not been led to repentance. Like Hezekiah, Josiah had a sense of responsibility towards the separated, spiritually weak brethren of the ten tribes. And he also knew that idolatry there would easily seep into Judah, as it had done previously. This sense of responsibility even for separated brethren is another abiding lesson for us. Assyrian power was declining, which is why Josiah was able to enter Israel and do this. It seems Josiah had a vision of a reunited kingdom, centered around Yahweh worship. This was indeed the prophetic potential, but the idolatrous hearts of the people precluded it from coming about.

2Ch 34:7 He broke down the altars, and beat the Asherim and the engraved images into powder, and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel, and returned to Jerusalem-

"All the land of Israel" need not mean that every altar in all Israel was broken down, but that he went throughout "all Israel" on this mission; see on :6.

2Ch 34:8 Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of Yahweh his God-

"His God" could imply that he was not widely supported by the people. For as ever, their hearts soon returned to idolatry after this. For the chronological issue on when this repair occurred, see on :3. The "scribe" or historian was a senior advisor in the Hebrew court (2 Sam. 8:17; 2 Kings 18:18,37; 2 Chron. 34:8) because of the huge value attached to history in the Hebrew mind, and as reflected in the Bible being largely history. Advice on how to act was to be based upon historical, or as we would now say, "Biblical", precedent.

2Ch 34:9 They came to Hilkiah the high priest, and delivered the money that was brought into God's house, which the Levites, the keepers of the threshold, had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin, and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem-

AV "And they returned to Jerusalem". We note the generosity of the people even in the northern tribes, as well as the Israelites living in Judah ["the remnant of Israel"]. The way the various sources of income are described suggests a detailed record was made, indeed Kings says that Hilkiah took the sum. The half shekel temple tax was to be paid when a census was taken, and it seems this is what he did.

2Ch 34:10 They delivered it into the hand of the workmen who had the oversight of the house of Yahweh. The workmen who laboured in the house of Yahweh gave it to mend and repair the house-

Chronicles was written for the encouragement of the exiles to likewise mend and repair the temple, and so they were intended to take encouragement from these men.

2Ch 34:11 even to the carpenters and to the builders they gave it, to buy cut stone, and timber for couplings, and to make beams for the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed-

The destruction of the temple by these kings may not have been because they totally rejected Yahweh. The essence of their apostasy, as ours, was to use the things of Yahweh for idolatry, to mix paganism and the way of the flesh with Yahweh worship. So it is likely that when we read of men like Manasseh building other temples or shrines to idols in the vicinity of the temple, what happened was that they took the materials from the temple structure and used them for the idol temples. For materials like cut stone and timber were expensive and hard to source; Solomon had spent huge effort in bringing them from far away to build Yahweh's temple.

2Ch 34:12 The men did the work faithfully; and their overseers were Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set it forward; and others of the Levites, all who were skilful with instruments of music-

This could mean that the builders worked to the accompaniment of spiritual music. Or that musicians, not used to manual labour, worked in the rebuilding; just as apothecaries and others unused to such work laboured in rebuilding the wall in Nehemiah's time. And Chronicles was written for their encouragement.

2Ch 34:13 Also they were over the bearers of burdens, and set forward all who did the work in every kind of service. Of the Levites there were scribes, and officers, and porters-

This is the first time we read of the "scribes" as a distinct body. Although possibly they began in the time of Hezekiah (Prov. 25:1). Whilst this was the class which so persecuted the Lord Jesus generations later, the original intention was that they would be responsible for "the writings" and perhaps interpretation of them. But for now, they were to be concerned not with academic study, but in making the word flesh through actually labour in the rebuilding work.

2Ch 34:14 When they brought out the money that was brought into the house of Yahweh, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of Yahweh given by Moses-

All spiritual endeavour leads to the Lord inviting us deeper into that endeavour; thus it was as Barnabas and Paul went about their ministering to the Lord that they were invited to go on a missionary journey (Acts 13:2). Likewise it was as the Levites were in process of collecting funds for repairing the temple, that they found the book of the law- perhaps because they needed more space in which to store the donations, and whilst making space they found the scroll. In the process of being a deacon, faith is developed (1 Tim. 3:13). The very process of service and obedience leads to greater faith in practice.

There is an apparent parallel between money being found in the temple, and the book of the law being found (2 Kings 22:8,9). The idea is that as David often says in

Ps. 119, Yahweh's law was the greatest treasure. So much so that the Chronicles record focuses so much on the book of the law being found that no direct mention is made of the money also "found" along with it until :17. Even in Kings, the discovery of the money is only mentioned in passing, as if the greatest discovery was not wealth, but God's law. And that is an abiding principle.

2Ch 34:15 Hilkiyah answered Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Yahweh. Hilkiyah delivered the book to Shaphan-

This book was probably not the entire Pentateuch, but the curses for disobedience in Dt. 28, for Josiah's response is appropriate to someone who had just heard them read. But see on :5. Jer. 15:16 refers to this: "Your words were found, and I did eat them... [they] were to me the joy and the delight of my heart: for I am called by Your name, Yahweh". Jeremiah rejoiced in those words of judgment. And as a result, "I am called by Your name"- the language of a woman marrying and taking her husband's name (Is. 4:1). The word of God was his "joy [and] delight"- two words used four times elsewhere in Jeremiah, and always in the context of the joy of a wedding (Jer. 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11). Jeremiah saw his prophetic task as actually a marriage to God, an inbreathing of His word and being, to the point that he could say that he personally was "full of the wrath / passion of God" (Jer. 6:11). Jeremiah's lament that the people had no joy or delight in God's word (Jer. 6:10) is the basis for this comment that when he found God's words, they were his joy.

2Ch 34:16 Shaphan carried the book to the king, and moreover brought back word to the king, saying, All that was committed to your servants, they are doing-

There appears an intentional contrast here. The book of the law contained a list of curses for disobedience, and the people had not been doing according to God's word. But the message of Shaphan is that the servants are doing all they have been commanded to do. The idea is that Josiah perceived this, and realized that all this rebuilding of the temple was not going to save them of itself. They needed to make a heart repentance amongst all the people, in order to truly avoid Divine judgment. And this was so relevant to the exiles, for whom Chronicles was written. Rebuilding the temple alone was not in fact what God primarily wanted. He desired their hearts.

2Ch 34:17 They have emptied out the money that was found in the house of Yahweh, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and into the hand of the workmen-

The implication is that all was being done honestly. Whenever there was an appeal for materials, money or labour to build the tabernacle or rebuild the temple, God's people were always very responsive. But the lesson of Judah's history is that material generosity is not the same as true spirituality.

2Ch 34:18 Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest has delivered me a book. Shaphan read therein before the king-

What was read were the curses for disobedience. The harder side of the Father and the Lord Jesus should actually serve as an attraction to the serious believer. Peter knew that if it really was the Lord Jesus out there on the water, then He would bid him walk on the water to Him. Peter knew his Lord, and the sort of things He would ask men to do- the very hardest things for them in their situation. He knew how Jesus could be a demanding Lord. Jeremiah "knew that this was the word of the Lord" when he was

asked to do something so humanly senseless- to buy property when he was in prison, when the land was clearly about to be overrun by the Babylonians (Jer. 31:8). When Jeremiah had earlier found the curses for disobedience recorded in the book of the Law which had been lost, He 'ate them', those words of cursings were "the joy and rejoicing of my heart" - they so motivated him (Jer. 15:16 = 2 Chron. 34:18-21). When Ananias and Sapphira were slain by the Lord, fear came upon "as many as heard these things" .

