



Summary of Second Chronicles

Introduction

The second volume of Chronicles commences with the reign of Solomon and the building of the temple in Jerusalem. He is succeeded by his son Rehoboam during whose reign the country is divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. The Chronicler's main interest is then on the kings of Judah and the main events that occurred during their times.

Despite reforms during the times of Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah, Judah was in terminal decline and eventually followed the northern kingdom into exile; in Judah's case it was to Babylon. The temple was left in ruins and the majority of the country was deserted but the book concludes on a positive note with King Cyrus of Persia, now the ruler of the former Babylonian Empire, making a decree that any Jew who wanted to could return to Judæa to rebuild the temple and resettle the land.

Therefore, this volume covers a period of history from the time of David's death in 970 BC to the decree of Cyrus in 538 BC.

Chapter One

Once Solomon was established as the king over all Israel, he gathered all the leaders to him and they went to Gibeon to make offerings on the altar in front of the Tabernacle. While he was there the Lord appeared to him and said that Solomon could have whatever he asked for. He did not ask for wealth or power but for the wisdom to lead God's people. The Lord granted him that but also said he could have the power and wealth he did not request. In fact, he would have the opportunity to become the greatest king anywhere in the world.

Although the country was at peace with its neighbours, Solomon strengthened his army with many horses and chariots. He also traded well, making gold and

silver common in Jerusalem and bringing in plenty of cedar for his building projects.

Chapter Two

Time came for Solomon to start building the temple and a palace for himself. He renewed his father's alliance with King Hiram of Tyre and struck a deal with him to provide skilled workers and materials for the building project. The main craftsman was to be Hiram-abi of Tyre although his mother was from the tribe of Dan. Solomon then had a census taken of the foreigners living in Israel and put them to work as conscripted labour.

Chapter Three

The Chronicler's actual account of the construction of the temple is much briefer than his source of 1 Kings Chapter 6. The architectural details of 1 Kings 6:4-20a are passed over, as are the descriptions of the intricate carvings or stonework in 1 Kings 6:29-36. Instead, the Chronicler leads his readers in their imagination through the vestibule (v.4) into the ornate nave or Holy Place (vv.5-7), then on to the Most Holy Place (vv.8-13), partitioned off by the veil (v.14). The numerous references to gold (vv.4-10) and cherubim (v.7 and vv.10-14) highlight the splendour of the temple as the heavenly King's earthly palace. As its structure and furnishings indicate, it stood in continuity with the Mosaic tabernacle, at the same time exceeding it in beauty and opulence.

The temple measured about 90 feet by 30 feet or 27m by 9.1m, so it was not particularly large compared with many modern church buildings, and it did not function as a place of congregational worship. Only priests would have been admitted into the temple itself, and only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place, and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

Chapter Four

The temple's furnishings communicated the same message as that signified by the structure of the building: the presence of the holy God in the midst of his people, and his gracious provision of atonement and forgiveness. For the Chronicler's own generation, the fact that these vessels had been returned from their Babylonian captivity, as recorded in Ezra 1:3-11 and 6:5, was a sign as well that they were still God's covenant people and the heirs of his promises to David and Solomon.

Chapter Five

Solomon gathered all the leaders of the nation for the ceremony to bring the Ark of the Covenant into the temple, where it was placed in the Most Holy Place. There were uncounted numbers of animals sacrificed to God with all the priests and Levites in attendance, leading the ceremony of worship to God.

Then the presence of the Lord filled the temple so that the priests could no longer minister there.

Chapter Six

Solomon addresses the assembly and reminds that it was the Lord who chose Jerusalem as a place to build his temple. He also states that the Lord had chosen David and his family as the kings over his people and that he was pleased that David had a heart for building the temple. However, the task of building the temple was to be Solomon's and this he has now done.

Solomon then kneels on a raised platform so that the assembly could see him and he prays to God. He gives thanks to the Lord that David and his descendants have been chosen as kings. He also asks God to hear the prayers of both his people and the foreigners who come to the temple to pray to him. He asks that the Lord will judge fairly and that he will forgive sins. Also, when the people's sin becomes so bad that the Lord has to send them into exile and they then repent of their sin, that the Lord would hear them and return them to the land he had given to his people.

