

5. THE REIGN OF JEHOSEPHAT (17 - 21:3)

TEXT

Chapter 17:1. And Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Israel. 2. And 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. 3. And Jehovah was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto the Baalim, 4. but sought to the God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel. 5. Therefore Jehovah established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat tribute; and he had riches and honor in abundance. 6. And his heart was lifted up in the ways of Jehovah: and furthermore he took away the high places and the Asherim out of Judah.

7. Also in the third year of his reign he sent his princes, even Ben-hail, and Obadiah, and Zechariah, and Nathanel, and Micah, to teach in the cities of Judah; 8. and with them the Levites, even Shemaiah, and Nathaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tobadonijah, the Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, the priests. 9. And they taught in Judah, having the book of the law of Jehovah with them; and they went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught among the people.

10. And the fear of Jehovah fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat. 11. And some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and silver for tribute; the Arabians also brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he-goats. 12. And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah castles and cities of store. 13. And he had many works in the cities of Judah; and men of war, mighty men of valor, in Jerusalem. 14. And 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 valor three hundred thousand; 15. and next to him Jehohanan the captian, and with him two hundred and fourscore thousand; 16. and next to him Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto Jehovah; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valor. 17. And of Benjamin: Eliada a mighty man of valor, and with him two hundred thousand armed with bow and shield; 18. and next to him Jehozabad, and with him a hundred and fourscore thousand ready prepared for war. 19. These were they that waited on the king, besides those whom the king put in the fortified cities throughout all Judah.

Chapter 18:1. Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and he joined affinity with Ahab. 2. And after certain years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that were with him, and moved him to go up with him to Ramoth-gilead. 3. And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah. "Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead?" And he answered him, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war."

4. And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, "Inquire first, I pray thee, for the word of Jehovah. 5. Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred men, and said unto them, "Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?" And they said, "Go up; for God will deliver it into the hand of the king." 6. But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah besides, that we may inquire of him?" 7. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, "There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of Jehovah: but I hate him; for he never prophesieth good concerning me, but always evil: the same is Micaiah the son of Imla. And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so." 8. Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, "Fetch quickly Micaiah the son of Imla." 9. Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, arrayed in their robes, and they were sitting in an open place at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. 10. And Zedekiah

the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron and said, "Thus saith Jehovah, 'With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until they be consumed.' " 11. And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper; for Jehovah will deliver it into the hand of the king."

12. And the messenger that went to call Micaiah spake to him, saying, "Behold, the words of the prophets declare good to the king with one mouth: let thy word therefore, I pray thee, be like one of theirs, and speak thou good." 13. And Micaiah said, "As Jehovah liveth, what my God saith, that will I speak." 14. And when he was come to the king, the king said unto him, "Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?" And he said, "Go ye up, and prosper; and they shall be delivered into your hand." 15. And the king said to him, "How many times shall I adjure thee that thou speak unto me nothing but the truth in the name of Jehovah;" 16. And he said, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd: and Jehovah said, 'These have no master; let them return every man to his house in peace.' " 17. And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell thee that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?" 18. And Micaiah said, "Therefore hear ye the word of Jehovah: I saw Jehovah sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left. 19. "And Jehovah said, 'Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one spake saying after this manner, and another saying after that manner. 20. "And there came forth a spirit, and stood before Jehovah, and said, I will entice him. And Jehovah said unto him. 'Wherewith?' 21. "And he said, 'I will go forth, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And he said, 'Thou shalt entice him, and shalt prevail also: go forth, and do so.' 22. "Now therefore, behold, Jehovah hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets; and Jehovah hath spoken evil concerning thee."

23. Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and smote Micaiah upon the cheek, and said, "Which way went the Spirit of Jehovah from me to speak unto thee?" 24. And

Micaiah said, "Behold, thou shalt see on that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself." 25. And the king of Israel said, "Take ye Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; 26. and say, 'Thus saith 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." ' ' ' 27. And Micaiah said, "If thou return at all in peace, Jehovah hath not spoken by me." And he said, "Hear, ye peoples, all of you."

28. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead. 29. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself, and go into the battle; but put thou on thy robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself; and they went into the battle. 30. Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of his chariots, saying, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel." 31. And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, "It is the king of Israel." Therefore they turned about to fight against him: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and Jehovah helped him; and God moved them to depart from him. 32. And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. 33. And a certain man drew his bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the armor: wherefore he said to the driver of the chariot, "Turn thy hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am sore wounded." 34. And the battle increased that day? howbeit the king of Israel stayed himself up in his chariot against the Syrians until the even; and about the time of the going down of the sun he died.

Chapter 19:1. And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem. 2. And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, "Shouldest thou help the wicked, and love them that hate Jehovah? for this thing wrath is upon thee from before Jehovah. 3. "Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast put away the Asheroth out of the land,

and hast set thy heart to seek God."

4. And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again among the people from Beer-sheba to the hill-country of Ephraim, and brought them back unto Jehovah, the God of their fathers. 5. And he set judges in the land throughout all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, 6. and said to the judges, "Consider what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for Jehovah; and he is with you in the judgment. 7. "Now therefore let the fear of Jehovah be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with Jehovah our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of bribes."

8. Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites and the priests; and of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel, for the judgment of Jehovah, and for controversies. And they returned to Jerusalem. 9. And he charged them, saying, "Thus shall ye do in the fear of Jehovah, faithfully, and with a perfect heart. 10. "And whensoever any controversy shall come to you from your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and ordinances, ye shall warn them, that they be not guilty towards Jehovah, and so wrath come upon you and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not be guilty. 11. "And, behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of Jehovah; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, in all the king's matters: also the Levites shall be officers before you. Deal courageously, and Jehovah be with the good."

Chapter 20:1. And it came to pass after this, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them some of the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. 2. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, "There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea from Syria; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar (the same is En-gedi)." 3. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek unto Jehovah; and he proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. 4. And Judah gathered themselves together, to seek help of Jehovah: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek Jehovah.

5. And Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of Jehovah, before the new court; 6. and he said, "O Jehovah, the God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and art not thou ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? and in thy hand is power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee. 7. "Didst not thou, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and give it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever? 8. "And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, 9. 'If evil come upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house, and before thee (for thy name is in this house), and cry unto thee in our affliction, and thou wilt hear and save.' 10. "And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned aside from them, and destroyed them not; 11. behold, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. 12. "O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee." 13. And all Judah stood before Jehovah, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.

14. Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, the Levite, of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of Jehovah in the midst of the assembly; 15. and he said, "Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king of Jehoshaphat: Thus saith Jehovah unto you, 'Fear not ye, neither be dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. 16. 'To-morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the ascent of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the valley, before the wilderness of Jeruel. 17. 'Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of Jehovah with you, O Judah and Jerusalem;' fear not, nor be dismayed: to-morrow go out against them; for Jehovah is with you." 18. And Jehoshaphat bowed his head

with his face to the ground; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before Jehovah, worshipping Jehovah. 19. And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites, stood up to praise Jehovah, the God of Israel, with an exceeding loud voice.

20. And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem: believe in Jehovah your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. 21. And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed them that should sing unto Jehovah, and give praise in holy array, as they went out before the army, and say, "Give thanks unto Jehovah; for his lovingkindness endureth for ever." 22. And when they began to sing and to praise, Jehovah set liers-in-wait against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, that were come against Judah; and they were smitten. 23. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.

24. And when Judah came to the watch-tower of the wilderness, they looked upon the multitude; and behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and there were none that escaped. 25. And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take the spoil of them, 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: and they were three days in taking the spoil, it was so much. 26. And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in "the valley of Berach;" for there they blessed Jehovah: therefore the name of that place was called The valley of Berach unto this day. 27. Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for Jehovah had made them to rejoice over their enemies. 28. And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of Jehovah. 29. And the fear

of God was on all the kingdoms of the countries, when they heard that Jehovah fought against the enemies of Israel. 30. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet; for his God gave him rest round about.

31. And Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah: he was thirty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. 32. And he walked in the way of Asa his father, and turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah. 33. Howbeit the high places were not taken away; neither as yet had the people set their hearts unto the God of their fathers. 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.

35. And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel; the same did very wickedly: 36. and he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish; and they made the ships in Ezion-geber. 37. Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, Jehovah hath destroyed thy works." And the ships were broken, so that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

Chapter 21:1. And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Jehoram his son reigned in his stead. 2. And he had brethren, the sons of Jehoshaphat: Azariah, and Jehiel, and Zechariah, and Azariah, and Michael, and Shephatiah; all these were the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel. 3. And 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 first-born.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 17:1. Then his son Jehoshaphat became the king and mobilized for war against Israel. 2. He placed garrisons in all of the fortified cities of Judah, in various other places through-

out the country, and in the cities of Ephraim that his father had conquered. 3. The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he followed in the good footsteps of his father's early years, and did not worship idols. 4. He obeyed the commandments of his father's God—quite unlike the people across the border in the land of Israel. 5. So the Lord strengthened his position as king of Judah. All the people of Judah cooperated by paying their taxes, so he became very wealthy as well as being very popular. 6. He boldly followed the paths of God—even knocking down the heathen altars on the hills, and destroying the Asherim idols.

7, 8, 9. In the third year of his reign he began a nationwide religious education program. He sent out top government officials as teachers in all the cities of Judah. These men included Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah. He also used the Levites for this purpose, including Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah; also the priest Elishama and Jehoram. They took copies of The Book of the Law of the Lord to all the cities of Judah, to teach the Scriptures to the people.

10. The fear of the Lord fell upon all the surrounding kingdoms so that none of them declared war on King Jehoshaphat. 11. Even some of the Philistines brought him presents and annual tribute, and the Arabs donated 7,700 rams and 7,700 male goats. 12. So Jehoshaphat became very strong, and built fortresses and supply cities throughout Judah. 13. His public works program was also extensive, and he had a huge army stationed at Jerusalem, his capital. 14, 15. Three hundred thousand Judean troops were there under General Adnah. Next in command was Jeho-hanan with an army of 280,000 men. 16. Next was Amasiah (son of Zichri), a man of unusual piety, with 200,000 troops. 17. Benjamin supplied 200,000 men equipped with bows and shields under the command of Eliada, a great general. 18. His second in command was Jehozabad, with 180,000 trained men. 19. These were the troops in Jerusalem in addition to those placed by the king in the fortified cities

throughout the nation.

Chapter 18:1. But rich, popular King Jehoshaphat of Judah made a marriage alliance (for his son) with (the daughter of) King Ahab of Israel. 2. A few years later he went down to Samaria to visit King Ahab, and King Ahab gave a great party for him and his aides, butchering great numbers of sheep and oxen for the feast. Then he asked King Jehoshaphat to join forces with him against Ramoth-gilead.

3, 4, 5. "Why, of course!" King Jehoshaphat replied. "I'm with you all the way. My troops are at your command! However, let's check with the Lord first." So King Ahab summoned 400 of his heathen prophets and asked them, "Shall we go to war with Ramoth-gilead or not?" And they replied, "Go ahead, for God will give you a great victory!" 6, 7. But Jehoshaphat wasn't satisfied. "Isn't there some prophet of the Lord around here too?" he asked. "I'd like to ask him the same question." "Well," Ahab told him, "there is one, but I hate him, for he never prophesies anything but evil! His name is Micaiah (son of Imlah)." "Oh, come now, don't talk like that!" Jehoshaphat exclaimed. "Let's hear what he has to say." 8. So the king of Israel called one of his aides. "Quick! Go and get Micaiah (son of Imlah)," he ordered. 9. The two kings were sitting on thrones in full regalia at an open place near the Samaria gate, and all the "prophets" were prophesying before them. 10. One of them, Zedekiah (son of Chenaanah), made some iron horns for the occasion and proclaimed, "The Lord says you will gore the Syrians to death with these!" 11. And all the others agreed. "Yes," they chorused, "go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper, for the Lord will cause you to conquer."