2Ch 34:19 It happened, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he tore his clothes-

Although Josiah was personally innocent, he felt so passionately for God's people. We too need to have hearts that bleed for others, and not be solely concerned with our own standing before God. For our standing before Him involves our attitudes to others and our concern for their salvation, if we truly seek God's glory and not our own.

2Ch 34:20 The king commanded Hilkiyah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant saying- This is the Ahikam of Jer. 26:24; 40:5. His son Gedaliah appears to have been faithful and to also have cared for Jeremiah after Jerusalem fell (Jer. 40:6).

2Ch 34:21 Go inquire of Yahweh for me, and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found. Great is the wrath of Yahweh that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of Yahweh, to do according to all that is written in this book-

"Poured out" is "kindled" in 2 Kings; the sense was that he realized the wrath of God was kindled and was literally about to burn against them, and so repentance must be immediate with no time to lose.

2Ch 34:22 So Hilkiyah, and they whom the king had commanded, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she lived in Jerusalem in the second quarter), and they spoke to her to that effect-

"The second quarter" may refer to a newer area of Jerusalem (Zeph. 1:10 RV), or as AV "the college", implying as a prophetess she had a kind of Bible study centre.

"Keeper of the wardrobe" may refer to the priestly garments (cp. 2 Kings 10:22).

2Ch 34:23 She said to them, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: 'Tell the man who sent you to me-

We see here and in :26 how Josiah had no direct vision from God. He was dealing all the time through the prophetic word relayed to him, and his obedience to it is the more commendable. Because it reflects his humility to God's revealed word, in a way more impressive than if these words had come directly to him. We are in his position, and should learn from him.

2Ch 34:24 Thus says Yahweh, Behold, I will bring evil on this place, and on its inhabitants, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah-

The reference to curses suggests that the scrolls discovered contained at least Dt. 28 and Dt. 27:15-26. See on :5.

2Ch 34:25 Because they have forsaken Me, and have burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore is My wrath poured out on this place, and it shall not be quenched'-

God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us.

Idolatrous Israel never *consciously* tried to provoke Yahweh to anger with their apostasy; the words of the prophets must have seemed to them a gross exaggeration. But this was really how God saw it (2 Chron. 34:25).

Although "it shall not be quenched", Josiah knew God well enough to try to quench it, by getting all His people to make a from the heart commitment to Him. Even though God had told Josiah that His wrath with His people would not be quenched, it would seem that there was still some possibility of "remedy", had the people accepted God's word in their hearts (2 Chron. 36:16). We see here His absolute eagerness for their repentance, and unwillingness that any of His people should have to perish. And that is the same God with whom we have to do.

2Ch 34:26 But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of Yahweh, thus you shall tell him, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: 'As touching the words which you have heard-

See on :23 for the significance of Josiah not receiving these words directly.

2Ch 34:27 because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place, and against its inhabitants, and have humbled yourself before Me and have torn your clothes, and wept before Me; I also have heard you, says Yahweh-

We see here the mutuality between God and man; He hears the man who hears Him. We see the root of humility as being in having a heart / mind sensitive to Him. But "tender heart" is the same phrase used for being "faint hearted" in time of battle (Dt. 20:3; Is. 7:4; Jer. 51:46). It was as if Josiah saw the judgment of God coming, as if it had come, and was faint hearted before the soldiers he saw coming against him. And yet even such a tender heart can be given by God (s.w. Job 23:16), for He can also give attitudes of mind by His sovereign operation .

2Ch 34:28 Behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, neither shall your eyes see all the evil that I will bring on this place, and on its inhabitants'. They brought back word to the king-

This is a similar situation to the promise to Hezekiah and Ahab (1 Kings 21:29). It is as if God judged the entire weight of sin to be such that even Josiah's reformation could only delay and not remove the judgment for it. However, if the people had all repented in their hearts, rather than passively allowing a reformer like Josiah to remove the external evidence of idolatry, then surely the outcome could have been different. See on :31.

The reality was that Josiah died in battle, not in peace (2 Chron. 35:22-24). Yet he had been promised to be gathered to his grave in peace (2 Chron. 34:28). Here we have an example of God making a statement about the future which is conditional

upon human behaviour. Thus He stated that Nineveh would be destroyed in 40 days; but it wasn't, because they repented. There is a gap between the pronouncement and its fulfilment, and in that gap our behaviour can change the outcome. We too must waste so many potential futures.

2Ch 34:29 Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem-

Josiah's idea was to bring about a reformation of the ordinary people, as in :30 we read of the people small and great being gathered. So presumably his gathering of the leaders was in order for them to bring their people with them.

2Ch 34:30 The king went up to the house of Yahweh, and all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, both great and small; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of Yahweh-

2 Kings has "prophets" for "Levites". There were clearly prophets actively operating at this time. As noted on :31, Josiah saw the only way to change the threatened judgments as getting the ordinary people to repent in their hearts. Unlike Hezekiah, he was not satisfied with simply avoiding seeing judgment come in his days. Indeed he learned from Hezekiah's mistake in that matter. See on 2 Chron. 35:7.

2Ch 34:31 The king stood in his place, and made a covenant before Yahweh, to walk after Yahweh-

Maybe a reference to Dt. 10:12,13, which perhaps was in this scroll.

And to keep His commandments, His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book-

Josiah recognizes that Judah have broken covenant with God and must be judged appropriately (see on :5,28). God was unwilling to ultimately avert the judgment upon the people because of their state of heart. And yet Josiah throws himself into trying to persuade the people to totally give themselves to covenant relationship. He realized that in the gap between the pronouncement of judgment, and it being carried out, there was the possibility of repentance and the judgment not being performed. His mentor Jeremiah had made this point in Jer. 18, and was also appealing to the people to change their hearts so that the threatened judgment wouldn't happen. This is how open God's purpose is, and Josiah and Jeremiah perceived that.

2Ch 34:32 He caused all who were found in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. The inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers-

There are a number of Old Testament examples of preaching the word after becoming aware of the depth of one's own sins. Consider Jonah preaching the second time, with the marks in his body after three days in the whale, admitting his rebellion against Yahweh, pleading with them to respond to His word. Reflect how when his head was wrapped around with seaweed, at the bottom of the sea at the absolute end of mortal life, he made a vow to God, which he then fulfilled, presumably in going back to preach to Nineveh (Jonah 2:9). His response to having confessed his sins and daring to believe in God's forgiveness, turning again towards His temple even from underwater, was to resolve to preach to others if he was spared his life. And this he did, although as with so many of us, the pureness of his initial evangelical zeal soon

flaked. Or consider Manasseh, 2 Chron. 33:16; Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. 19:3 cp. 18:31; 19:2; Josiah, 2 Chron. 34:29,32; Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 3:29; 4:2...

We note the specific reference to the people of Jerusalem. It seems that Josiah tried to gather together literally all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all "found" there. And yet Jerusalem particularly was to suffer in the judgments to come, and Jeremiah's prophecies at this time tend to single out Jerusalem for particular judgment for the unspirituality of the population. So again we perceive that this was all the enthusiasm of Josiah; the people's hearts weren't affected. This is the trouble with mass meetings for "revival". Reformation is essentially personal and of the heart.

2Ch 34:33 Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all who were found in Israel to serve, even to serve Yahweh their God. All his days they didn't depart from following Yahweh, the God of their fathers-

As noted above, Assyrian power was declining, and the ten tribes although living in ruins, were invited hereby to become Josiah's subjects. His vision was of a reunited kingdom of Israel and Judah, based around solid commitment to Yahweh. For a people accepted the gods of those dominant over them, and Israel were now agreeing to accept Yahweh, which was Judah's God, as theirs. But this was to be experienced only in "his days" as his son Jehoiakim let the ball drop rather dramatically. All this potential was wasted by him.