Chapter Seven

God's twofold answer to Solomon's prayer through the appearance of the glory of the Lord in vv.1-3 and the words from God in vv.12-22 takes readers to the heart of the Chronicler's message of repentance and restoration. The Chronicler is acutely aware of Israel's sinfulness, knowing that this will result in exile; but against this bleak fact he highlights the Lord's undeserved restorative mercy and forgiveness toward his people, for which the temple is the visible symbol. The assurance that the temple is indeed the divinely sanctioned place of atonement and prayer should encourage the Chronicler's own postexilic generation to respond accordingly, confident that God will grant a greater measure of restoration and blessing. Ultimately, salvation will come not through a material building but through the one whom the temple foreshadows: <<*Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'* The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body>> (John 2:19-21).

Chapter Eight

Solomon's further conquests and building projects are revealed, as well as his attention to matters of worship, both for himself and for the people. The success of Solomon's various building projects are seen as blessings that follow his obedience in building the temple which, along with his palace, took twenty years to complete.

Chapter Nine

Solomon's reputation and influence extend beyond the borders of Israel. The wealthy and powerful Queen of Sheba comes to see him because she had heard of Solomon's wealth and wisdom. She found that the stories were not only true but the reality far exceeded all that she had heard.

The chapter provides information as to how Solomon gained all this wealth and lists all the articles that he had made from the gold in particular. Some of it became national treasures and some for his own personal use.

After forty years on the throne of Israel, Solomon died and was buried in the same tomb complex as David. His son Rehoboam succeeded him.

Chapter Ten

The division of the kingdom was a complex matter, to which Solomon and Jeroboam both contributed through their disobedience, but here the focus is on Rehoboam's folly in alienating the northerners. At the same time, the author notes that this was a turn of affairs brought about by God, indicating that God remained in control of his kingdom and that the northerners' rebellion was understandable; it was, in fact, in accordance with the prophetic word, which presupposes the reader's knowledge of 1 Kings 11:29-39. It was the northerners' later idolatry that made their continuing rebellion reprehensible.

When Solomon's son Rehoboam arrived at Shechem for his coronation after his father's death, he refused to lighten his father's heavy tax burden on the people, and the ten northern tribes revolted and set up Jeroboam as their king. The northern kingdom would now be known as Israel and the southern kingdom as Judah. Five years later, King Shishak of Egypt, also called Sheshonq, invaded Judah and Israel and captured a number of towns. Rehoboam avoided Jerusalem's destruction by paying off Shishak with many of the treasures Solomon had placed in the temple.

Chapter Eleven

Rehoboam's first instinct was to start a war with the northern tribes but through a prophet he was told by the Lord not to. Instead, he improved the defences of Judah.

The priests and the Levites living in the northern kingdom were prevented from serving by Jeroboam and so they came to Rehoboam to pledge their allegiance to him, serving the Lord in Judah instead.

Rehoboam followed in his father Solomon's footsteps and this chapter provides a brief account of some of his eighteen wives, sixty concubines and the resulting eighty eight children.

The information in vv.5-23 has no parallel in First Kings but is derived from another source or sources. It illustrates the blessings that come to Judah following Rehoboam's and the people's obedience to the word of Yahweh (v.4), while Jeroboam leads the northerners into apostasy.

Chapter Twelve

Because Rehoboam was considered himself strong he turned away from the Lord and so God sent King Shishak of Egypt against him. Rehoboam was told that it was the Lord's doing and so he repented. Therefore, God did not allow Shishak to destroy Jerusalem but instead made Judah his vassal state. Shishak took all the valuable items from the temple and the palace including the gold shields Solomon had made. Rehoboam replaced them with bronze imitations.

Rehoboam was not a good king for the seventeen years that he reigned. When he died his son Abijah succeeded him.