12. The man who went to Micaiah told him what was happening, and what all the prophets were saying—that the war would end in triumph for the king. "I hope you will agree with them and give the king a favorable reading," the man ventured. 13. But Micaiah replied, "I vow by God that whatever God says is what I will say." 14. When he arrived before the king, the king asked him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth-gilead or not?" And Micaiah replied, "Sure, go ahead! It will be

a glorious victory!" 15. "Look here," the king said sharply, "how many times must I tell you to speak nothing except what the Lord tells you to?" 16. Then Micaiah told him, "In my vision I saw all Israel scattered upon the mountain as sheep without a shepherd. And the Lord said, 'Their master has been killed. Send them home.' " 17. "Didn't I tell you?" the king of Israel exclaimed to Jehoshaphat. "He does it every time. He never prophesies anything but evil against me." 18. "Listen to what else the Lord has told me," Micaiah continued, "I saw him upon his throne surrounded by vast throngs of angels. 19, 20. "And the Lord said, 'Who can get King Ahab to go to battle against Ramoth-gilead and be killed there?' " "There were many suggestions, but finally a spirit stepped forward before the Lord and said, 'I can do it!' " "How?" the Lord asked him. 21. "He replied, 'I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all of the king's prophets!' " "It will work," the Lord said; 'go and do it.' 22. "So you see, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets of yours, when actually he has determined just the opposite of what they are telling you!"

23. Then Zedekiah (son of Chenaanah) walked up to Micaiah and slapped him across the face. "You liar!" he yelled. "When did the Spirit of the Lord leave me and enter you?" 24. "You'll find out soon enough," Micaiah replied, "—when you are hiding in an inner room!" 25. "Arrest this man and take him back to Governor Amon and to my son Joash," the king of Israel ordered. 26. "Tell them, 'The king says to put this fellow in prison and feed him with bread and water until I return safely from the battle!' " 27. Micaiah replied, "If you return safely, the Lord has not spoken through me." Then, turning to those around them, he remarked, "Take note of what I have said."

28. So the king of Israel and the king of Judah led their armies to Ramoth-gilead. 29. The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I'll disguise myself so that no one will recognize me, but you put on your royal robes!" So that is what they did. 30. Now the king of Syria had issued these instructions to his charioteers: "Ignore everyone but the king of Israel!" 31. So

when the Syrian charioteers saw King Jehoshaphat of Judah in his royal robes, they went for him, supposing that he was the man they were after. But Jehoshaphat cried out to the Lord to save him, and the Lord made the charioteers see their mistake and leave him. 32. For as soon as they realized he was not the king of Israel, they stopped chasing him. 33. But one of the Syrian soldiers shot an arrow haphazardly at the Israeli troops, and it struck the king of Israel at the opening where the lower armor and the breastplate meet. "Get me out of here," he groaned to the driver of his chariot, "for I am badly wounded." 34. The battle grew hotter and hotter all that day and King Ahab went back in, propped up in his chariot, to fight the Syrians, but just as the sun sank into the western skies, he died.

Chapter 19:1. As King Jehoshaphat of Judah returned home, uninjured. 2. the prophet Jehu (son of Hanani) went out to meet him. "Should you be helping the wicked, and loving those who hate the Lord?" he asked him. "Because of what you have done, God's wrath is upon you. 3. But there are some good things about you, in that you got rid of the shame-idols throughout the land, and you have tried to be faithful to God."

4. So Jehoshaphat made no more trips to Israel after that, but remained quietly at Jerusalem. Later he went out again among the people, traveling from Beer-sheba to the hill country of Ephraim to encourage them to worship the God of their ancestors. 5. He appointed judges throughout the nation in all the larger cities, 6. and instructed them: "Watch your step—I have not appointed you—God has; and he will stand beside you and help you give justice in each case that comes before you. 7. Be very much afraid to give any other decision than what God tells you to. For there must be no injustice among God's judges, no partiality, no taking of bribes."

8. Jehoshaphat set up courts in Jerusalem, too, with the Levites and priests and clan leaders and judges. 9. These were his instructions to them: "You are to act always in the fear of God, with honest hearts. 10. Whenever a case is referred to you by the judges out in the provinces, whether murder cases or other violations of the laws and ordinances of God, you are to

clarify the evidence for them and help them to decide justly, lest the wrath of God come down upon you and them; if you do this, you will discharge your responsibility." 11. Then he appointed Amariah, the High Priest, to be the court of final appeal in cases involving violation of sacred affairs; and Zebadiah (son of Ishmael), a ruler in Judah, as the court of final appeal in all civil cases; with the Levites as their assistants. "Be fearless in your stand for truth and honesty. And may God use you to defend the innocent," was his final word to them.

Chapter 20:1. Later on, the armies of the kings of Moab, Ammon, and of the Meunites declared war on Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah. 2. Word reached Jehoshaphat that "a vast army is marching against you from beyond the Salt Sea, from Syria. It is already at Hazazon-tamar" (also called Engedi). 3. Jehoshaphat was badly shaken by this news and determined to beg for help from the Lord; so he announced that all the people of Judah should go without food for a time, in penitence and intercession before God. 4. People from all across the nation came to Jerusalem to plead unitedly with him.

5. Jehoshaphat stood among them as they gathered at the new court of the Temple, and prayed this prayer: 6. "O Lord God of our fathers—the only God in all the heavens, the Ruler of all the kingdoms of the earth—you are so powerful, so mighty. Who can stand against you? 7. O our God, didn't you drive out the heathen who lived in this land when your people arrived? And didn't you give this land forever to the descendants of your friend Abraham? 8. Your people settled here and built this Temple for you, 9. truly believing that in a time like this—whenever we are faced with any calamity such as war, disease, or famine—we can stand here before this Temple and before you—for you are here in this Temple—and cry out to you to save us; and that you will hear us and rescue us. 10. "And now see what the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir are doing. You wouldn't let our ancestors invade those nations when Israel left Egypt, so we went around and didn't destroy them. 11. Now see how they reward us! For they have come to throw us out of your land which you have given us. 12.

O our God, won't you stop them? We have no way to protect ourselves against this mighty army. We don't know what to do, but we are looking to you." 13. As the people from every part of Judah stood before the Lord with their little ones, wives, and children,

14. the Spirit of the Lord came upon one of the men standing there—Jahaziel (son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah the Levite, who was one of the sons of Asaph). 15. "Listen to me, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem, and you, O king Jehoshaphat!" he exclaimed. "The Lord says, 'Don't be afraid! Don't be paralyzed by this mighty army! For the battle is not yours, but God's! 16. Tomorrow, go down and attack them! You will find them coming up the slopes of Ziz at the end of the valley that opens into the wilderness of Jeruel. 17. But you will not need to fight! Take your places; stand quietly and see the incredible rescue operation God will perform for you, O people of Judah and Jerusalem! Don't be afraid or discouraged! Go out there tomorrow, for the Lord is with you!' " 18. Then king Jehoshaphat fell to the ground with his face to the earth, and all the people of Judah and the people of Jerusalem did the same, worshiping the Lord. 19. Then the Levites of the Kohath clan and the Korah clan stood to praise the Lord God of Israel with songs of praise that rang out strong and clear.

20. Early the next morning the army of Judah went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. On the way Jehoshaphat stopped and called them to attention. "Listen to me, O people of Judah and Jerusalem," he said. "Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall have success! Believe his prophets, and everything will be all right!" 21. After consultation with the leaders of the people, he determined that there should be a choir leading the march, clothed in sanctified garments and singing the song "His Lovingkindness Is Forever" as they walked along praising and thanking the Lord! 22. And at the moment they began to sing and to praise, the Lord caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to begin fighting among themselves, and they destroyed each other! 23. For the Ammonites and Moabites

turned against their allies from Mount Seir and killed every one of them. And when they had finished that job, they turned against each other!

24. So, when the army of Judah arrived at the watchtower that looks out over the wilderness, as far as they could look there were dead bodies lying on the ground—not a single one of the enemy had escaped. 25. King Jehoshaphat and his people went out to plunder the bodies and came away loaded with money, garments, and jewels stripped from the corpses—so much that it took them three days to cart it all away! 26. On the fourth day they gathered in the Valley of Blessing, as it is called today, and how they praised the Lord! 27. Then they returned to Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat leading them, full of joy that the Lord had given them this marvelous rescue from their enemies. 28. They marched into Jerusalem accompanied by a band of harps, lyres, and trumpets and proceeded to the Temple. 29. And as had happened before, when the surrounding kingdoms heard that the Lord himself had fought against the enemies of Israel, the fear of God fell upon them. 30. So Jehoshaphat's kingdom was quiet, for his God had given him rest.

31. A thumbnail sketch of King Jehoshaphat: He became king of Judah when he was thirty-five years old, and reigned twenty-five years, in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi. 32. He was a good king, just as his father Asa was. He continually tried to follow the Lord, 33. with the exception that he did not destroy the idol shrines on the hills, nor had the people as yet really decided to follow the God of their ancestors. 34. The details of Jehoshaphat's reign from first to last are written in the history of Jehu the son of Hanani, which is inserted in The Annals of the Kings of Israel.

35. But at the close of his life, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, went into partnership with Ahaziah, king of Israel, who was a very wicked man. 36. They made ships in Ezion-geber to sail to Tarshish. 37. Then Eliezer, son of Dodavahu from Mareshah, prophesied against Jehoshaphat, telling him, "Because you have allied yourself with King Ahaziah, the Lord has destroyed your

work." So the ships met disaster and never arrived at Tarshish.

Chapter 21:1. When Jehoshaphat died, he was buried in the cemetery of the kings in Jerusalem, and his son Jehoram became the new ruler of Judah. 2. His brothers—other sons of Jehoshaphat—were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael, and Shephatiah. 3, 4. Their father had given each of them valuable gifts of money and jewels, also the ownership of some of the fortified cities of Judah. However, he gave the kingship to Jehoram because he was the oldest. But when Jehoram had become solidly established as king, he killed all of his brothers and many other leaders of Israel.

COMMENTARY

Asa's son, Jehoshaphat, sat on the throne in Judah. Jehoshaphat's name means "Jehovah is judge". He was one of the best kings of the southern kingdom.¹ A continual condition of civil strife persisted between Judah and Israel. Jehoshaphat concerned himself with necessary fortifications to protect the territory of Judah. This involved strengthening several villages in Judah and in the territory on the border of Ephraim. Judah's king opposed every form of Baalism. In every matter pertaining to the kingdom he sought Jehovah's counsel. Jehovah was with him. The southern kingdom enjoyed a period of prosperity and Jehoshaphat was held in high honor as king. The lifting up of the heart sometimes meant boastful and foolish pride; however, Jehoshaphat boasted in Jehovah and gave his people strong spiritual leadership.

Jehoshaphat was deeply concerned that his people be trained in the word of God. He appointed princes, Levites, and priests to travel throughout the borders of Judah to teach the people out of the "book of the law of Jehovah". He wanted all of his people to be involved in religious education. In this matter he approximated the ideal in Deuteronomy 17:18, 19 which stated that the king should rule by the law of God. This is the only mention in the Bible of these particular princes of the Levites. They filled an important place of service in the days

¹Oehler, Grustave F., *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 403

of Jehoshaphat.