Josiah discovered the book of the Law- and he then went on to do something about it in practice. Reflect through what he did:

Passover kept in Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:21-23) = Dt. 16:1-8; Removed asherahs (2 Kings 23:4,6,14) = Dt. 12:3; 16:21; Star worship removed (2 Kings 23:4,11) = Dt. 17:3; The 'high places' and cults removed (2 Kings 23:8-20) = Dt. 12; Child sacrifice ended (2 Kings 23:10) = Dt. 12:31; 18:10; The cultic stones / 'mazzeboth' removed (2 Kings 23:14) = Dt. 12:3; 16:22; Conjouring up the dead ended (2 Kings 23:24) = Dt. 18:11.

Do you notice from where in Deuteronomy he got those ideas? From chapters 12-18. My suggestion is that he maxed out on that part of the 'book of the law' which was read to him, and went and did it. The Lord in the wilderness was likewise motivated by Deuteronomy chapters 6 and 8.

In the first century, when people heard the Gospel, they were generally baptized immediately. This meant that the prison keeper was baptized in the middle of the night, amidst an earthquake... in essence, people heard the message, and responded immediately. We likewise heard of the Bible's teaching about baptism, and we did something concrete and actual- we got wet. We went under the water. But we must ask ourselves whether we are continuing to be responsive to the word of God which we become increasingly familiar with as we read daily. Our very familiarity with it can militate against a real response. When last did you read / understand something from Scripture, and then get up and *do something real, concrete and actual about it?*

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 35

2Ch 35:1 Josiah kept a Passover to Yahweh in Jerusalem: and they killed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month-

Josiah urged the people to keep this (2 Kings 23:21) despite having been told in 2 Chron. 34:25 that the people would indeed be judged for their sons. He had sought to change this by appealing for all the people to enter covenant with Yahweh from their

hearts (2 Chron. 34:30). And he seeks to confirm this by holding a huge Passover, where he provided the people with the sacrifices.

2Ch 35:2 He set the priests in their offices, and encouraged them to the service of the house of Yahweh-

This encouragement may have been necessary because they themselves were not so enthusiastic; for as noted on :3, it was their servants the Levites who were teaching Israel, when the priests ought to have been doing so.

2Ch 35:3 He said to the Levites who taught all Israel, who were holy to Yahweh, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel built. There shall no more be a burden on your shoulders. Now serve Yahweh your God and His people Israel-

The Levites here are distinguished from the priests (:2). But it was the duty of the priests to teach (2 Chron. 15:3; Mal. 2:7), but we sense the priesthood was not solidly behind the reforms; although their servants the Levites were. This is similar to how the situation was at the time of Hezekiah's reforms (2 Chron. 29:34), and it explains why all these reforms were so quickly undone; for the priesthood and people were always still hankering after idols.

We note that the ark had been carried around on their shoulders for some time, and the temple was therefore devoid of the supreme symbol of God's presence. The religion of Judah had therefore been hollow for quite some time. Perhaps the ark had been removed from the temple by Manasseh, or by faithful priests who feared he would destroy it or abuse it.

2Ch 35:4 Prepare yourselves after your fathers' houses by your divisions, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son-

These writings had been preserved for some centuries, and had presumably been copied out by the scribes. But they had to be urged all the time by Josiah to act in a way which ought to have been natural for them if they from their hearts were really obedient and eager for reformation (see on :3).

2Ch 35:5 Stand in the holy place according to the divisions of the fathers' houses of your brothers the children of the people, and let there be for each a portion of a father's house of the Levites-

"The children of the people" is s.w. "the common people" (2 Kings 23:6). The idea is that each father's house of the common people was assigned a group of Levites to help them in the preparation of the Passover sacrifices. And we noted in :3 that the Levites had at this time replaced the priests as the teachers, so they presumably also taught them what the law of Moses said about the Passover.

2Ch 35:6 Kill the Passover and sanctify yourselves, and prepare for your brothers, to do according to the word of Yahweh by Moses-

The Levites were to perceive the common people of Israel as their "brothers" (:5) which is the most effective way of teaching (:3) and spiritually helping people, rather than assuming a position of high authority over them.

2Ch 35:7 Josiah gave to the children of the people of the flock, lambs and young goats, all of them for the Passover offerings, to all who were present, to the number of

thirty thousand, and three thousand bulls. These were of the king's substance-
The people were intended to bring their own Passover lambs, but they hadn't. And Josiah was hoping that he could bring the hearts of the people back to Yahweh (see on 2 Chron. 34:30) so that the threatened judgment upon them would be revoked. We recall that Josiah himself had been assured of his personal acceptability with God, and that he would not see judgment come in his days. Unlike Hezekiah, he didn't shrug at the fate of his people. He of his own substance gave them huge numbers of animals in order that they would each have something personal to offer, in accordance with the law (:6). But again, this was a case of a reformer seeking to impose his vision upon the masses, and it ultimately didn't work. For they soon returned to idolatry and were judged for that. Hezekiah likewise had given the people the offerings they themselves ought to have brought (2 Chron. 30:24) and that too didn't ultimately work out.

2Ch 35:8 His princes gave for a freewill offering to the people, to the priests, and to the Levites. Hilkiah and Zechariah and Jehiel, the rulers of God's house, gave to the priests for the Passover offerings two thousand and six hundred small livestock, and three hundred head of cattle-

Hilkiah is well attested as the one who found the lost book of the law (2 Kings 22:8), helped in Josiah's reforms (2 Kings 22:14-20) and arranged the great Passover observance of 2 Chron. 35:1-19. But Hilkiah did all this despite being the son of a High Priest called Shallum (1 Chron. 6:12,13), whose name can mean 'bribe' (s.w. Mic. 7:3 about the corruption of the priesthood). Perhaps this was what he was known for. But his son / descendant rose above that bad background, as we can. "For a freewill offering" may be better as AV "freely", that is these offerings were given willingly and freely.

2Ch 35:9 Conaniah also, and Shemaiah and Nethanel, his brothers, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, the chiefs of the Levites, gave to the Levites for the Passover offerings five thousand small livestock, and five hundred head of cattle-

This was a major act of generosity, reflecting Hezekiah's desire to as it were make the people acceptable to God by each having something to offer. But sacrifice is ultimately a very personal thing and cannot be forced, nor done using other people as a proxy.

2Ch 35:10 So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their place, and the Levites by their divisions, according to the king's commandment-

This was all done according to the commandment of God through Moses (:6). Josiah was careful that his commandments exactly reflected God's. He was sincerely doing all he could to make the people acceptable to God through strict obedience. But it didn't ultimately work because their hearts were untouched and soon returned to idolatry.

2Ch 35:11 They killed the Passover, and the priests sprinkled the blood which they received of their hand, and the Levites flayed them-

As noted on :10,13 Josiah was being careful to follow the absolute letter of the law.

2Ch 35:12 They removed the burnt offerings, that they might give them according to the divisions of the fathers' houses of the children of the people, to offer to Yahweh, as it is written in the book of Moses. So they did with the cattle-

As explained on :5, the animals were carefully given to the common people to offer.

But those huge numbers of sacrifices, put into the hands of people to offer, was not the spirit of the law. God had made it clear that He didn't delight in huge numbers of offerings, but rather sought humble, contrite hearts. Just as David had been taught when faced with death over his sins with Bathsheba. But the hearts of the people were apparently unmoved at this time. It was all the externality of mere ritualism.