Chapter Thirteen

The Chronicler's account of Abijah's reign is much longer than that given in 1 Kings 15:1-8 where he is called Abijam. It is, in fact, mainly the development of the statement in 1 Kings 15:7b that <<*There was war between Abijam and Jeroboam*>> through the detailed record of one incident, a battle between these kings in the hill country of Ephraim. In the estimation of 1 Kings 15:3b, Abijah, like his father Rehoboam, <<*was not true to the Lord his God, like the heart of his father David*>>. The Chronicler would probably agree, since it appears from 2 Chronicles 14:3-5, 15:8, and 15:16, that idolatrous worship was practiced throughout Judah during Abijah's reign, but he refrains from explicit comment on the king's own piety to concentrate instead on what God accomplished through his reign.

The Chronicler notes that in contrast to Jeroboam's kingdom and cult, the Davidic monarchy is the object of God's enduring promise; the Jerusalem priesthood is legitimate and faithful; and the men of Judah trust in God. It is for these reasons that the southern kingdom enjoys God's protection and blessing, even if Abijah himself, like his father, falls somewhat short of the ideal Davidic standard.

Chapter Fourteen

When Abijah dies, his son Asa succeeds him. He is a good king and follows in the Davidic tradition, restoring worship to the people of Judah and removing idolatrous practices. Initially, the land knew peace under his reign but then a large army of invaders came from the south. Asa knew that only the Lord was strong enough to bring Judah military victory and so he cried out to him. God

heard his prayer and army of Israel routed the Ethiopians, taking away all their treasure as the spoils of war.

Chapter Fifteen

This chapter summarises some of the information recorded in Chapter 14 with some additional information as well. It seems that the land had been a troubled place because of the apostasy of the people until a prophecy was given by Azariah to Asa and his people. It stated that if Judah returned to serving the Lord then he would be with them and it seems it was this news that spurred Asa into his reforms. In addition to changing the ways of his own people he also appealed to pious people living in the neighbouring northern tribal lands, who had come to live in Judah because of the Lord. Because the people sought the Lord, the land had peace for the majority of Asa's long reign.

Chapter Sixteen

In order to stop more people from departing the northern kingdom and going over to King Asa, King Baasha of Israel built fortifications at Ramah. Therefore, Asa sent payment to King Ben-hadad of Aram to withdraw his support from Israel and actively oppose them instead. This he did and Israel withdrew from Ramah to face this new threat from their north. However, the Lord sent word through the seer Hanani saying he was not pleased with Asa because he had turned to Aram instead of trusting in God. Asa in turn locked Hanani in prison and also mistreated many of his own people in his anger. Even when he became ill he did not turn to the Lord and so he died from his disease.

Chapter Seventeen

Following the death of Asa, his son Jehoshaphat became the king of Judah. He was basically a good king following the ways of the Lord. He continued to build the defences of Judah and had a strong standing army. As well as continuing the work of his father to eradicate pagan worship, Jehoshaphat sent out teachers of the law into all the towns and cities of Judah so that the people might have a better understanding of the ways of the Lord. Neighbouring nations such as the Philistines and the Arabs paid tribute to Jehoshaphat for the nation was strong both militarily and spiritually.

Chapter Eighteen

King Jehoshaphat of Judah joins King Ahab of Israel in his campaign to restore Ramoth-gilead to Israel from the hands of the Aramæans. When Jehoshaphat first asks to hear what the Lord has to say of this campaign, Ahab has four hundred of his prophets prophesy good things about the outcome but Jehoshaphat wants to hear from a true prophet and so Micaiah is called. He

reveals the truth that Ahab will not survive the battle and so Ahab has him put in prison.

The scheming Ahab dressed as an ordinary soldier but said that Jehoshaphat should go into battle in his royal robes. Therefore, it was Jehoshaphat that became the initial target for the Aramæans but they soon realised it was not Ahab and stopped pursuing him. Meanwhile, an archer fired his arrow into the midst of battle and managed to hit Ahab who died later that day from his wounds and was taken back to Samaria to be buried.

Chapter Nineteen

Following the battle with Ahab against the Aramæans, Jehoshaphat returns to Jerusalem to face criticism from the Lord for joining with a pagan worshipping king rather than following the ways of the Lord in his own land. Therefore, Jehoshaphat goes throughout Judah, encouraging people to turn to the Lord. He also sets up honourable judges to deal with civil matters fairly and justly.