This course of action chosen by Judah's king brought great blessings upon the king and the people. Judah enjoyed an era of comparative peace. The Philistines brought tribute. Arab tribes in the environs of Judah brought great numbers of rams and goats. Store cities were built throughout the kingdom and much attention was given to improving social conditions. In addition to all of his peaceful pursuits, Jehoshaphat maintained a standing army of considerable proportions. Seven hundred eighty thousand warriors were numbered in Judah and three hundred eighty thousand warriors were numbered in Benjamin. They manned the fortified cities and helped the king in any assigned tasks. We do not know anything else about the captains or mighty men who are named in connection with Jehoshaphat's army.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

LESSON EIGHTEEN 15-17

656. Who was Azariah? How was he moved to do his work?
657. What promise and warning are detailed in 15:2?
658. How does Azariah summarize Israel's history?
659. What charge is given in 15:7?
660. Who was Oded?
661. How would Asa have authority in Ephraim?
662. Describe the covenant entered into in Jerusalem.
663. What about the person who would not seek God?
664. How did Jehovah reward His people?
665. Who was Maacah and what was done with regard to her?
666. Locate Kidron.
667. How complete was Asa's reform?
668. Identify Baasha.
669. Why would Baasha fortify Ramah?
670. For what purpose did Asa pay a considerable amount of money?

671. Locate Ijon, Dan, and Abel-maim.
672. Where were Geba and Mizpah?
673. Who was Hanani?
674. Why does Asa now come under rebuke?
675. What had been Asa's experience with the Ethiopians?
676. How extensive is Jehovah's domain?
677. What did Asa do with Hanani?
678. Evaluate Asa as a king.
679. Describe Asa's illness
680. Where did Asa go for help?
681. What is said about Asa's burial?
682. Describe Jehoshaphat's actions relating to Judah.
683. Explain Jehovah's attitude toward Jehoshaphat.
684. Explain the reference to Jehoshaphat's "heart being lifted up".
685. Why were princes sent out into Judah?
686. What special services did Levites render?
687. Why did the nations round about not make war on Judah?
688. What did the Arabians do for Jehoshaphat?
689. How many men of war were numbered out of Judah and Benjamin?

LESSON NINETEEN 18-20

JEHOSHAPHAT AND AHAB WAR WITH MOAB AND AMMON

5. THE REIGN OF JEHOSHAPHAT—Continued (17-21:3)

INTRODUCTION

Judah's alliance with Ahab of Israel displeased Jehovah. The prophets were mistreated. Jehoshaphat worked diligently to bring his people back to God. He activated the priestly high court. The Moabites and Ammonites were defeated in Jehoshaphat's day.

TEXT

(Scripture text in Lesson Eighteen)

PARAPHRASE

(Scripture text in Lesson Eighteen)

COMMENTARY

Jehoshaphat's relation with the northern kingdom was not entered into with a view to weakening the southern kingdom. The king of Judah probably wanted to share some of the prosperity of his kingdom with Ahab. Jehoshaphat's reign extended over a period of twenty five years. His peaceful overtures toward the northern kingdom probably came during the first half of his reign. The "affinity" with Ahab was effected in the marriage of Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, with Athaliah, daughter of Ahab. As there had been a Jezebel in Samaria, there would be an Athaliah in Jerusalem. There were state visits between the royal houses. On such an occasion Ahab made lavish provisions for Jehoshaphat. The Syrians had set a great army against Ramoth-gilead, a village thirty miles southeast of the southern tip of the Sea of Chinnereth. Ahab needed military assistance. Jehoshaphat agreed to bring Judah's army into this conflict. Certainly in these matters Judah's king failed to seek Jehovah's will.

Jehoshaphat knew that Ahab did not serve Jehovah. On the

occasion when Judah's king agreed to go to battle against Syria with Ahab's army, Jehoshaphat suggested that they determine Jehovah's will in this matter. Ahab proceeded to ask counsel of the four hundred heathen prophets of Israel.¹ They advised him to go to war and assured him of victory through God (Elohim). Jeroboam had set up calf worship in convenient places in the northern kingdom at the beginning of his reign. His successors to the throne maintained these centers of worship. Ahab had married Jezebel, the Phoenician princess. She had brought Baalism out of her country into the northern kingdom. Ahab had completely committed himself to this heathen worship and had forsaken Jehovah. We marvel that these heathen prophets would presume to speak for Israel's God. Jehoshaphat loved Jehovah. He was not satisfied with the word of Ahab's false prophets. Upon inquiring as to whether or not a prophet of Jehovah was available, the king of Judah was informed about a man named Micaiah. This true prophet had declared Jehovah's word to Ahab on previous occasion and had condemned Ahab for his heathenism. Ahab told Jehoshaphat that he hated Micaiah. The king of Judah urged Jehoshaphat to weigh his words. Micaiah's location wasn't exactly known. He may have been imprisoned at the time. While the officer was sent to bring Micaiah to the court, the two kings held court at the gate of Samaria. Ahab's prophets continued their formal worship and stoutly maintained that Ahab should go to battle. One of the false prophets, Zedekiah, put on a mask fashioned like the head of a bull and equipped with iron horns. He moved among his fellow prophets and before Ahab and Jehoshaphat like an attacking animal. Zedekiah claimed that Jehovah had told him that Israel would be victorious. Whenever Zedekiah spoke, he was fully supported by the four hundred Baalists.

The officer who was sent to bring Micaiah tried to condition the prophet to say an agreeable word when he stood before the kings. Micaiah asserted his independency in relation to other prophets and his dependency upon God. He said, "What my God saith, that will I speak". In the presence of the kings in a

¹Beecher, Willis, J., *The Prophets and the Promise*, p. 55

sarcastic manner Micaiah told Ahab to join the battle and anticipate victory. Ahab's own conscience convicted him in this matter. Micaiah's attitude and manner of expression revealed to Ahab that the prophet had a true message from Jehovah. Since Micaiah had bound himself by Jehovah's name to declare God's will and since Ahab bound Micaiah under oath to reveal the truth, Micaiah said that Israel was a scattered flock without a shepherd. Ahab's army should be dismissed. In wrath Ahab interrupted Micaiah and contended that Micaiah ought not to have been called for advice. Micaiah described his vision of Jehovah. Ahab had hardened his heart. A lying spirit from Jehovah moved the false prophets to advise Ahab to go to battle.

Zedekiah humiliated Micaiah by striking him in the face and challenging him to identify the spirit that had prompted this insulting gesture. Zedekiah was informed that his own life would be in jeopardy at the hands of Israel's enemies (most likely, the Syrians). Ahab consigned Micaiah to prison where he would be sustained only by bread and water. The king's order was that Micaiah should be imprisoned until he returned from the battle front in peace. He may have intended to kill the prophet at that time. Even though he was under this sentence, Micaiah insisted that Ahab would not return in peace. Ahab, himself, was under the sentence of death.

This would have been the proper time for Jehoshaphat to withdraw himself and his army from the northern kingdom. In spite of this demonstration of Jehovah's will, the two kings went to war with Syria at Ramoth-gilead. Ahab was so confident that he could win the battle that he had no hesitancy to join the ranks of the fighting men. He knew that as king of Israel, he would be a special prize to the enemy. So he disguised himself. Jehoshaphat was especially vulnerable because he wore robes identifying himself as a king. In the heat of the battle when the king of Judah was recognized by the enemy, he was miraculously spared. Somewhere on the battle-field a Syrian soldier shot an arrow toward the army of Israel.¹ He did not

¹Spence, H. D. M., *The Pulpit Commentary*, II Chronicles, p. 216

aim at any particular Hebrew soldier. Jehovah guided that Syrian arrow in its flight and it penetrated Ahab's armor striking a vital organ in the king's body. In mortal pain Ahab withdrew from the battle and died at the close of the day.

After these tragic experiences with Ahab, Jehoshaphat returned to Jerusalem. His alliance with wicked Ahab did not go unrebuked. A prophet named Jehu stood in Jehoshaphat's presence and condemned him. Judah's king was also informed that Jehovah approved his efforts to rid his land of Baalism. With renewed determination Jehoshaphat visited all of his people from Beersheba in the south to Ephraim in the north encouraging them to worship Jehovah. He set up a system of judges and courts throughout his kingdom charging these officials to fear the Lord and not respect persons or accept bribes. He also re-established the high court at the Temple in Jerusalem in which the priests passed judgment on very serious matters which the lesser courts could not handle (Deuteronomy 17:8-13). Amariah, the high priest, was in charge of the Temple court and all of the matters of business that were associated with God's House. Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab had not completely turned him from Jehovah.

Later in Jehoshaphat's reign the Moabites, Ammonites, and some Edomites (Meunim) rebelled against the southern kingdom. Reports were brought to Judah's king to the effect that a great army was moving around the southern end of the Dead Sea and organizing for attack at Hazazon-tamar or Engedi on the west coast of the Dead Sea. In this crisis once more Jehoshaphat turned to Jehovah. He asked all of his people to fast and to pray for God's help. The people were called to Jerusalem. There in the court of the priests the king plead with Jehovah for mercy and deliverance. The content of Jehoshaphat's prayer is worth careful study. Jehovah is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is ruler over all kingdoms. He gave Palestine to Abraham's seed. The Temple is in Jerusalem. As Solomon had said in his prayer (I Kings 8), if the Hebrews would pray toward this house, Jehovah would hear. Jehoshaphat reminded God that Israel had been prohibited

from attacking Moab and Ammon when Moses brought Israel through that territory. Now, these very people who were spared rise up to attack Jehovah's people. Jehoshaphat said that he and his people were not able to defend themselves, so they cast themselves completely upon God's mercy—"our eyes are upon Thee".

When the king had prayed, Jahaziel, a Levite, was filled with the Spirit of Jehovah. He declared the word that the people longed to hear. "Don't be afraid of the enemy. The battle is not your concern; it is God's". The army of Jehoshaphat was to be drawn up against Moab, Ammon, and Edom. The place called Ziz is difficult to locate, but it is believed to have been in the vicinity of Engedi. The Hebrews were told that they would not have to fight. They were to come to the battle-field, stand still, and wait for Jehovah to act. Jehoshaphat and his people received the news gladly and they worshipped God.

The next morning the king of Judah moved his army toward Tekoa, southeast of Bethlehem about six miles. As the army moved, the king encouraged his people. "Believe in Jehovah. Believe His prophets." The soldiers sang as they marched, "Give thanks unto Jehovah" (Psalm 106:1; 136:1). The ancient strategy of ambush was used. Jehovah was in complete control. The result of the ambush was that the Ammonites and Moabites supposed that the Edomites had turned upon them. So the enemies of Israel fought among themselves. The complete overthrow of the enemy is described in verses 24-30. Somewhere beyond Tekoa in the vicinity of the Dead Sea the battlefield was covered with the corpses of the fallen enemy soldiers. Jehoshaphat's warriors stripped the dead and carried off much booty. They called the place "Beracah", which means "blessing". Jehoshaphat's people returned to Jerusalem praising Jehovah for this miraculous deliverance.

The total picture of Jehoshaphat's reign leaves a good impression. His reign extended through twenty five years. The leadership provided by this king is compared with that of his father, Asa. In the days of the Judges "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). Judah's king

did "that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah" (verse 32). The reforms of Jehoshaphat were not complete, probably because idolatry had been rooted so deeply in the southern kingdom. In spite of the king's devotion to Jehovah, it was difficult to secure the same commitment on the part of his people. The prophet Jehu (I Kings 16:1) was used by Jehovah as a writer of history. An account of Jehoshaphat's reign was written by Jehu and incorporated in a larger book.