2Ch 35:13 They roasted the Passover with fire according to the ordinance. They boiled the holy offerings in pots, in caldrons and in pans, and carried them quickly to all the children of the people-

"According to the ordinance" reflects the continued stress on the fact they were doing all they could to be obedient to the letter of the law (see on :10). But as noted on :12, what was required was broken hearts, and not rivers of blood and mounds of slain animals. What was offered using pots was the boiled flesh of the peace offerings, offered on the days of unleavened bread (Lev. 23:4-8). We get the impression of hyper vigilance to obey the letter of the law; although their hearts were still far from God, and they had not even brought their own Passover sacrifices.

2Ch 35:14 Afterward they prepared for themselves, and for the priests, because the priests the sons of Aaron were busy with offering the burnt offerings and the fat until night; therefore the Levites prepared for themselves, and for the priests the sons of Aaron-

The priests themselves kept the Passover, despite being so busy, although they needed the help of the Levites to do it. Again we have the impression of careful, all out effort to obey every letter of the law about the Passover. We may take the lesson that we are not to be so caught up with serving others that we neglect personal obedience. But the stronger lesson is that all this legalistic obedience didn't succeed, as Josiah hoped it would, in averting the judgment coming upon the people. Because their hearts were not changed.

2Ch 35:15 The singers the sons of Asaph were in their place, according to the commandment of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun the king's prophet. The porters were at every gate: they didn't need to depart from their service; for their brothers the Levites prepared for them-

Jeduthun is called Ethan in 1 Chron. 6:44. As with priests explained on :14, the singers also kept the Passover because the Levites prepared it for them. But we wonder whether this was not a departure from the letter of the law, for each family were to prepare their Passover lamb personally and not have others doing it for them. So in the intense effort to obey the letter of the law (see on :14), they still had to fall back upon keeping the spirit of it.

2Ch 35:16 So all the service of Yahweh was prepared the same day, to keep the Passover, and to offer burnt offerings on the altar of Yahweh, according to the commandment of king Josiah-

"So the service... was prepared / set in order" is a phrase used only of the time of Hezekiah's reformation (2 Chron. 29:35) and of that of Josiah (2 Chron. 35:10,15,16). I suggested on 2 Chron. 29:17 ,18 that this term was used in the context of Hezekiah keeping a kind of Passover. It seems Josiah was inspired by the record of Hezekiah's reformation, and sought to follow it. Just as we too in our own contexts are to be inspired by the spirit of these reformers.

2Ch 35:17 The children of Israel who were present kept the Passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days-

The number of sacrificial lambs was huge. If each extended family numbered 13 people, there would have been over half a million people present. But that is unrealistic. More like, each head of family offered more than one Passover lamb, in an attempt to cover families not present. It was Josiah's attempt at as it were impressing God by the number of animals offered, and to somehow cleanse all Israel. But he failed to appreciate that numbers of sacrifices were not impressive to God, and He instead was searching for broken hearts as David's was. And there is no mention of any appeal to the hearts of the people.

2Ch 35:18 There was no Passover like that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did any of the kings of Israel keep such a Passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem-

This Passover was unique both in terms of numbers of offerings, and in the strict obedience to all the legislation about it. We note the repeated treatment of "the inhabitants of Jerusalem" as a separate group. And yet Jeremiah, who was the contemporary prophet, specifically criticizes this group above all as being so far from Yahweh in their hearts. And this was the critical dimension which was not addressed by all this ritualistic obedience.

2Ch 35:19 In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this Passover kept-

We have no record of what Josiah did in the last 13 years of his reign (2 Chron. 34:1), apart from the note we will now have about how he died in disobedience to God's word. Perhaps this was the end point of a spiritual slip in that period. Tragically, so many of the kings started well and slipped at the end; truly a warning to us. We would rather hope to read that Judah continued to keep Passovers after this one, but there is no record of that. See on :20.

2Ch 35:20 After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Neco king of Egypt went up to fight against Carchemish by the Euphrates; and Josiah went out against him-

"After all this" may suggest that despite all this external obedience, 13 years later, Josiah came to his end in unfaithfulness to God's word, despite all his zeal to so carefully obey every part of the rituals commanded by Moses.

2Ch 35:21 But he sent ambassadors to him saying, What have I to do with you, you king of Judah? I come not against you this day, but against the house with which I have war. God has commanded me to make haste. Beware and know that it is God who is with me, that he not destroy you-

God does use Gentiles to perform His purpose, and even they often get a sense of this, without themselves believing.

2Ch 35:22 Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and didn't listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo-

Going into battle disguised is exactly what Ahab did (2 Chron. 18:29), and was slain doing it- having also defied God's prophetic word to do so. See on :23. Josiah totally

failed to hear God's word at this point, both from the historical precedents and the explicit prophecy given to him. The valley of Megiddo, and mourning in it (:24), will have an equivalent in the latter days (Zech. 12:10). Josiah therefore seems to represent a disobedient Israel, who will be finally saved by grace.

2Ch 35:23 The archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Take me away, because I am seriously wounded!-

Josiah must have seen the similarities with the death of Ahab, also slain by archers in his chariot (2 Chron. 18:33). He died in the same way as Ahab because he too had refused to accept God's prophetic word, despite previously having been so sensitive to it. We naturally wonder whether Josiah will be saved, despite dying in sin, or at best, at a very low point spiritually. The overall spirit of his life was perhaps acceptable with God (2 Chron. 34:2), despite this failure at the end. This may help us more positively hope for those who are weak at the end of their lives, such as those believers who take their own lives.

2Ch 35:24 So his servants took him out of the chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had, and brought him to Jerusalem; and he died, and was buried in the tombs of his fathers. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah-

Josiah died in battle, not in peace (2 Chron. 35:22-24). Yet he had been promised to be gathered to his grave in peace (2 Chron. 34:28). Here we have an example of God making a statement about the future which is conditional upon human behaviour. Thus He stated that Nineveh would be destroyed in 40 days; but it wasn't, because they repented. There is a gap between the pronouncement and its fulfilment, and in that gap our behaviour can change the outcome. We too must waste so many potential futures.

2Ch 35:25 Jeremiah lamented for Josiah. All the singing men and singing women spoke of Josiah in their lamentations to this day; and they made them an ordinance in Israel. These are written in the lamentations-

The timing of Josiah's reformation (2 Chron. 34:3) coincides with the prophecies of Jer. 2,3; he heard them, and responded. Hence Jeremiah wept when Josiah died, remembering how as a teenager, Josiah had heard his prophecies and immediately responded to them.

2Ch 35:26 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his good deeds, according to that which is written in the law of Yahweh-

Josiah died in spiritual weakness and at a point of disobedience to God's word (2 Chron. 35:20-24). The rubric 'He did what was right...' used about him (2 Chron. 34:2) is found even of kings who clearly departed from Yahweh. The truly righteous ones such as Jehoshaphat have a clause added to their summary, saying that they had followed Yahweh in their hearts. But this is lacking in the case of Josiah. We note too that he raised evil sons. And so we wonder whether the record is acknowledging the good works which he did at some points in his life, and it here concludes with this too. But there is a notable absence of any statement to the intent that he was judged as having a heart right with God. And the state of the heart was and is the critical indicator in God's final judgment of men.