Chapter Twenty

This is the Chronicler's own material, describing a victory over Judah's enemies in which the sovereign God alone acts for his people. In contrast to earlier battles in Chapters 13 and 14, Judah's part is simply to pray for God's help, trust in his word, worship him, and then watch thankfully while the Divine Warrior destroys the enemy.

The narrative draws together a wide range of religious themes and practices, especially those centred on the temple, and also alludes to many earlier scriptural texts and themes. Jehoshaphat's faith is presented here in the most positive light, although the Chronicler will go on to show a further lapse in vv.35-37, and the rest of the nation, conceived here as a sacred assembly, similarly acts in an exemplary way.

The significance of the narrative for the Chronicler's own postexilic community seems clear: although Judah was a small and oppressed outpost of the Persian Empire, recourse to the temple in prayer and trust in the prophetic word was its sure defence in the most testing circumstances, including the dangers posed by its hostile neighbours. This is confirmed in Ezra Chapter 4 and also in Nehemiah Chapter 4.

Chapter Twenty One

The Chronicler's account of King Jehoram's reign in Judah is considerably expanded over the description given in 2 Kings 8:16-24. The dominant concern here, and in the accounts of his successor Ahaziah in 2 Chronicles 22:1-9, and the usurper Queen Athaliah (2 Chronicles 22:10-23:21), is the disastrous influence of the house of Ahab on the Davidic dynasty and Judah. While the

Chronicler's portrayal of Jehoram is unremittingly negative, he highlights God's promise to David as the grounds for hope in the most troubled of days. Again, the Chronicler's own community may take this example from history and apply it to their own circumstances.

Chapter Twenty Two

Ahaziah's sole remaining son ruled following his father's death and he continued to rule after the evil fashion of Ahab rather than his own grandfather Jehoshaphat. His mother Queen Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab was his counsellor and he had fought alongside Jehoram son of King Ahab of Israel against the Aramæans. It was this association with the north that would lead to his death as he was taken to Jehu, the man anointed to be king in the north after he had killed all the descendants of Ahab.

After her son's death, Queen Athaliah seized the throne for herself. She did so by destroying all the remaining heirs to the throne of Judah but one of her grandsons Joash was secreted away and hidden in the temple until it would become time to make him the rightful king of Judah.

Chapter Twenty Three

The information in this chapter is drawn mainly from 2 Kings 11:4-20, with numerous changes to reflect the Chronicler's particular concerns. After six years of hiding the young son of the late king, the priest Jehoiada brought together the senior people from Judah in the temple. He ordered the priests and Levites to take up strategic positions in the temple complex in order to guard the king designate. Once the guard was in place, Joash was proclaimed as the new king.

When Queen Athaliah heard the commotion she came to the temple and was alarmed to see a new king. She cried out treason but, at this, Jehoiada had her arrested and taken out of the temple complex to be executed. After this, the people went to the temple dedicated to Baal, destroyed it and killed the priest that served there. Jehoiada then instructed the Levitical priests to assume their rightful duties in the temple and King Joash was set upon his throne.

Chapter Twenty Four

This chapter is loosely adapted from 2 Kings 11:21-12:21, and is supplemented with the Chronicler's own material. Joash's reign from 835-796 BC falls into two parts: a faithful period, while Jehoiada the priest was alive (vv.1-16), followed by apostasy ending in judgement (vv.17-27). The priest Zechariah spoke out against the king's apostasy and was stoned to death for doing so. Judgement came in the form of the Aramæans who sacked Judah and took most of the treasures away from Jerusalem to Damascus.

Throughout Second Chronicles, the religious character of a king can be readily gauged by his attitude toward the temple, and this is most evident in the case of Joash: in his faithful period, he is devoted to the restoration of the temple, but in his apostasy, he abandons it for idolatry (v.18). This leads directly to his death when he is murdered by his own servants.