Sometime after Jehoshaphat had been humiliated in his alliance with Ahab he covenanted with Ahaziah, son of Ahab and king of Israel. This venture involved building and equipping ships like those used on the Mediterranean by the Phoenicians for the Tarshish trade. Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah intended to use Ezion-geber at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba for their home port. They would send the vessels to Ophir which was far to the South and from there extend their trade to the East. The project was disastrous because Jehovah sent a prophet named Eliezer to condemn Jehoshaphat for his renewed alliance with Israel. The ships were ruined by a terrible storm before they ever left the home port.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

LESSON NINETEEN (18-20)

690. What was Jehoshaphat's economic condition?
691. With whom did Jehoshaphat set up an alliance? What was the purpose of the alliance?
692. Carefully locate Ramoth-gilead.
693. With regard to proposed plans, whose word did Jehoshaphat want to hear?
694. Who were the four hundred prophets of 18:5?
695. Why did Ahab hate Micaiah?
696. Describe the scene as the kings awaited Micaiah's arrival.
697. Who is this Zedekiah?
698. What were the "horns of iron"?

- 699. How did the messenger try to condition Micaiah?
- 700. At first, how did Micaiah answer Ahab? Why did he so answer?
- 701. Did Ahab really want to hear the truth? Explain.
- 702. What illustration is used in 18:16?
- 703. Where was Jehovah when Micaiah saw Him?
- 704. How had the spirit worked to mislead Ahab?
- 705. Was Ahab responsible for his actions? Explain.
- 706. At this time what did Zedekiah do?
- 707. What did Micaiah predict with regard to Zedekiah?
- 708. Describe "the bread of affliction".
- 709. What did Micaiah say about Ahab's returning in peace?
- 710. As the kings prepared to go into the battle how could they be distinguished?
- 711. Explain the instruction of the king of Syria to his captains.
- 712. Which of the Hebrew kings was attacked first? Why was he not killed?
- 713. Describe the wound which Ahab received. How long did Ahab live after being wounded?
- 714. After the battle with Syria where did Jehoshaphat go?
- 715. Identify this Jehu. What did he say?
- 716. What would be the nature of Jehoshaphat's work as "he went out among the people"?
- 717. In appointing judges what did the king order?
- 718. Explain the phrase, "respect of persons".
- 719. Who served as judges in Jerusalem? Was such an arrangement within Jehovah's will?
- 720. Describe the attitude of one who acts under "the fear of Jehovah".
- 721. How could a judge keep himself from guilt?
- 722. Who was the high priest in these days?
- 723. Where were the territories of Moab and Ammon located?

- 724. From whom were Moab and Ammon descended?
- 725. When Jehoshaphat learned of the threat of military attack what did he do?
- 726. What great truths relating to Jehovah are mentioned in 20:6?
- 727. Who were the original inhabitants of the land of Canaan?
- 728. What kind of confidence did Jehoshaphat have?
- 729. Name the ancient people who lived in Mount Seir.
- 730. What did the king confess to Jehovah in 20:12?
- 731. Who was Jahaziel?
- 732. Explain the phrase, "the battle is not yours, but God's".
- 733. What was the plan for meeting this military crisis?
- 734. Upon hearing the word of Jehovah, what did the king and the people do?
- 735. As they prepared to execute the plan what did the king say to the people?
- 736. What was the word of praise in 20:21?
- 737. What actually happened to Israel's enemies this day?
- 738. How did Jehoshaphat and his people profit from this overthrow?
- 739. What happened in the valley of Beracah?
- 740. Describe the return to Jerusalem.
- 741. How long did Jehoshaphat reign?
- 742. In what respects was Jehoshaphat not altogether successful as a godly leader?
- 743. Who wrote this king's history?
- 744. Who was Ahaziah?
- 745. What happened to Jehoshaphat's navy?
- 746. Where was Ezion-geber?
- 747. Who was Eliezer?

LESSON TWENTY 21-23

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JEHORAM THE REIGN OF AHAZIAH.

ATALIAH'S DEATH. THE CORONATION OF JOASH.

5. THE REIGN OF JEHOSHAPHAT—Continued (17-21:3)

INTRODUCTION

Jehoram's marriage to Athaliah brought serious trouble to Judah. Ahaziah's death at the hands of Jehu led Athaliah to murder all possible candidates for Judah's throne. Joash's rescue and Athaliah's death proved that Jehovah still directed affairs in Judah.

TEXT

(Scripture text in Lesson Eighteen)

PARAPHRASE

(Scripture text in Lesson Eighteen)

COMMENTARY

A brief summary note on Jehoshaphat's life is added in chapter 21:1-3. Upon his death he was accorded a very honorable burial in the royal cemetery in Jerusalem. The sons of Jehoshaphat were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael, and Shephatiah. Two of these sons were called by the same name, "Azariah". The Hebrew names show a slight variation. One son is called "Azarihu". In addition to these six sons, Jehoram is named as successor to his father's position. Jehoram is identified as the first-born son. These princes received splendid gifts from their father and held positions of authority in the kingdom.

6. THE REIGN OF JEHORAM (21:5-20)

TEXT

Chapter 21:5. Jehoram was thirty and two years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 6.

And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab; for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. 7. Howbeit Jehovah 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 alway.

8. In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves. 9. Then Jehoram passed over with his captains, and all his chariots with him: and he rose up by night, and smote the Edomites that compassed him about, and the captains of the chariots. 10. So Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day: then did Libnah revolt at the same time from under his hand, because he had forsaken Jehovah, the God of his fathers.

11. Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and made the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot, and led Judah astray. 12. And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, "Thus saith Jehovah, the God of David thy father, 'Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah, 13. but hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot, like as the house of Ahab did, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, who were better than thyself: 14. behold, Jehovah will smite with a great plague thy people and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy substance; 15. and thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness, day by day.' "

16. And Jehovah stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians that are beside the Ethiopians: 17. and they came up against Judah, and brake 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 never a son left him, save Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons.

18. And after all this Jehovah smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease. 19. And it came to pass, in process of time,

at the end of two years, that his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness, and he died of sore diseases. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers. 20. Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years: and he departed without being desired; and they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 21:5. He was thirty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years, in Jerusalem. 6. But he was as wicked as the kings who were over in Israel. Yes, as wicked as Ahab, for Jehoram had married one of the daughters of Ahab, and his whole life was one constant binge of doing evil. 7. However, the Lord was unwilling to end the dynasty of David, for he had made a covenant with David always to have one of his descendants upon the throne.

8. At that time the king of Edom revolted, declaring his independence of Judah. 9. Jehoram attacked him with his full army and with all of his chariots, marching by night, and almost managed to subdue him. 10. But to this day Edom has been successful in throwing off the yoke of Judah. Libnah revolted too, because Jehoram had turned away from the Lord God of his fathers.

11. What's more, Jehoram constructed idol shrines in the mountains of Judah, and led the people of Jerusalem in worshiping idols; in fact, he compelled his people to worship them. 12. Then Elijah the prophet wrote him this letter: "The Lord God of your ancestor David says that because you have not followed in the good ways of your father Jehoshaphat, nor the good ways of King Asa, 13. but you have been as evil as the kings over in Israel, and have made the people of Jerusalem and Judah worship idols just as in the times of King Ahab, and because you have killed your brothers who were better than you. 14. now the Lord will destroy your nation with a great plague. You, your children, your wives, and all that you have will be struck down. 15. You will be stricken with an intestinal

disease and your bowels will rot away."

16. Then the Lord stirred up the Philistines and the Arabs living next to the Ethiopians to attack Jehoram. 17. They marched against Judah, broke across the border, and carried away everything of value in the king's palace, including his sons and his wives; only his youngest son, Jehoahaz, escaped.

18. It was after this that Jehovah struck him down with the incurable bowel disease. 19. In the process of time, at the end of two years, his intestines came out and he died in terrible suffering. (The customary pomp and ceremony was omitted at his funeral.) 20. He was thirty two years old when he began to reign and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years, and died unmourned. He was buried in Jerusalem, but not in the royal cemetery.

COMMENTARY

In order to secure his position as king, Jehoram massacred all of his brothers. Along with them, many princes were put to death. The cruelties of Ahab and Jezebel were perpetuated in the new king of Judah. Jehovah was merciful to His people in that the reign of Jehoram extended only through eight years. The Bible record explains Jehoram's failures on the basis of his alliance with the northern kingdom which included his marriage with Athaliah, daughter of Jezebel. The king of Judah was charged with the sin of "walking the way of the kings of Israel". His manner of life and failure as a king were sufficient reasons for Jehovah to bring the kingdom of Judah to an end at that time. Jehoram's connection with the line of David caused God to be merciful to him and his subjects. The "lamp" of verse seven has to do with kingly leadership (see II Samuel 7). Jehoram had to contend with rebellion on the part of the Edomites and the people of Libnah. Libnah was a village in Judah about twenty five miles southwest of Jerusalem. Judah's relationship with Edom was regulated largely by the inner strength or weakness of the southern kingdom. On this occasion (verses 8-10) Jehoram was able to accomplish a military victory over Edom; however the Edomites continued in revolution

against the southern kingdom. Jehovah used Edom and Libnah in this manner to bring judgment on Jehoram because of his failure as a king.

In order to convince Jehoram that he was wicked, Jehovah directed Elijah to write a review of the king's sins. This is the only mention of Elijah in the Books of Chronicles. This Elijah is to be identified with the man of God who was called "troubler of Israel" by Ahab (I Kings 18:17). In setting up idol worship Jehoram was not content simply to provide materials and places for such worship. He "led Judah astray". He forced his people to become idolatrous. He rejected the good examples of Jehoshaphat and Asa. He found his models for leadership in the sinful kings of the northern kingdom. He massacred his brothers. Elijah told him that he was the least worthy of all his brothers to serve as king.¹ He could expect continuing crises in his government. His own family would be brought under Jehovah's judgment and he, himself, would be stricken with a mortal bowel disease. This "writing" of Elijah indicates that some of the prophet's prior to the eighth century B.C. reduced their messages to written form. The kind of accusation brought against Jehoram reminds us of Elijah's words against Ahab and Jezebel.

The king of Israel's troubles accumulated rapidly. Philistines along the coast of the Great Sea and Arabians who lived on the perimeter of the great desert revolted. They attacked Jerusalem and carried away much booty along with the wives and sons of Jehoram. Jehoahaz was the only remaining son of the king. Elsewhere he is named Ahaziah and Azariah. The curse in Elijah's writing was thus being fulfilled. Jehoram's final sickness and death proved beyond doubt that he was judged because of his sins. Jehoahaz probably reigned with his father during the last two years of Jehoram's life. Jehoram died in dishonor and was not buried in that plot reserved for the kings of Judah. The tragic epitaph for his life was, "he departed without being desired".²

¹Cook, F. C., *The Bible Commentary*, I Samuel-Esther, p. 401

²Clarke, Adam, *A Commentary and Critical Notes*, Vol. II., p. 675

7. THE REIGN OF AHAZIAH (22:1-9)

TEXT

Chapter 22:1. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son king in his stead; for the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp had slain all the eldest. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah reigned. 2. Forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Athaliah the daughter of Omri. 3. He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab; for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly. 4. And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, as did the house of Ahab; for they were his counsellors after the death of his father, to his destruction. 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. 6. And 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. And Azariah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Jehoram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

7. Now the destruction of Ahaziah was of God, in that he went unto Joram: for when he was come, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom Jehovah had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab. 8. And it came to pass, when Jehu was executing judgment upon the house of Ahab, that he found the princes of Judah, and the sons of the brethren of Ahaziah, ministering to Ahaziah, and slew them. 9. And he sought Ahaziah, and they caught him (now he was hiding in Samaria), and they brought him to Jehu, and slew him; and they buried him, for they said, "He is the son of Jehoshaphat, who sought Jehovah with all his heart." And the house of Ahaziah had no power to hold the kingdom.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 22:1. Then the people of Jerusalem chose Ahaziah, his youngest son, as their new king (for the marauding bands of

Arabs had killed his older sons). 2. Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned one year, in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah, granddaughter of Omri. 3. He, too, walked in the evil ways of Ahab, for his mother encouraged him in doing wrong. 4. Yes, he was as evil as Ahab, for Ahab's family became his advisors after his father's death, and they led him on to ruin. 5. Following their evil advice, Ahaziah made an alliance with King Jehoram of Israel (the son of Ahab), who was at war with King Hazael of Syria at Ramoth-gilead. Ahaziah led his army there to join the battle. King Jehoram of Israel was wounded. 6. and returned to Jezreel to recover. Ahaziah went to visit him,

7. but this turned out to be a fatal mistake; for God had decided to punish Ahaziah for his alliance with Jehoram. It was during this visit that Ahaziah went out with Jehoram to challenge Jehu (son of Nimshi), whom the Lord had appointed to end the dynasty of Ahab. 8. While Jehu was hunting down and killing the family and friends of Ahab, he met King Ahaziah's nephews, the princes of Judah and killed them. 9. As he and his men were searching for Ahaziah, they found him hiding in the city of Samaria, and brought him to Jehu, who killed him. Even so, Ahaziah was given a royal burial because he was the grandson of King Jehoshaphat—a man who enthusiastically served the Lord. None of his sons, however, except for Joash, lived to succeed him as king.