2Ch 35:27 and his acts, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah-

As discussed on :26, this puts huge emphasis upon his works rather than the state of his heart. As discussed on 2 Chron. 33:18, the "book of the kings" apparently included Manasseh's prayer, which is not found in our books of Kings; and so the book referred to here may not be that which we have in our Bibles.

2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 36

2Ch 36:1 Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's place in Jerusalem-

2 Kings 23:31 says that Jehoahaz was the son of Hamutal, whereas his brother Eliakim was the son of Zebudah (2 Kings 23:36). So we see that Josiah practiced polygamy- another indication that he was not such a stellar example of spirituality, despite his works of obedience to the Mosaic law; see on 2 Chron. 35:19,20. And the mothers of his sons are blamed in Ez. 19 for leading them into very bad behaviour, so these were not good women.

2Ch 36:2 Joahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem-

It is possible that Josiah was spiritually sliding downwards in the last 13 years of his reign; see on 2 Chron. 35:19,20. So the formative years of his sons may not have been spent under a good parental influence, which would explain their weakness and apostasy. LXX adds: "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done. And Pharaoh Neco bound him in Deblatha in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem".

2Ch 36:3 The king of Egypt deposed him at Jerusalem, and fined the land one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold-

2 Kings 23:35 says that Jehoiakim raised the tribute for the Babylonians by imposing a poll tax on the people. And he succeeded in raising the money. Yet such a tax ought to have been paid to the temple, but Jehoiakim hadn't bothered doing that. He was "deposed at Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 36:3) but put in bonds at Riblah (2 Kings 23:33), which was on the Orontes river on the road from Babylon to Palestine. This was the same place where Nebuchadnezzar was based during the destruction of Jerusalem, and where the captives were brought to him for judgment (2 Kings 25:20,21). The parallel is to show how Judah were intended to learn from their sufferings at the hands of the Egyptians and to repent. But they didn't, and so the situation repeated with the Babylonians.

2Ch 36:4 The king of Egypt made Eliakim his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. Neco took Joahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt- "Eliakim" means "God will raise", and "Jehoiakim" means the same, only "Yah will raise". Perhaps the king made Eliakim swear by his God Jehovah, that he would be subservient to him. But it could be that the "Jeh" prefix meant something different to the Egyptians, and was effectively a sign of subservience to them; it may even refer to an Egyptian god. Joahaz died in Egypt (2 Kings 23:34) as prophesied in Jer. 22:12. Shallum in Jer. 22 is the same as Jehoahaz. Perhaps he is called Shallum because that word means 'The one marked out for judgment'. I explain on Ez. 4:6 that potentially, the captivity of Judah need only have lasted for 40 days or years, but this period was extended, just as it could have been reduced. But Jehoahaz was not going to experience this, he had precluded any reduction in his captivity period because of his impenitence at that time. Jer. 22:11,12 imply that the false prophets

were claiming that his exile was going to be very short lived and he would return to establish a Messianic kingdom, thus twisting the prophecies of the restoration which Jeremiah may have already given, along with those of Isaiah which were already extant.

LXX adds: "And Pharaoh Neco took his brother Joahaz and brought him into Egypt, and he died there: but he had given the silver and gold to Pharaoh. At that time the land began to be taxed to give the money at the command of Pharaoh; and every one as he could borrowed the silver and the gold of the people of the land, to give to Pharaoh Neco."

2Ch 36:5 Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. He did that which was evil in the eyes of Yahweh his God-

Jer. 22:13-18 gives an example of the sins of Jehoiakim- he built an opulent home for himself and refused to pay the labourers for their work. He also murdered the prophet Urijah who spoke against him (Jer. 26:20-23), and burnt the scroll of God's words and persecuted Jeremiah (Jer. 36).

2Ch 36:6 Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon-

It may not have been Nebuchadnezzar in person. "To carry him to Babylon" means that was the intention, but it may not have happened. Jer. 22:18,19 says he was to be thrown out onto the garbage tip outside Jerusalem like a dead donkey. 2 Kings says that bands of the Babylonians attacked him at this time, and he may have been slain at this time.

2Ch 36:7 Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of Yahweh to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon-

"Of the vessels" means they were not all taken at this time; that was to happen later (:18). Babylon's original plan seemed to have been to make Judah a tributary state, taking away the leadership and seeking to make the youngsters like Daniel completely Babylonian, with a view to them returning and governing Judah. Hence only part of the vessels were initially taken. But this changed to a policy of complete destruction. It would have been at this time that Daniel and his friends went into captivity. Dan. 1:2 describes this situation: "He carried them into the land of Shinar to the house of his god: and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god". The captives were paralleled with the temple treasures; they were taken into the temple as evidence that Yahweh and His people had now been apparently dominated. But Isaiah had prophesied that Bel would be rendered helpless and judged (Is. 46:1,2). The faithful captives would have remembered that, even when it seemed their chips were down.

2Ch 36:8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and his abominations which he did, and that which was found in him, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah-

I have noted earlier that the kings are often described with a double description- of their works, and of their heart. Some of them like Jehoshaphat had imperfect works but good hearts for God; others performed some outstanding works at some times, but their hearts were not devoted to Yahweh. Here we have the same double reference; Jehoiakim's works were abominations, and what was "found in him", by the Divine search of his heart, was also [it is implied] very bad. I have noted before that "the book of the kings" is not necessarily the books we know as 1 and 2 Kings in our Bibles.

Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place-

Jeconiah of 1 Chron. 3:16 is Coniah in Jer. 22:14, and Jehoiachin in 2 Chron. 36:8,9; 2 Kings 24:6. A reminder that people carried multiple names, explaining some of the apparent contradictions in the genealogies. Ez. 19 says that he was effectively made king by his

ambitious mother, whose hope was to be the glorious queen mother, teaching her sons to be ambitious, aggressive lions to that end.

2Ch 36:9 Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem. He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh- Jehoiachin of 2 Chron. 36:9 is also called Jeconiah or Jechoniah (1 Chron. 3:16,17); Coniah (Jer. 22:24), and Jechoniah in 2 Chron. 24:1. We note that he was judged as a sinner at eight years old, for what he did over a 70 day period. We sometimes tend to excuse ourselves on the basis of only being products of our background. But eight year old Jehoiachin reigned a mere three months and ten days: and God's comment was that "he did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh". We could, of course, make the excuse that his surroundings, his immediate family, his peers...were all idolatrous. But Yahweh evidently didn't see this as any real excuse: he, at sweet eight years old, "did that which was evil" and was punished accordingly. Not only does this give an unusual insight into God's view of responsibility; but it shows that God expects even a child to break away from background influences when they are evil.

However, 2 Kings 24:8 says he was 18. Although even so, 18 is very young to be condemned for 70 days' behaviour, and the points made above about God's sensitivity to sin still stand. Kings also gives "three months" rather than "three months and ten days", and it has been suggested that the "ten" has been misplaced by a copyist, explaining why 18 has been miscopied as 8.

2Ch 36:10 At the return of the year king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and brought him to Babylon, with the beautiful vessels of the house of Yahweh, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem-

"Brother" is used in a very wide sense, and more means "uncle" here (2 Kings 24:17). 2 Kings 24:17 says that Nebuchadnezzar changed the name Mattaniah, 'gift of Yah', to "Zedekiah", 'Yah is right / just'. Perhaps even Nebuchadnezzar perceived that Yahweh was judging Judah justly. But "Zedekiah" is also "Yahweh our righteousness", but his birth name was Mattaniah (2 Kings 24:17). We wonder if this was a pre existing name given him by Josiah, and that Josiah named him this in keeping with his vision of reestablishing the Kingdom of God, based around a united Israel and Judah centered around worshipping Yahweh. For this is the term associated with king of the restored kingdom in Jer. 23:6; 33:16; 51:10. But he again was a case of wasted potential.