Chapter Twenty Five

This section is drawn mainly from 2 Kings 14:2-20, with a long interpolation in vv.5-16 accounting for Amaziah's defeat by Israel. His reign between 796-767 BC is divided into a period of relative obedience and blessing, followed by outright apostasy and judgement. Yet throughout his reign, Amaziah is basically half-hearted and divided in his loyalty to God, so his final failure is one of steady degeneration rather than radical reversal. Amaziah's reign included a long period of co-regency between 791-767 BC with his son Uzziah as a result of his capture by King Joash of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Chapter Twenty Six

The Chronicler reproduces most of this section of 2 Kings 15:1-7, but splices it with a lengthy passage of his own material (vv.5-20a) illustrating God's blessing on Uzziah's reign, which was between 791-740 BC, and recounting the cause of his downfall.

As with his presentation of Joash and Amaziah, the Chronicler has divided Uzziah's reign into two parts: a period of faithfulness and blessing, followed by sin and punishment. The language used, such as 'to seek God,' 'prosper,' 'God helped him,' 'fame,' etc., and the motifs of blessing, i.e. military success, building projects, and armed forces, are all characteristic of the Chronicler's style and thought, and they carry a sober message. The chapter is essentially a sermon on the dangers of pride: Uzziah's God-given success leads him into presumption, seeking an office of spiritual leadership that could never be rightly his, for he attempted to take on the role of a priest in the temple and was struck down with leprosy. He had to go into isolation for the last ten years of his reign, effectively making his son Jotham the king in his place.

Chapter Twenty Seven

The account of Jotham's reign (750-732 BC), which includes 10 years as co-regent with his father Uzziah, is expanded from 2 Kings 15:33-38 to show that his military success and power were due to his faithfulness to God. Jotham is presented in a wholly positive way, in contrast to his father Uzziah and his son Ahaz in Chapter 28, of whom the Chronicler has nothing good to say.

Chapter Twenty Eight

The Chronicler's account of Ahaz's reign (735-715 BC) incorporates the introduction and conclusion from 2 Kings Chapter 16, and follows the same topics, but otherwise the details are different. The Chronicler amplifies the negative assessment of Ahaz in Second Kings, showing how his apostasy led Judah astray and brought it to ruin. The charge that Ahaz was faithless exceeds even that made against Saul in 1 Chronicles 10:13. Yet the dark picture of Judah's decline is mitigated somewhat by the action of its northern kinsmen, who show a measure of repentance and responsiveness to the prophetic word.

Chapter Twenty Nine

King Hezekiah came to the throne at a time of great apostasy in Israel. His predecessor, King Ahaz, had greatly sinned against the Lord and had set up pagan worship, even in the temple. Judah had also suffered military defeats against Aram and Israel because of their apostasy. Hezekiah's immediate task was to call together the priest and Levites and have them open up the temple again. They immediately rallied to Hezekiah's commands and set about cleaning out the temple. It took sixteen days to complete their task.

Once the temple was restored, Hezekiah called the officials of the city to the temple and there was great sacrificial offering and songs of praise made to the Lord, asking for his forgiveness for the faithlessness that had gone before. The amount of animals offered was so great and there were too few priests who had kept themselves consecrated for the task that their brother Levites had to come and support them in the task of ministering at the altar. Thus worship in Judah was restored and all the people rejoiced- revival had come!

Chapter Thirty

The account of Hezekiah's Passover is not mentioned in Second Kings. Hezekiah demonstrates his commitment to the Law of Moses by implementing this celebration immediately after the reconsecration of the temple. At the same time, the ceremony is unorthodox in its date and in the participation of the ceremonially unclean. The Passover is also the occasion in which people from the north and south are reunited, at least in principle, in true worship at the temple, in contrast to earlier attempts to secure a false unity through force of arms or ungodly alliances.

Chapter Thirty One

Following the great scenes of celebration at the Passover, Hezekiah continued his programme of reform. He had all the pagan shrines destroyed throughout both Judah and the remaining lands of Israel. He also re-established the normal function of the temple with the priests and Levites ministering and the people

bringing in their offerings. The king gave abundantly and everyone tithed and there was a mountain of offerings given into the temple for the Lord.

Hezekiah also had the priests and the Levites re-organised and individuals were designated for their various duties in the temple and throughout the Levitical cities. The provision made for the priests from the offerings according to the Law was implemented so that they could perform their duties to the Lord. Thus Hezekiah and the people were once again faithful to the Lord.