COMMENTARY

Chapter 22:1 says that all of Jehoram's sons, except Jehoahaz, had been murdered by men who were associated with a band of Arabians. If the Davidic succession was to be followed, there was no alternative to setting Jehoahaz on the throne. Jehoahaz is called by the name of Ahaziah in chapter 22. He was Athaliah's son and she ruled Judah through him. Athaliah was Ahab's daughter and her grandfather was Omri. The chronicler emphasized the fact that the moral degeneracy of the northern kingdom had spilled over into Judah. Ahaziah's relationship to Athaliah brought him and Judah into alliance

with Jehoram, son of Ahab.¹ The Syrians under Hazael's kingship had fought with Jehoram and Israel at Ramoth-gilead. In this conflict Jehoram was wounded. He retreated from the battle field and remained at Jezreel while he recovered from his wound. Jezreel was about twenty miles southwest of the southern tip of the Sea of Chinnereth. Ahaziah (here called Azariah) came up from Jerusalem to visit Jehoram. This visit was another indication of the implications of Judah with the idolatrous northern kingdom. Ahaziah's death was the result of Jehovah's judgment on his wicked life. "Joram" is a shortened form of "Jehoram". Jehovah never approved Ahaziah's friendliness with this worshipper of Baal. The record in II Kings 9:21ff describes Ahaziah's ultimate tragedy. When Elijah met Jehovah at Horeb (Mount Sinai) as recorded in I Kings 19:15ff, the prophet was commissioned to anoint Jehu to be king of Israel. Jehu's assignment was to annihilate the houses of Omri and Ahab and to cleanse the northern kingdom of its Baalism. When Jehu had been anointed by one of the sons of the prophets at Ramoth-gilead, he hurried to Jezreel to execute judgment on Jehoram. At that time Ahaziah was visiting Jehoram. Both of the kings came out of the city to inquire about Jehu's mission and both of them were killed. Ahaziah had been able to avoid Jehu briefly while hiding in Samaria. Jehu hunted him and killed him. Even though he was the son of a righteous father, Jehoshaphat, his father's goodness could not save him. In connection with these events Jehu met "brethren of Ahaziah" who evidently were coming to Samaria to visit Jehoram and Jezebel (II Kings 10:12-14). He fell upon them and slew them.

8. THE TIMES OF ATHALIAH (22:10-23:15)

TEXT

Chapter 22:10. Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah. 11. But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole

¹Elmslie, W. A. L., *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. III, p. 502.

him away from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in the bedchamber. 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 slew him not. 12. And he was with them hid in the house of God six years: and Athaliah reigned over the land.

Chapter 23:1. And in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroaham, and Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, and Azariah the son of Obed, and Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, into covenant with him. 2. And they went about in Judah, and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the heads of fathers' houses of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. 3. And all the assembly made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And he said unto them, "Behold, the king's son shall reign, as Jehovah hath spoken concerning the sons of David. 4. "this is the thing that ye shall do: a third part of you, that come in on the sabbath, of the priests and of the Levites, shall be porters of the thresholds; 5. and a third part shall be at the king's house; and a third part at the gate of the foundation: and all the people shall be in the courts of the house of Jehovah. 6. "But let none come into the house of Jehovah, save the priests, and they that minister of the Levites; they shall come in, for they are holy: but all the people shall keep the charge of Jehovah. 7. "And the Levites shall compass the king around about, every man with his weapons in his hand; and whosoever cometh into the house, let him be slain: and be ye with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out."

8. So the Levites and all Judah did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded: and they took every man his men, those that were to come in on the sabbath, with those that were to go out on the sabbath; for Jehoiada the priest dismissed not the courses. 9. And Jehoiada the priest delivered to the captains of hundreds the spears, and bucklers, and shields, that had been king David's, which were in the house of God. 10. And he set all the people, every 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, by the king around about. 11. Then they brought out the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony, and made him king: and Jehoiada and his sons anointed him; and they said, "Long live the king."

12. And when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of Jehovah: 13. and she looked, and behold, the king stood by his pillar at the entrance, and the captains and the trumpets by the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew trumpets; the singers also played on instruments of music, and led the singing of praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, "Treason! treason!" 14. And Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, "Have her forth between the ranks; and whoso followeth her, let him be slain with the sword:" for the priest said, "Slay her not in the house of Jehovah." 15. So they made way for her; and she went to the entrance of the house gate to the king's house: and they slew her there.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 22:10. for their grandmother Athaliah killed them when she heard the news of her son Ahaziah's death. 11. Joash was rescued by his Aunt Jehosabeath, who was King Ahaziah's sister, and was hidden away in a storage room in the Temple. She was a daughter of King Jehoram, and the wife of Jehoiada the priest. 12. Joash remained hidden in the Temple for six years while Athaliah reigned as queen. He was cared for by his nurse and by his aunt and uncle.

Chapter 23:1. In the seventh year of the reign of Queen Athaliah, Jehoiada the priest got up his courage and took some of the army officers into his confidence: Azariah (son of Jeroham), Ishmael (son of Jehohanan), Azariah (son of Obed), Maaseiah (son of Adaiah), and Elishaphat (son of Zichri). 2, 3. These men traveled out across the nation secretly, to tell the

Levites and clan leaders about his plans and to summon them to Jerusalem. On arrival they swore allegiance to the young king, who was still in hiding at the Temple. "at last the time has come for the king's son to reign!" Jehoiada exclaimed. "The Lord's promise—that a descendant of King David shall be our king—will be true again. 4. This is how we'll proceed: a third of you priests and Levites who come off duty on the Sabbath will stay at the entrance as guards. 5, 6. Another third will go over to the palace, and a third will be at the Lower Gate. Everyone else must stay in the outer courts of the Temple, as required by God's laws. For only the priests and Levites on duty may enter the Temple itself, for they are sanctified. 7. You Levites, form a bodyguard for the king, weapons in hand, and kill any unauthorized person entering the Temple. Stay right beside the king."

8. So all the arrangements were made. Each of the three leaders led a third of the priests arriving for duty that Sabbath, and a third of those whose week's work was done and were going off duty—for Jehoiada the chief priest didn't release them to go home. 9. Then Jehoiada issued spears and shields to all the army officers. These had once belonged to King David and were stored in the Temple. 10. These officers, fully armed, formed a line from one side to the other in front of the Temple and around the altar in the outer court. 11. Then they brought out the little prince and placed the crown upon his head and handed him a copy of the law of God, and proclaimed him king. A great shout went up, "long live the king!" as Jehoiada and his sons anointed him.

12. When Queen Athaliah heard all the noise and commotion, and the shouts of praise to the king, she rushed over to the Temple to see what was going on—and there stood the king by his pillar at the entrance, with the army officers and trumpeters surrounding him, and people from all over the land rejoicing and blowing trumpets, and the singers singing, accompanied by an orchestra leading the people in a great psalm of praise. Athaliah ripped her clothes and screamed, "Treason! Treason!" 13, 14. "Take her out and kill her," Jehoiada the

priest shouted to the army officers. "Don't do it here at the Temple. And kill anyone who tries to help her." 15, 16, 17. So the crowd opened up for them to take her out and they killed her at the palace stables. Then Jehoiada made a solemn contract that he and the king and the people would be the Lord's. And all the people rushed over to the temple of Baal and knocked it down, and broke up the altars and knocked down the idols, and killed Mattan the priest of Baal before his altar.

COMMENTARY

The scene of action quickly transfers to Jerusalem where the queen mother, Athaliah, moved to make certain her claim to the throne.¹ Upon Ahaziah's death at the hands of Jehu, Athaliah set out to kill every person who through David's line might claim the throne. Jehoshabeath (Jehosheba) was the daughter of Jerhoram and the sister of Ahaziah. She acted quickly and wisely in taking Ahaziah's young son, Joash, and hiding him in a room in the Temple. Jehoshabeath was also the wife of Jehoiada, the high priest. Jehoiada was destined to become the power behind the throne in Judah. Most likely, Athaliah feverishly hunted this little boy; however, his aunt was able to hide him for six years. During this difficult period, Athaliah reigned as queen over Judah. She did not fear Jehovah and she used her influence to establish Baalism in the southern kingdom.

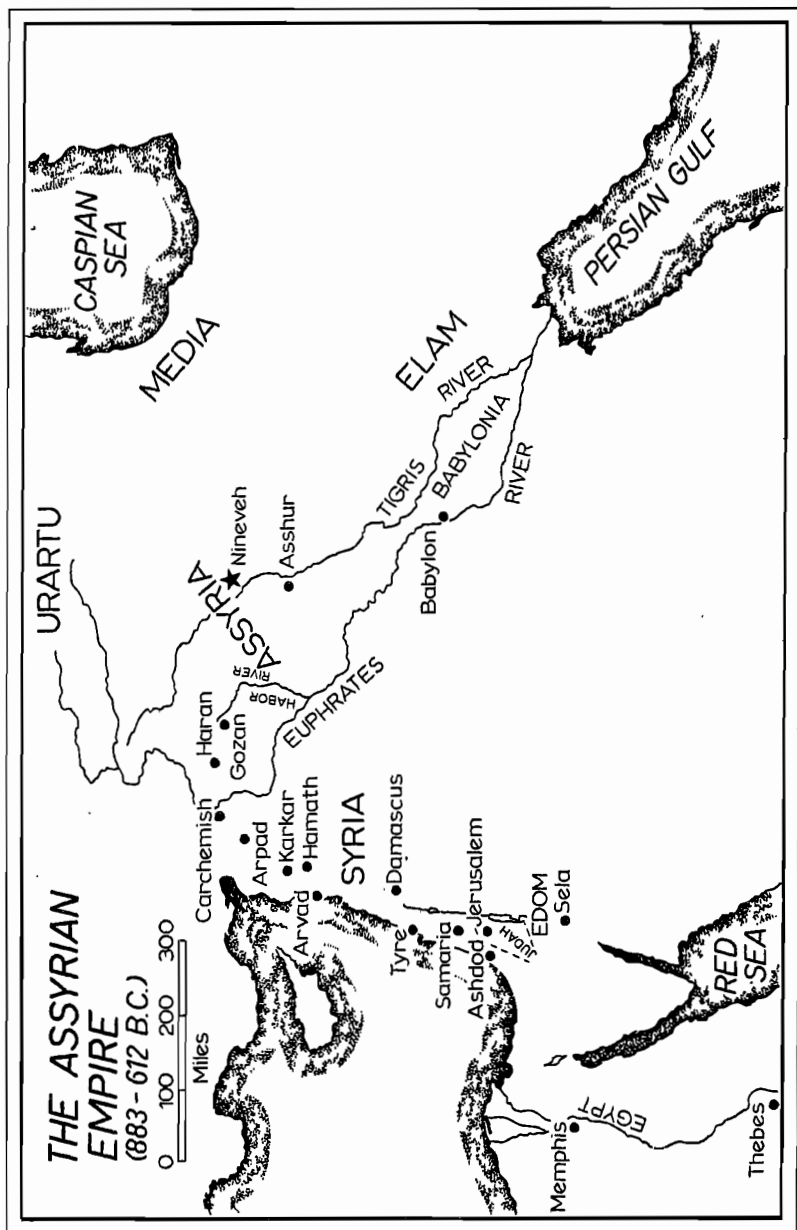
When Joash passed the sixth anniversary of his birth, the high priest, Jehoiada, made his move to depose Athaliah and put the true Davidic king on the throne of Judah. The five men named in this account are not named in II Kings 11:5-7. They are Azariah, Ishmael, Azariah the son of Obed, Maaseiah, and Elishaphat. The whole group of soldiers over which they had charge probably numbered about five hundred. In addition to these soldiers, there was a representative group of Levites and elders who had agreed with Jehoiada to put Joash on the throne. All of this work was done without Athaliah's