2Ch 36:11 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem-

Hamutal his mother (2 Kings 24:18) is severely criticized in Ez. 19 as an ambitious, aggressive and scheming mother lion who set up her young lion sons for destruction by wanting them to be kings. Instead they needed to heed Jeremiah's message and humble themselves before Babylon, realizing they had sinned, rather than trying to break away from Babylon to achieve the independent kingship their mother was so obsessed with.

2Ch 36:12 He did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh his God; he didn't humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking the words of Yahweh-

The prophets "spoke from the mouth of Yahweh" Himself; and yet the people scoffed at them (2 Chron. 36:12,16 RV). The power of inspiration was and is so great; and to not heed God's word is therefore a personal affront to Him. And those words have been recorded. When we read His word, we hear His voice. 1 Kings 13:21 speaks of us hearing "the *mouth* of God". Jeremiah spoke "from the mouth of the Lord". His word brings Him that near to us, if we will

perceive it for what it is. Jeremiah's appeals for Zedekiah to submit to Babylon were repeated so often (Jer. 21:1-7; 34:8-22; 37:1-10,17; 38:17-23).

And yet we wonder whether Zedekiah may have finally repented. For Ez. 21:14 speaks of Zedekiah as "the deadly wounded", likewise "You, deadly wounded wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day has come" (Ez. 21:25). The intention was that Zedekiah would die by the sword, but in fact he didn't. He was blinded, but died peacefully in prison (Jer. 52:11). The wound that ought to have been unto death was in fact not unto death- because God wanted him to be moved by His grace to repent. And the change of judgment upon him would suggest to me that he did repent.

2Ch 36:13 He also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God; but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart against turning to Yahweh, the God of Israel-

Turning to Yahweh with a soft heart therefore involved his accepting that Judah had sinned, and therefore their servitude to Babylon was the appropriate punishment. But egged on by his mother (see on :11), Zedekiah broke his oath to Nebuchadnezzar, which he had made in the name of Yahweh. He thus despised the Name. The parable of Ez. 17:12-20 clearly condemns him for doing this (also Ez. 21:25). Ez. 17:14 explains the intention of God in all this: "That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping his covenant it might stand". The idea may be that it was God's plan that through keeping the covenant, the royal family and leadership would be humbled, and this would bring about God's favourite paradox- the brought down could then be exalted, "that... it might stand". See on Ez. 17:24. But they refused to repent, to be humbled, to be ashamed, and instead sought to wriggle out of the covenant by making agreements with Egypt to attack the Babylonian forces, liberate Jerusalem and perhaps later themselves from Babylon itself. Yet all these things had been explicitly promised to Judah; God would do all these things, if they repented. But instead of doing so, they sought by all manner of desperate means to bring about this liberation in the strength of Egypt. This is so typical of human behaviour. It is for us to learn the lesson.

Ez. 17:15 commented: "Shall he who does such things escape? Shall he break the covenant, and yet escape?". This is the language of Judah breaking covenant with God, just used in Ez. 16:59. God had designed the covenant between Zedekiah and the Babylonians, for the spiritual growth and repentance of the Jews. To break it was therefore to effectively break covenant with God. Or we could instead perceive that covenant breaking with God is reflected in covenant breaking with men. Our attitude to God becomes our attitude to men. Hence Ez. 17:19 specifically states: "Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: As I live, surely My oath that he has despised, and My covenant that he has broken, I will even bring it on his own head". Judah were light hearted in their attitude to everything; they "gave the hand" in covenant (Ez. 17:18) in order just to get "bread" (Lam. 5:6). They were in need, and instead of turning to God in repentance, they madly made promises of total loyalty to various peoples and their gods. It is this light hearted, not serious attitude, seeking for the immediate for the total sacrifice of principle, which dominates our age today.

2Ch 36:14 Moreover all the chiefs of the priests, and the people, trespassed very greatly after all the abominations of the nations; and they polluted the house of Yahweh which He had made holy in Jerusalem-

Their sin with "all" the abominable idols of the nations is in contrast to how those nations were themselves loyal to their gods. But Judah was so desperate for help that she prostituted herself to every possible god of the nations. Hence Hosea describes her with the image of a woman who is sexually addicted. This is what happens when someone goes away from the true God; they will live a sad life of endless drifting between idols, desperately trying to find

as much benefit as possible from as many of them as possible. The temple was therefore finally found to be full of various idols and images to various gods.

2Ch 36:15 Yahweh, the God of their fathers, sent to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place-

Several times God speaks of His rising up early in the morning through the ministry of the prophets, every single day since Israel left Egypt (2 Chron. 36:15; Jer. 7:13,25). The figure is stressed- God Himself rose up early every day to teach and appeal to His people (Jer. 32:33). Alarm clocks have changed our appreciation of this. Have you ever had to make yourself wake up before dawn, without an alarm clock? You can only do it by having a deep internal, subconscious awareness that you must get up early. You don't sleep well, you keep waking up and wondering if it's time to get up. So to make oneself rise up early was easily understood as a figure expressing great mental effort. And God did this *every day* for centuries... This figure of rising up early is surely the basis for the Lord's parable in Mt. 20:1- where God is likened to a man going out early in the morning to hire labourers. It is through the ministry of His word that God does this- each morning that word calls us to labour for Him in His vineyard. Israel didn't notice the huge effort God puts into His word- that every day He rose early and taught them. We can also misunderstand Biblical inspiration to mean that God effortlessly inspired "the original autographs" long ago, and moved on; but actually the whole process is an ongoing and incredible outgiving of God's energy in appealing to us. And... in our mismanaged, weakly disciplined lives, is it so that we don't even make time to read His word daily?

There is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages, this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Joshua (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10); Gideon (Jud. 6:38; 7:1); Samuel (1 Sam. 15:12); David (1 Sam. 17:20; 29:11); Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:35; 2 Chron. 29:20). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. This can be a figure for being zealous (Ps. 127:2; Pr. 27:14; Song 7:12; Is. 5:11; Zeph. 3:7). God Himself rises up early in His zeal to save and bring back His wayward people (2 Chron. 36:15; Jer. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4). Yet the above examples all show that men literally rose up early in their service to God; this was an expression of their zeal for God, in response to His zeal for us. I'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

2Ch 36:16 But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of Yahweh arose against His people, until there was no remedy- "Despised" is the word used for the sin of presumption (Num. 15:31), and yet having been told this, they could still repent; but they did not, until there was no remedy, the implication being that each time they were told what they were doing, they could have repented. It is the word used by Nathan to David of what he had done (2 Sam. 12:9,10), and he repented in response to the prophetic word of rebuke. Even though God had told Josiah that His wrath with His people would not be quenched (2 Chron. 34:25), it would seem that there was still some possibility of "remedy", had the people accepted God's word in their hearts (2 Chron. 36:16) and not despised and imprisoned Jeremiah and murdered Urijah the prophet (Jer. 26:20-23). We see here His absolute eagerness for their repentance, and unwillingness that any of His people should have to perish. And that is the same God with whom we have to do.

2Ch 36:17 Therefore He brought on them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young

men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or gray-headed. He gave them all into his hand-

The particular anger with the temple was because Judah had promised unique loyalty to Babylon, and had therefore put Babylonian gods in the temple of Yahweh. But when the Babylonians took Jerusalem, they found the temple full of idols to other gods. As the prophets explain, her nakedness was discovered, and she was put to shame before all her lovers. For she had promised each of them unique loyalty and acceptance of their gods. This verse is the fulfilment of the vision of slaughter in Ez. 9:1-11.