Chapter Thirty Two

Having captured the northern kingdom of Israel, the Assyrian king Sennacherib turned his attention to Judah, so Hezekiah prepared for a siege. He had all the local water sources outside of the city stopped up to deprive the Assyrians of the water they would need, he strengthened and rebuilt the walls and the armoury, but above all he encouraged the people not to fear the Assyrians because Judah had God on their side.

Sennacherib responded by sending messengers to tell the people of Jerusalem not to trust in the word of Hezekiah or to rely on God because the Assyrians had swept all before them despite other nations relying on their gods and they said that the God of Israel and their king could not protect them from the final outcome of the siege.

In response, Hezekiah and Isaiah prayed to the Lord for deliverance. God sent his angel to decimate the Assyrian army and Sennacherib had to return to his home land in disgrace, where he was assassinated by his own sons.

Hezekiah became ill and was on the point of death because he had become proud of his achievements. He turned again to the Lord and repented of his pride and the Lord healed him, extending his life and reign over Judah. Thus he and his people prospered, knowing both wealth and security from their adversaries, because God favoured them due to the re-establishment of the temple services and a people who had returned to their God.

Chapter Thirty Three

After all the reforms of the mostly good King Hezekiah, his son Manasseh reverts to the ways of his grandfather Ahaz, abandoning the Lord and setting up shrines to pagan gods, including the sacrificial offering of his own son. Therefore, the Lord brought the Assyrians against him and Manasseh was taken away in chains to Babylon. There, he humbled himself, repented and acknowledged the Lord was his true God. He returned to Israel and brought the people back to serving the Lord, even if some of them did so at the high places.

When Manasseh died he was succeeded by his son Amon, who had not learned from his father's repentance and worshipped all the pagan idols that

his father had initially set up. He was assassinated but his killers too were killed by the people, who set up his son Josiah to reign as their king.

Chapter Thirty Four

Although Josiah was only a child when he came to the throne, he soon became obedient to the Lord and at the age of just twelve he not only removed all the articles of pagan worship - he destroyed them!

By the time he was in his mid twenties, Josiah gave instruction to repair the temple and restore it to its purpose as the centre for worshipping the Lord. The money that was collected from Judah and the remnant of Israel was used to purchase the materials and pay for the workers to complete their tasks under the supervision of the Levites. While they were doing this work the book of the Law was discovered in the temple and read to the king. When he heard the Word of God he was dismayed for he realised just how far from the Lord the people had strayed.

In response, the prophetess Huldah was consulted and she brought the words that Josiah feared. The Lord would indeed bring about all the curses he had declared upon those who were disobedient. However, he recognised that Josiah was truly humble and penitent. Therefore, he graciously promised that Josiah would not live to see the disaster that would befall the nation. Josiah's response was to gather all the elders of the nation to Jerusalem and have them renew their covenant promises with the Lord.

Chapter Thirty Five

Josiah turned his attention to the Levites and the priests, ensuring they understood their duties and divisions according to those stipulated long ago by David and Solomon for the temple. He then provided vast numbers of lambs for the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread that would follow it. Other leaders also made willing contributions. The priests prepared and made the offerings in accordance with the Law of Moses and they were ably supported by the Levites. And so the greatest Passover celebration since the days of Samuel was held.

The Egyptian Pharaoh Neco was travelling north to join the king of Assyria as part of an alliance against the growing strength of the Babylonians. King Josiah led his army out to face Neco, who made it clear he did not wish to fight with Judah but Josiah went into battle anyway and was mortally wounded. He was taken back to Jerusalem, where he died and was buried.

Chapter Thirty Six

The Chronicler briefly describes the reigns of the final four kings of Judah: Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. However, his main focus is the

demise of Judah as it is first made a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and then Jerusalem and its temple finally destroyed, with the majority of the population taken away into exile. It was not the kings that are blamed for this outcome but the people themselves who had turned away from the Lord and ignored the warnings of his prophets.

Chronicles comes to an end on a positive note as King Cyrus of Persia recognised that the Lord has used him to ensure that a remnant returns to Jerusalem following exile in order to rebuild the temple.