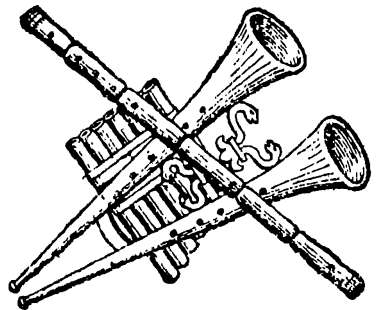
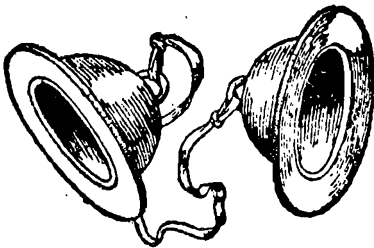
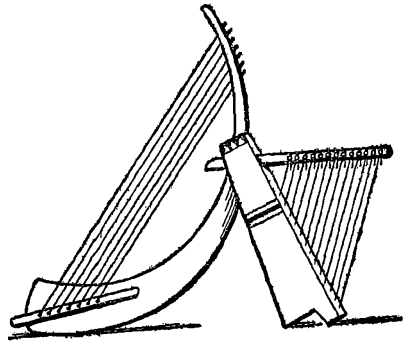
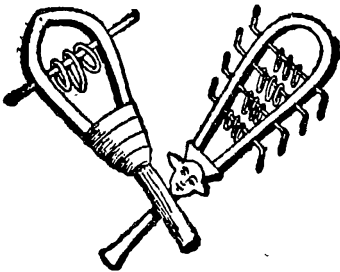
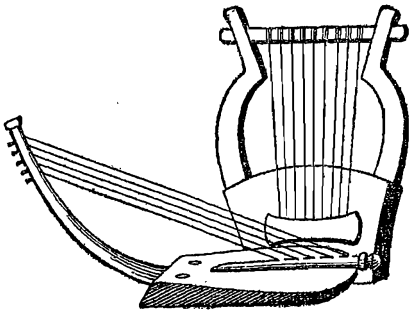
¹Pfeiffer, Charles H., *The Divided Kingdom* Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1967, p. 20.

knowledge. It is possible that many people were surprised to learn that Joash was alive, supposing that all the princes had been killed in Athaliah's purge. Jehoiada proceeded with great care to organize the men at his disposal. One third of the patriots would be priests and Levites who would be stationed at the doors of Jehovah's Temple. One third of the men would take up their positions at "the king's house", the place where Joash had been living. One third of the high priest's helpers were assigned to guard a particular gate in the vicinity of the Temple. The people would fill the courts to which they normally were allowed access. The Temple was not to be desecrated even for this important occasion. "The charge of Jehovah" concerning the sacredness of the Temple had to be observed. On this occasion the Levites were equipped with swords and at the proper time they were to form a protective shield around the boy, Joash. They were to guard this child with their own lives and they had orders to kill anybody who would attempt to harm him.

In order to carry out this very important project, Jehoiada kept all of the priests and Levites in service at the Temple. All of those who were responsible for groups of men were briefed concerning their assignments. Military equipment was taken out of the museum in the Temple and placed in the hands of Levites and others who were ready to put Joash on the throne. When all preparations had been completed, Joash was brought into the court of priests and stationed near the altar of burnt offering as Jehovah had instructed in Deuteronomy 17:18, when Joash was crowned. He was also presented a copy of the Law (the testimony) and the high priest anointed him to be king. The blessing, "Long live the king", was used when Saul was chosen for that office (I Samuel 10:24). It was also employed in the rebellion of Adonijah (I Kings 1:25).

No attempt was made to conceal the coronation. Athaliah had not been invited. From her quarters she heard the shouting of the congregation and the festival sounds of a free people. Upon leaving her house she hurried to Jehovah's Temple where she saw the boy king and the soldiers who blocked her access to





him. She tarried long enough to hear the sound of the trumpets and to hear a few words of the spirited singing. Not being able to contain herself, in a burst of emotion she ripped her queenly robes and charged the whole assembly with treason. Jehoiada answered this demonstration by ordering her to be led from the Temple. Careful attention was to be given to any who might come to Athaliah's defense. Such persons were to be put to death. The queen was not to be killed in the Temple, thus avoiding defiling the house of God. As she made her way back to her residence, she was slain. Her departure was as dramatic as that of her mother, Jezebel.

9. THE REIGN OF JOASH (23:16-24)

TEXT

Chapter 23:16. And Jehoiada made a covenant between himself, and all the people, and the king, that they should be Jehovah's people. 17. And all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it down, and brake his altars and his images in pieces, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. 18. And Jehoiada appointed the officers of the house of Jehovah under the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of Jehovah, to offer the burnt-offerings of Jehovah, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, according to the order of David. 19. And he set the porters at the gates of the house of Jehovah, that none that was unclean in anything should enter in. 20. And 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 Jehovah: and they came through the upper gate unto the king's house, and set the king upon the throne of the kingdom. 21. So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet. And Athaliah they had slain with the sword.

Chapter 24:1. Joash was seven years old when he began to reign; and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Zibiah, of Beer-sheba. 2. And Joash did that which

was right in the eyes of Jehovah all the days of Jehoiada the priest. 3. And Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons and daughters.

4. And it came to pass after this, that Joash was minded to restore the house of Jehovah. 5. And he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and said to them, "Go out unto the cities of Judah, and gather of all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year; and see that ye hasten the matter." Howbeit the Levites hastened it not. 6. And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said unto him, "Why hast thou not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and out of Jerusalem the tax of Moses the servant of Jehovah, and of the assembly of Israel, for the tent of the testimony?" 7. For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, hath broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of Jehovah did they bestow upon the Baalim.

8. So the king commanded, and they made a chest, and set it without at the gate of the house of Jehovah. 9. And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in for Jehovah the tax that Moses the servant of God laid upon Israel in the wilderness. 10. And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end. 11. And it was so, that, at what time the chest was brought unto 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 priest's 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. 12. And the king and Jehoiada gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of Jehovah; and they hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of Jehovah, and also such as wrought iron and brass to repair the house of Jehovah. 13. So the workmen wrought, and the work of repairing went forward in their hands, and they set up the house of God in its state, and strengthened it. 14. And when they had made an end, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, whereof were made vessels for the house of Jehovah, even vessels wherewith to

minister and to offer, and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt-offerings in the house of Jehovah continually all the days of Jehoiada.

15. But Jehoiada waxed old and was full of days, and he died; a hundred and thirty years old was he when he died. 16. And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and toward God and his house. 17. Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them. 18. And they forsook the house of Jehovah, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their guiltiness. 19. Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto Jehovah; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear.

20. And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest; and he stood above the people, and said unto them, "Thus saith God, 'Why transgress ye the commandments of Jehovah, so that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken Jehovah, he hath also forsaken you' " 21. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of Jehovah. 22. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, "Jehovah look upon it, and require it."

23. And it came to pass at the end of the year, that the army of the Syrians came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus. 24. For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men; and Jehovah delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken Jehovah, the God of their fathers. So they executed judgment upon Joash.

25. And when they were 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 slew him on his bed, and he died; and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings. 26. And these are they that conspired against him: Zabad the son of Shimeath the Ammonitess, and Jehozabad the son of Shimrith the Moabitess. 27. Now concerning his sons, and the greatness of the burdens laid upon him, and the rebuilding of the house of God, behold, they are written in the commentary of the book of kings. And Amaziah his son reigned in his stead.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 23:18. Jehoiada now appointed the Levite priests as guards, and to sacrifice the burnt offering to the Lord as prescribed in the law of Moses. He made the identical assignments of the Levite clans that King David had. They sang with joy as they worked. 19. The guards at the Temple gates kept out everything that was not consecrated and all unauthorized personnel.

20. Then the army officers, nobles, governors, and all the people escorted the king from the Temple, wending their way from the Upper Gate to the palace, and seated the king upon his throne. 21. So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet and peaceful because Queen Athaliah was dead.

Chapter 24:1. Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years, in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah, from Beer-sheba. 2. Joash tried hard to please the Lord all during the lifetime of Jehoiada the priest. 3. Jehoiada arranged two marriages for him, and he had sons and daughters.

4. Later on, Joash decided to repair and recondition the Temple. 5. He summoned the priests and Levites and gave them these instructions: "Go to all the cities of Judah and collect offerings for the building fund, so that we can maintain the Temple in good repair. Get at it right away. Don't delay." But the Levites took their time.

6. So the king called for Jehoiada, the High Priest, and

asked him, "Why haven't you demanded that the Levites go out and collect the Temple taxes from the cities of Judah, and from Jerusalem? The tax law enacted by Moses the servant of the Lord must be enforced so that the Temple can be repaired."

7, 8. (The followers of wicked Athaliah had ravaged the Temple, and everything dedicated to the worship of God had been removed to the temple of Baalam.) So now the king instructed that a chest be made and set outside the Temple gate. 9. Then a proclamation was sent to all the cities of Judah and throughout Jerusalem telling the people to bring to the Lord the tax that Moses the servant of God had assessed upon Israel.

10. And all the leaders and the people were glad, and brought the money and placed it in the chest until it was full.

11. Then the Levites carried the chest to the king's accounting office where the recording secretary and the representative of the High Priest counted money, and took the chest back to the Temple again. This went on day after day, and money continued to pour in. 12. The king and Jehoiada gave the money to the building superintendents, who hired masons and carpenters to restore the Temple; and to foundrymen who made articles of iron and brass. 13. So the work went forward, and finally the Temple was in much better condition than before. 14. When all was finished, the remaining money was brought to the king and Jehoiada, and it was agreed to use it for making the gold and silver spoons and bowls used for incense, and for making the instruments used in the sacrifices and offerings.

Burnt offerings were sacrificed continually during the lifetime of Jehoiada the priest. 15. He lived to a very old age, finally dying at 130. 16. He was buried in the City of David among the kings, because he had done so much good for Israel, for God, and for the Temple.

17, 18. But after his death the leaders of Judah came to King Joash and induced him to abandon the Temple of the God of their ancestors, and to worship shame-idols instead! So the wrath of God came down upon Judah and Jerusalem again. 19.