2Ch 36:18 All the vessels of God's house, great and small, and the treasures of the house of Yahweh, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon-

These were the vessels remaining after the deportation of :10, and were largely the brass vessels which remained (2 Kings 25:13-15).

2Ch 36:19 They burnt God's house and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all the beautiful vessels of it-

Israel were told to "throw down", "break in pieces" and "utterly destroy" the idols and altars of Canaan. There were times during their history when they obeyed this command by purging themselves from their apostasy in this. The Hebrew words used scarcely occur elsewhere, except very frequently in the context of how God "broke down", "threw down" and "destroyed" Israel at the hands of their Babylonian and Assyrian invaders as a result of their not 'breaking down' (etc.) the idols. "Throw down" in Ex. 34:13; Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chron. 31:1 is the same word in 2 Chron. 36:19; Jer. 4:26; 31:28; 33:4; 39:8; 52:14; Ez. 16:39; Nah. 1:6. "Cut down" in Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chron. 31:1 later occurs in Is. 10:33; Jer. 48:25; Lam. 2:3. So Israel faced the choice: either cut down your idols, or you will be cut down. The stone will either fall on us and destroy us, or we must fall on it and become broken men and women (Mt. 21:44). For the man untouched by the concept of living for God's glory, it's a hard choice. God will conquer sin, ultimately.

2Ch 36:20 He carried those who had escaped from the sword away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia-

Being servants to the ruling dynasty of Babylon was the judgment upon all the nations (Jer. 27:7). So God's people were sharing in the judgments of the world, because they were not separate from the world. And thus the punishment of the apostate amongst the new Israel will be to be "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). The critics claim that the sons or descendants of Nebuchadnezzar ceased to reign at some point before Persia took over. There were three kings of Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar before Cyrus and the Persians took over: Evil-Merodach (Amil-Marduk) (2 Kings 25:27), Neriglissar and Nabonidus. The last two were not "sons" of Nebuchadnezzar but they were both his sons in law. The Hebrew term "sons" is very broad and easily includes this dimension.

2Ch 36:21 to fulfil the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. As long as it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfil seventy years-

It would seem from 2 Chron. 36:21 that the law concerning the land resting every Sabbath year was hardly ever kept, even by the righteous kings. We can imagine how the thinking developed: father didn't do it. grandfather didn't, none of the faithful old kings seemed that interested in it... therefore every time that passage was considered in their study of the Law, it was mentally bypassed. *We are all absolutely expert at this kind of bypass.*

The land of Israel had to be rested every Sabbath year. God's people thought they could quietly ignore this inconvenient requirement of their God, and get away with it. But God has His way, in everything, all the time. Eventually the whole land had to go through 70 years

laying desolate, to compensate for the 70 Sabbaths (over 490 years) which His people had ignored to keep (2 Chron. 36:21).

Closer study reveals the variableness of outworking of the time periods. Jer. 25:11,12 and Jer. 29:10 speak of a 70 year period of Babylonian rule over Judah, beginning with the invasion of BC597. But Babylon only ruled over Judah for 49 years, before Babylon fell to the Persians. This would connect with the way that Zech. 4:3 speaks of 7 menorah candlesticks each with 7 lamps, making 49 lamps. 49 is the cycle of 7 Sabbath years that culminated in the jubilee year, and the jubilee year, the proclamation of liberty to the land (Lev. 25:8-12; 27:7-24) is a figure used so often in Isaiah to describe the freedom of Judah once released from Babylon. Lev. 26:34,43 speak of the land enjoying her Sabbaths whilst Israel were in exile for their sins- i.e. for 49 years. So it seems that there could have been some restoration after 49 years- but it didn't happen. But Dan. 9:2 and 2 Chron. 36:21 seem to reinterpret those 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecies as speaking of a 70 year period during which Jerusalem and the temple would be desolate. See on Ez. 6:8.

The prophecy of 70 years exile in Babylon is specifically stated as having been fulfilled in the first year of Cyrus (2 Chron. 36:20-22, "till seventy years were completed... in the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, when the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah was fulfilled"). But it is also said to have been fulfilled in the second year of Darius: "O Yahweh of Armies, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You have had indignation those seventy years?" (Zech. 1:12; the rest of Zech. 1 shows that God has indeed had mercy on Jerusalem). Daniel 9 could be reinterpreting the 70 years as 70 'sevens'; or, adding another 70 'sevens' to the 70 years. Clearly fulfilment of time periods can be delayed or made open to various starting and ending points. Such is the open ended nature of such prophecies.

2Ch 36:22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished-

Daniel understood from Jeremiah's prophecies that Jerusalem's fortunes would be revived after the 70 year period was ended. Yet he goes on to ask God to *immediately* forgive His people, as if Daniel even dared hope that the period might be shortened. Daniel lived into the reign of Cyrus (Dan. 6:28), and so he would have witnessed "the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (Dan. 9:25; Ezra 1:1). But it seems to me that whilst the prophecy of the 70 years came true in one sense, the Jews didn't respond as they should, and so the time of Zion's true freedom in the Messianic Kingdom was delayed. Daniel had been petitioning the Father to not delay beyond the 70 year period in doing this. But in another sense, the prophecy was re-interpreted; Daniel was now told that there was to be a "seventy weeks of years" (Dan. 9:24 RSV) period involved in order to gain ultimate forgiveness for Israel as Daniel had just been praying for. The 70 years had become "seventy weeks of years". The command to rebuild Jerusalem was given in the first year of Cyrus; but Daniel must have watched in vain for any sign that Zion's glad morning had really come. And so it is recorded that in the third year of Cyrus Daniel was given a vision that confirmed to him that "the thing was true, but the time appointed was long [Heb. 'extended'; the word is also translated "greater", "more"]": and he understood the thing" (Dan. 10:1). What was "the thing" that was true, which Daniel sought to understand? Surely it was the vision of the 70 years that he had sought to "understand" in Dan. 9:2. The Hebrew *dabar*, translated "thing", is usually translated "word". He was comforted that the word of prophecy would come true; it was "noted in the scripture of truth" (Dan. 10:21). It was just that it had been extended in its fulfilment; "for yet the vision is for many days" (Dan. 10:14). And this was how he came to "understand the thing / word". The essential and ultimate fulfilment of the 70 years prophecy would only be after a long time, involving 70 "weeks of years". Thus Daniel came to

“understand” the vision (Dan. 10:1); hence he was so shocked, depressed and disappointed that the fulfilment would not be in his days. But he is set up as a representative of those of us in the very last days who shall likewise “understand” (s.w. Dan. 12:10) the very same prophecies which Daniel studied. Daniel is described as both understanding, and also not understanding (Dan. 10:1; 12:8). Surely the idea is that he understood the principle of deferment and the outline meaning of the prophecy; but he didn’t understand the details. And so perhaps it is with us who will, or do, likewise “understand” as Daniel did.