God sent prophets to bring them back to the Lord, but the people wouldn't listen.

20. Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, Jehoiada's son. He called a meeting of all the people. Standing before them upon a platform, he said to them, "God wants to know why you are disobeying his commandments. For when you do, everything you try fails. You have forsaken the Lord, and now he has forsaken you."

21. Then the leaders plotted to kill Zechariah, and finally King Joash himself ordered him executed in the court of the Temple. 22. That was how King Joash repaid Jehoiada for his love and loyalty—by killing his son. Zechariah's last words as he died were "Lord, see what they are doing and pay them back."

23. A few months later the Syrian army arrived and conquered Judah and Jerusalem, killing all the leaders of the nation and sending back great quantities of booty to the king of Damascus. 24. It was a great triumph for the tiny Syrian army, but the Lord let the great army of Judah be conquered by them because they had forsaken the Lord God of their ancestors. In that way God executed judgment upon Joash. 25. When the Syrians left—leaving Joash severely wounded—his own officials decided to kill him for murdering the son of Jehoiada the priest. They assassinated him as he lay in bed, and buried him in the City of David, but not in the cemetery of the kings. 26. The conspirators were Zabad, whose mother was Shime-ath, a woman from Amon; and Jehozabad, whose mother was Shim-rith, a woman from Moab.

27. If you want to read about the sons of Joash, and the curses laid upon Joash, and about the restoration of the Temple, see The Annals of the Kings. When Joash died, his son Amaziah became the new king.

COMMENTARY

The high priestly office was a position of real authority among the Hebrew people. This had never been more manifest than it was in Jehoiada's day. The high priest at this time was

the real power behind the throne. Jehoiada led in the covenant renewal. His rage against the idols of Baal reminds the student of Paul's righteous wrath which he vented against Athens' idols (Acts 17). In a later day, John Knox turned his fury on idolatry in England. Athaliah had been the champion of Baalism. The whole Baalistic system was supported by her government. The Temple of Jehovah suffered because of the neglect of the queen and the people under her influence. With rare delight Jehoiada and the faithful Jehovah worshipers ruined the temple of Baal with all of its fixtures. Mattan, the priest of Baal was killed near the altars of his own temple.

The new government under Joash was committed to Jehovah worship. Priests were appointed for regular service. Offerings were to be presented to Jehovah according to directions in the Law. The singers and instrumentalists were assigned to their respective duties. The gatekeepers were charged with their peculiar responsibilities. Under heavy guard Joash was brought from the Temple to the throne room and installed as king over the southern kingdom. There had been bloodshed. It was a day of dramatic incidents. The stage had been set for a time of renewal and growth among Jehovah's people.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

LESSON TWENTY 21-23

748. Locate the royal cemetery.
749. Who followed Jehoshaphat as king?
750. Name the sons of Jehoshaphat.
751. What was one of Jehoram's first official acts? Evaluate this.
752. Jehoram ruled in Judah. Why would the record refer to "the way of the kings of Israel"?
753. Name Ahab's daughter. Name Ahab's wife.
754. Why was David's house secure?
755. How did Jehoram handle his problems with Edom?

756. Locate Libnah.
757. How did Jehoram use the high places?
758. Who is this Elijah and how did he communicate with Jehoram?
759. List the terrible calamities that were to come upon the king.
760. What did the Philistines and the Arabians do?
761. Which of Jehoram's sons escaped?
762. How did Jehoram die?
763. Explain the "burning" of 21:19.
764. How did Jehoram's burial differ from that of other kings?
765. Who succeeded Jehoram as king of Judah?
766. Who was Omri?
767. Who counselled Ahaziah?
768. Carefully locate Ramoth-gilead. What happened there at this time?
769. Who went to make a hospital visit and who was the patient?
770. Identify Jehu.
771. How was Ahaziah related to Jehoshaphat?
772. How did Ahaziah die?
773. Who was Athaliah? Explain her actions at the time of Ahaziah's death.
774. Identify Jehoshabeath.
775. Where was Joash hid?
776. Who was Jehoiada?
777. How long was Athaliah in power over Judah?
778. To what does "the seventh year" refer in 23:1?
779. Where did Jehoiada go to seek support for his plan?
780. Where was the covenant agreed upon?
781. Describe the three-fold organization set up by Jehoiada.
782. Who would be granted entrance to the Temple?
783. Why would the Levites be armed?

784. What special arrangement was set up for the courses of priests according to 23:8?
785. Where did Jehoiada's men obtain their military equipment?
786. Name the king who is now crowned.
787. What was "the testimony"?
788. Locate another reference to the cry, "Long live the king".
789. How did Athaliah react when she saw what had happened?
790. Why use the trumpets?
791. What happened to the queen mother, Athaliah?
792. What was the nature of Jehoiada's covenant?
793. Identify a special house which the people completely ruined that day.
794. In re-establishing Temple service what code did Jehoiada follow?
795. What kind of person was excluded from the Temple?
796. How old is Joash at this time? Who is the real power behind the throne?

LESSON TWENTY-ONE 24-26

THE REIGN OF JOASH, AMAZIAH'S RISE AND FALL. UZZIAH'S LIFE AND TIMES.

9. THE REIGN OF JOASH—Continued (23:16-24)

INTRODUCTION

Joash and Jehoiada led far-reaching reformation in Jerusalem. Amaziah sought revenge for his father's death. Later he challenged Joash of Israel to battle and finally died at the hands of conspirators. Uzziah accomplished many internal improvements in Judah. The king's leprosy ended an otherwise useful life.

TEXT

(Scripture text in Lesson Twenty)

PARAPHRASE

(Scripture text in Lesson Twenty)

COMMENTARY

Like Saul, David, and Solomon, each of whom reigned forty years, Joash attained to the same number of years for his reign. Some blessing from Jehovah is to be seen in Joash's ability to exercise authority through that many years. Nothing more is known about his mother except her name, Zibiah, and the place of her origin, Beersheba. As long as Jehoiada lived, the high priest exercised a good influence over Joash. Later in his reign, Joash turned away from Jehovah. The king regarded the high priest like a son would look to a father. Jehoiada's deep concern for the protection of the seed of David led him to a careful selection of two wives for Joash. Why he chose two wives we are not told. Perhaps he was suggesting that this should be the extent of Joash's harem. The record indicates that Joash was the father of several children. This, also, was another indication of Jehovah's blessing.

The Temple of Jehovah needed physical repairs. Athaliah had used all of her influence to promote Baalism. Joash's purpose at this time was to effect a complete renewal of the Temple. Jehoiada encouraged him in every way.¹ The priests and Levites were informed of Joash's purpose and were sent throughout the kingdom to tell the people of the king's plans and to collect money for the project. The official religious leaders failed to throw themselves fully into this good work even though they had been told that the matter was urgent. The king counseled with Jehoiada and inquired about the failure of the priests. A half shekel tax (Exodus 30:13-15; Numbers 1:30) was supposed to be paid each year by every male for the purpose of helping to support the work of Jehovah's House. This tax had not been collected for a long time. God's House had been completely impoverished by the Baalists. Joash was deeply concerned.

Since his first plan had failed, Joash devised the building of a box with a necessary opening in the cover. This box was most likely placed in the court of the priests near the altar of burnt-offering. People brought their gifts to the Temple, turned them over to the attending priests who deposited the gifts in the chest. Throughout the borders of Judah the people came with their Temple tax. The failure of the first program had to be laid upon the priests and Levites who would not go to the people with the king's request. Once Joash's country-men were told about the king's plan, with great rejoicing they came. Day after day they filled the money box. Perhaps there was a daily accounting of the funds by attendant priests at the Temple. Just as soon as the money was available, workmen began the task of renewing Jehovah's house. Whatever needed to be done to make the Temple substantial was accomplished by masons, carpenters, and workers in metals. When all of the necessary repairs were made and paid for, money remained in the building fund. This money was used to provide vessels of silver and gold for the service of the Temple. As long as Jehoiada lived, the people of the southern kingdom remained faithful to Jehovah.

¹Spence, H. D. M., *The Pulpit Commentary*, II Chronicles, p. 283

Jehoiada was blessed with a long life of one hundred and thirty years. His being "full of days" (verse 15) suggests something of the satisfaction and the fulfillment of his life. He was accorded a state funeral and was honored in his burial in the royal cemetery. Jehoiada ranked with the best men who were leaders of Jehovah's people. He was a "good" man in relation to his people and his God. Evil forces, held in check in Jehoiada's day, were unleashed when he died. The princes of Judah approached Joash with subtle flattery. Their "obedience" probably caused Joash to think too highly of himself. The idea of "worship" is associated with the action of the princes. Joash was about thirty five years old. Considering all that Jehovah had done for him, it is difficult to understand that he could be influenced so easily to rebel against God. These counselors were like the men who advised Rehoboam to act so foolishly earlier in Israel's history. By this choice, Joash's destiny was sealed. All that a person has done for Jehovah in former days is of no value in personal salvation if one is not faithful until death. When "the house of Jehovah" is forsaken, men not only fail to go there to worship, but they abandon God's whole program. In this context Jesus said, "You should look for Me in My Father's house" (Luke 2:49). He was always totally involved in His Father's business. The historian in Chronicles was fully aware of the cycle of history in which the Hebrews moved. They forsook Jehovah. They gave themselves to "the Asherim" (Baalism). They suffered under the wrath of Jehovah. Their God, moved by great compassion, sent prophets to convict the people of sin and to urge repentance. These prophets were often scorned and were sometimes put to death.

Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, was among the prophets sent by Jehovah to Judah and Jerusalem. He was motivated by and clothed with the Holy Spirit. His message was clear and pointed. Considering all that Jehovah had done for His people and weighing the consequences of their actions, there was no excuse for the rebel attitude. Zechariah emphasized their transgression, reviewed their failures, and reminded his hearers that Jehovah had abandoned them. King Joash dared to order death by

stoning for the prophet. The law had said that idolaters were to be stoned (Leviticus 20:2). The law was completely ignored as this death sentence was decreed for Zechariah. In a remarkable statement in Matthew 23:29-36 our Lord condemned the scribes and Pharisees because of their rejection of Himself and the prophetic word. He summarized the history of the Hebrew people when He charged them with the blood of the prophets which had been shed from the time of Abel to the time of Zechariah. Genesis is the first book in the Hebrew Bible. Second Chronicles is the last book in the Hebrew Bible. The expression, as Jesus used it, "from Abel to Zechariah", took in all history pertaining to God's people. Joash had begun his work in a very worthy manner. He suffered a moral and spiritual collapse. Jehoiada should most likely be regarded as the grandfather of Joash. As Zechariah was dying, he expressed confidence in Jehovah's judgment and predicted that Joash would come under that judgment.

The Syrians under their king, Hazael, came to Jerusalem and in battle humiliated Joash and his people. "At the revolution of the year" suggests that this Syrian attack took place in the spring-time. The Hebrews suffered heavy casualties. Many of their leaders were killed. Much goods was carried out of Jerusalem to Damascus. As Jehovah had used foreign powers on other occasions to chastise His own people, so He used the Syrians at this time. When the Hebrews were faithful to God, a small army of Israelites could ruin an empty equipped with legions of soldiers. On this occasion "a small company" of Syrians over-ran Judah and Jerusalem. The historian saw the hand of Jehovah in these events. Retribution for sin was God's purpose in this humiliating defeat. In due time the Syrians withdrew; however, Joash's burdens were not lightened. The king experienced failure in his personal health. Even this would be regarded as evidence of Jehovah's disapproval of his leadership. There were those who remembered how Joash had closed Zechariah's mouth by stoning him to death. These were troublous times. Servants named Zabad (Jozacar) and Jehozabad, whose parentage related them to the Ammonites

and Moabites, conspired and killed Joash in his bed. He had begun his reign in honor and with great promise. He died in shame. He was not buried in the royal cemetery.