Ez. 4:6 revealed the variable nature of Divine time periods: "You shall lie on your right side, and shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah: forty days, each day for a year, have I appointed it to you". Ezekiel was asked to prophecy that Judah would suffer for their sins for 40 years. Perhaps something could've happened after 40 years... And then, the starting point of the 70 or 40 years was somewhat flexible- for Ez. 22:3,4 records Ezekiel's prophecy that the desolation of Jerusalem by the Babylonians [the starting point of the time periods] was actually being hastened, brought forward, by the terrible behaviour of the Jews living there after the initial Babylon invasion of the land. Closer study reveals the variableness of outworking of the time periods. Jer. 25:11,12 and Jer. 29:10 speak of a 70 year period of Babylonian rule over Judah, beginning with the invasion of BC597. But Babylon only ruled over Judah for 49 years, before Babylon fell to the Persians. This would connect with the way that Zech. 4:3 speaks of 7 menorah candlesticks each with 7 lamps, making 49 lamps. 49 is the cycle of 7 Sabbath years that culminated in the jubilee year, and the jubilee year, the proclamation of liberty to the land (Lev. 25:8-12; 27:7-24) is a figure used so often in Isaiah to describe the freedom of Judah once released from Babylon. Lev. 26:34,43 speak of the land enjoying her Sabbaths whilst Israel were in exile for their sins- i.e. for 49 years. So it seems that there could have been some restoration after 49 years- but it didn't happen. But Dan. 9:2 and 2 Chron. 36:21 seem to reinterpret those 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecies as speaking of a 70 year period during which Jerusalem and the temple would be desolate. See on Ez. 6:8.

Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation- This is the same word for "noise" in Ez. 37:7: “So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone”. This meant that the “whole house of Israel” was to stand up from their graves and return as a mighty army to the land. Their attitude in Babylon was exactly as in Ez. 37:11: “behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts”. These were the very sentiments of Jeremiah in Lamentations, and those who wept by the waters of Babylon when they remembered Zion. They were revived by the gift of the Spirit, the breath / spirit which was blown into them by God's initiative.

The stirring up [Heb. 'opening the eyes'] of Cyrus is a parade example of the ability of God to work directly on the human mind, inserting ideas and initiatives, and confirming a person in their responses to various psychological stimuli. This is the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers today, and it was and will be seen in the revival of the dead bones of Israel. Not visible miracles, but internal mental working. And that Spirit can be resisted, as it was by many of the exiles; for we are not mere puppets in God's hand. Yet grace means that God takes the initiative; "He first loved us". That initiative is seen through His working on the human heart in calling us to action (s.w. 2 Chron. 21:16; Is. 13:17; Jer. 50:41; Joel 3:9) and Cyrus was a parade example of this (Is. 41:2,25, 45:13). The hearts of the returnees were likewise stirred up (see on :5). But this was not some irresistible manipulation of the human person; Zion was called to be stirred up ["awake"], but she refused to be stirred up (Is. 51:17; 52:1 cp. Is. 64:7). Zerubbabel had his mind or "spirit" stirred up to be the king-priest Messianic figure (Hag. 1:14); but he let the baton drop.

Throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing saying-

The restoration prophecies speak of how “all nations” are to be gathered to Zion; they are those who scattered Judah amongst the nations; not every literal nation. And who “scattered” Israel? The Hebrew word is used in Jer. 50:17 to describe how Babylon scattered Judah amongst the nations. And most significantly, the same word occurs again in Est. 3:8: “And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people *scattered abroad* and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom...”. It is quite wrong for us to imagine Judah sitting quietly by the rivers of Babylon, all huddled together. They were scattered throughout all the many provinces / colonies of the Babylonian empire. This was why Cyrus’ decree bidding the Jews return to rebuild Jerusalem had to be published “throughout all his kingdom”, and Jews living “in any place” of that kingdom were included in the invitation. It was Babylon who had “parted my land” by dividing it up amongst the various ‘Samaritan’ peoples who were transported there from other conquered territories. And their being in Babylon is paralleled with being scattered to the four corners of the world as it was known to them: “Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon” (Zech. 2:6-7). And consider Zech. 7:14: “But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them [i.e. this concerns the Babylonian invasion], that no man passed through nor returned”. Indeed, Zech. 8:7,8 speaks of the restoration as coming from both West and East of Israel, implying that the Babylonians had sold some of the Jews as slaves in Greece and north Africa.

2Ch 36:23 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, Yahweh, the God of heaven has given all the kingdoms of the earth to me; and He has commanded me to build Him a house in Jerusalem which is in Judah-

Cyrus clearly had a sense of relationship with Yahweh, and I have argued that he was one of the potential Messiah figures who could have reestablished the Kingdom at the restoration. Is. 44:28 is crystal clear about this. God “says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure’, even saying of Jerusalem, ‘She will be built;’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundation will be laid’”. It was God’s intention that Cyrus repent and become a proselyte, and Yahweh would then use him to save His people “out of all places where they have been scattered”. The decree of Cyrus was addressed to “Whoever is left [of the Jews], in any place where he lives” (Ezra 1:4). “Cyrus” literally means “sun” and so contrasts with the cloudy and dark day. But Cyrus let the ball drop and didn’t carry through the Divine purpose as he might have done and neither did the Jews respond as they should have done. Cyrus was Yahweh’s anointed (Is. 45:1), and so the essence of these prophecies is to come true in the last days in the person of the Lord Jesus. We could say that the prophecies are transferred from Cyrus to the Lord Jesus. LXX “Who bids Cyrus be wise, and he shall perform all my will” suggests Cyrus had a choice; he was commanded, and it seems he partially obeyed, but not enough to the Messiah figure envisaged.

It is significant that Ezra and Nehemiah speak of the “God of Heaven” (e.g. Ezra 1:2) whilst Zechariah speaks of the “God of the earth” or ‘land’ of Israel, perhaps because the Angel of Israel literally went to Heaven when the glory departed from Jerusalem, and returned, in a sense, at the restoration- to depart again at the Lord’s death (“Your house is left unto you desolate”; of the Angel that once dwelt in the temple).

Whoever there is among you of all his people, Yahweh his God be with him, and let him go up-

“His God...” sounds as if Cyrus had not adopted Yahweh as his own God. And yet he does

recognize that "He is God". We can know things *about* God, without grasping their personal reality. That is the lesson of Cyrus.

Amos 9:11-15 is most comfortably interpreted when read as referring to the restoration of Judah and the "remnant" of the ten tribes to the land under Ezra: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God". "I will *raise up*" uses a Hebrew word very commonly featured in the records of the restoration, when the people were exhorted to "rise up and build" (Ezra 1:5; 3:2; 10:4,15; Neh. 2:18,20). The statement that they would "close up the breaches thereof" is exactly the language of Neh. 6:1, which records that the walls were rebuilt so that there was no breach [s.w.] therein. It was after the Babylonian invasion that Zion was "fallen" and 'ruined' (s.w. Jer. 31:18; 45:4; Lam. 2:2,17). "I will build it" is exactly the theme of the records of the return from Babylon (Ezra 1:2,3,5; 3:2,10; 4:1-4; Neh. 2:5,17,18,20; 3:1-3, 13-15; 4:1,3,5,6,10,17,18; 6:1,6; 7:1). Surely Amos 9 is saying that at the rebuilding at the time of the restoration, God's people could have ushered in the Kingdom age of agricultural plenty and victory over their Arab neighbours. But they intermarried with Edom, and suffered drought because they didn't fulfill the requirements to rebuild Zion correctly. But the words of Amos were still to come true in some form- they are given an application in Acts 15:17 which may appear to be way out of context, i.e. to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Thus words which could have had a plain fulfilment at the restoration were given a delayed fulfilment; but they were not fulfilled in a literal sense, but in a spiritual one. And so it is with prophecies like Ezekiel 38, and the temple prophecies of Ezekiel. They will be fulfilled in spiritual essence, but probably not in strict literality, although they *could have been* had God's people been more 'fulfilling' of them.