Amaziah is the only known son of Joash. The specific nature of the burdens he placed on his "sons" is not described beyond the reference to the "rebuilding of the house of God". Political involvements with Syria and the general unsettled circumstances brought crises in internal affairs. Joash's successor would experience real trials. Other details concerning Joash were written in a "commentary of the book of the kings".

10. THE REIGN OF AMAZIAH (Chapter 25)

TEXT

Chapter 25:1. Amaziah was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jehoaddan, of Jerusalem. 2. And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, but not with a perfect heart. 3. Now it came to pass, when the kingdom was established unto him, that he slew his servants that had killed the king his father. 4. But he put not their children to death, but did according to that which is written in the law in the book of Moses, as Jehovah 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."

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: and he numbered them from twenty years old and upward, and found them three hundred thousand chosen men, able to go forth to war, that could handle spear and shield. 6. He hired also a hundred thousand mighty men of valor out of Israel for a hundred talents of silver. 7. But there came a man of God to him, saying, "O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee; for Jehovah is not with Israel, to wit, with all the children

of Ephraim. 8. "But if thou wilt go, do valiantly, be strong for the battle: God will cast thee down before the enemy; for God hath power to help, and to cast down." 9. And 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?" And the man of God answered, "Jehovah is able to give thee much more than this." 10. Then Amaziah separated them, to wit, the army that was come to him out of Ephraim, to go home again: wherefore their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in fierce anger. 11. And Amaziah took courage, and led forth his people, and went to the Valley of Salt, and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand. 12. And other ten thousand did the children of Judah carry away alive, and brought them unto the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock, so that they were all broken in pieces. 13. But the men of the army whom Amaziah sent back, that they should not go with him to battle, fell upon the cities of Judah, from Samaria even unto Beth-horon, and smote of them three thousand, and took much spoil.

14. Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was 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 unto them. 15. Wherefore the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, who said unto him, "Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which have not delivered their own people out of thy hand?" 16. And it came to pass, as he talked with him, that the king said unto him, "Have we made thee of the king's counsel? forbear; why shouldest thou be smitten?" Then the prophet forbore, and said, "I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel."

17. Then Amaziah king of Judah took advice, and sent to Joash, the son of Jehoahaz the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, "Come, let us look one another in the face." 18. And 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 thy daughter to my son to wife:' and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trod down the thistle. 19. "Thou sayest, 'Lo, thou hast smitten Edom;' and thy heart lifteth thee up to boast: abide now at home; why shouldest thou meddle to thy hurt, that thou shouldest fall, even thou, and Judah with thee?"

20. But Amaziah would not hear; 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. 21. So Joash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah looked one another in the face at Beth-shemesh, which belongeth to Judah. 22. And Judah was put to the worse before Israel; and they fled every man to his tent. 23. And Joash king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash the son of Jehoahaz, at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim unto the corner gate, four hundred cubits. 24. And he took all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obed-edom, and the treasures of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria.

25. And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Joash son of Jehohaz king of Israel fifteen years. 26. Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, first and last, behold, are they not written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel? 27. Now from the time that Amaziah did turn away from following Jehovah they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem; and he fled to Lachish: but they sent after him to Lachish, and slew him there. 28. And they brought him upon horses, and buried him with his fathers in the city of Judah.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 25:1. Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years, in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jeho-addan, a native of Jerusalem. 2. He did what was right, but sometimes resented it! 3. When he was well established as the new king, he executed the men who had

assassinated his father, 4. However, he didn't kill their children but followed the command of the Lord written in the law of Moses, that the fathers shall not die for the children's sins, nor the children for the father's sins. No, everyone must pay for his own sins.

5, 6. Another thing Amaziah did was to organize the army, assigning leaders to each clan from Judah and Benjamin. Then he took a census and found that he had an army of 300,000 men twenty years old and older, all trained and highly skilled in the use of spear and sword. He also paid \$200,000 to hire 100,000 experienced mercenaries from Israel. 7. But a prophet arrived with this message from the Lord: "sir, do not hire troops from Israel, for the Lord is not with them. 8. If you let them go with your troops to battle, you will be defeated no matter how well you fight; for God has power to help or to frustrate." 9. "But the money!" Amaziah whined. "What shall I do about that?" And the prophet replied, "The Lord is able to give you much more than this!" 10. So Amaziah sent them home again to Ephraim, which made them very angry and insulted. 11. Then Amaziah took courage and led his army to the Valley of Salt, and there killed 10,000 men from Seir. 12. Another 10,000 were taken alive to the top of a cliff and thrown over, so that they were crushed upon the rocks below. 13. Meanwhile, the army of Israel that had been sent home raided several of the cities of Judah in the vicinity of Beth-horon, toward Samaria, killing 3,000 people and carrying off great quantities of booty.

14. When King Amaziah returned from this slaughter of the Edomites, he brought with him idols taken from the people of Seir, and set them up as gods, and bowed before them, and burned incense to them! 15. This made the Lord very angry and he sent a prophet to demand, "Why have you worshiped gods who couldn't even save their own people from you. 16. "Since when have I asked your advice?" the king retorted. "Be quiet now, before I have you killed." The prophet left with this parting warning: "I know that God has determined to destroy you because you have worshiped these idols, and have not

accepted my counsel."

17. King Amaziah of Judah now took the advice of his counselors and declared war on King Joash of Israel (son of Jehoahaz, grandson of Jehu). 18. King Joash replied with this parable: "out in the Lebanon mountains a thistle demanded of a cedar tree. 'Give your daughter in marriage to my son.' Just then a wild animal came by and stepped on the thistle, crushing it! 19. You are very proud about your conquest of Edom, but my advice is to stay home and don't meddle with me, lest you and all Judah get badly hurt."

20. But Amaziah wouldn't listen, for God was arranging to destroy him for worshiping the gods of Edom. 21. The armies met at Beth-shemesh, in Judah, 22. and Judah was defeated, and its army fled home. 23. King Joash of Israel captured the defeated King Amaziah of Judah and took him as a prisoner to Jerusalem. Then King Joash ordered two hundred yards of the walls of Jerusalem dismantled, from the gate of Ephraim to the Corner Gate. 24. He carried off all the treasures and golden bowls from the Temple, as well as the treasures from the palace; and he took hostages, including Obed-edom, and returned to Samaria.

25. However, King Amaziah of Judah lived on for fifteen years after the death of King Joash of Israel. 26. The complete biography of King Amaziah is written in The Annals of the Kings of Judah and Israel. 27. This account includes a report of Amaziah's turning away from God, and how his people conspired against him in Jerusalem, and how he fled to Lachish—but they went after him and killed him there. 28. And they brought him back on horses to Jerusalem and buried him in the royal cemetery.

COMMENTARY

The parallel of this record is in II Kings 16:1-20. Amaziah came to the throne in Judah during the crisis which resulted in his father's death. The new king was twenty five years old. He should have been very capable as Judah's king. Jehoaddan, his mother, probably had been selected by Jehoiada as a wife for

Joash. She was always associated with Jerusalem. Amaziah was to reign over Judah for twenty nine years. The historian cannot altogether approve or disapprove Amaziah's kingship. The king could have done much better in approaching Jehovah's ideal. He concerned himself with avenging his father's death. He may have been fearful of his own safety as long as the conspirators, Zabad and Jehozabad, lived. The children of the murderers were spared because they posed no real threat to Amaziah. The chronicler reminds the reader that Moses (Deuteronomy 24:16) had said that children should not die for their fathers' sins. Amaziah, most likely, was not too concerned about Moses' instructions in this regard.

Military conflict too often was the order of the day. On numerous occasions the Edomites revolted against Judah. Amaziah organized his army and was able to mobilize three hundred thousand men out of Judah and Benjamin. To qualify for service, a man had to be twenty years of age and physically capable of doing all that would be expected of men in a walking army that used spears and shields. In addition to his own forces, Amaziah paid one hundred talents of silver (about two hundred thousand dollars) to hire the services of one hundred thousand men from the northern kingdom. There may have been other considerations in addition to the silver talents. Jehovah's will was not sought in these matters because it was necessary for "a man of God", a true prophet, to come to Amaziah. Jehovah's word was that Judah could go to war against Edom with the assurance of victory if Amaziah would obey God. In order to secure Jehovah's approval, Amaziah had to release the soldiers of the northern kingdom from their contract. Such a release would cost Amaziah a hundred talents of silver. The king of Judah was assured that "God had power to help" and that He was "able to give" much more than a hundred talents of silver. Against his better judgment, the king sent the hired soldiers home. He then led his army to the Valley of Salt at the extreme southern end of the Dead Sea. "The children of Seir", the Edomites, were defeated. They lost ten thousand men on the battlefield and another ten thousand were taken captive and

brought to Petra in Edom. When the Israelites (soldiers from the northern kingdom) were sent home at the prophet's word, they became very angry. They vented their wrath by attacking several cities in Judah while Amaziah was occupied with Edom. Beth-horon was about twelve miles northwest of Jerusalem. At least three thousand people of Judah were slain by their brethren from the north and much of their goods was taken.

Amaziah's idolatry cannot be excused. Jehovah had just given him a thorough victory over Edom. Judah's king sought out the gods of Edom, packed them up, brought them back to Jerusalem and worshipped them. We are amazed at Jehovah's mercy. Why would He even allow Amaziah to live? Jehovah sent a prophet (not otherwise identified) with a biting indictment. The gods of the Edomites (Baal, Molech, Chemosh and others) were powerless to prevent Edom's defeat in battle. Why would Amaziah concern himself with these idols? On a previous occasion the king had questioned Jehovah's word and then grudgingly obeyed. Now, he dared to insult the prophet by reminding him that he was not a member of the king's cabinet. In addition to the insult, he threatened the prophet's life. Bringing Edom's idols to Jerusalem sealed Amaziah's destiny. He would be destroyed.

Apparently encouraged by his military success against Edom, Amaziah planned to extend his conquests. He "took advice" from his counselors and challenged Joash, king of Israel, to war. To "look one another in the face" was the king of action described in II Samuel 2:13ff when Abner's men and Joab's men met for battle. To ask for a man's daughter in marriage meant that the intended groom counted himself at least equal in rank with the woman and her family. The "thistle" (Amaziah) had insulted the mighty "cedar" (Joash) and the thistle could well expect to be destroyed. The thistle represented that which was worthless, useless, and annoying. The cedar was renowned for its worth, usefulness, and pleasing odor. The advice of Joash to Amaziah was that he should forget this ill-advised war because he could very well lose his throne and the kingdom itself could be lost. Joash showed considerable

restraint and merited approval for his diplomacy. The prophet had said that "God had determined to destroy" Amaziah. That which followed "was of God." Amaziah's idolatry sealed his destiny. Bethshemesh was a village about fifteen miles southwest of Jerusalem. Here the battle was joined and Amaziah and his people were convincingly defeated. Once more Joash was very patient in that he did not put Amaziah to death. Amaziah was returned to Jerusalem. A considerable portion of the walls of Jerusalem was ruined. Much booty and spoil, along with prisoners of war (hostages), were taken back to Samaria. Obed-edom was the name of the person in charge of the treasures in the king's house. Once more, the Temple was robbed. So Amaziah's idol worship brought real trouble to Judah.

Joash, king of Israel, preceded Amaziah in death by fifteen years. Amaziah's tragic history was reduced to written form in the "books of the kings of Judah and Israel." The conspiracy that brought about Amaziah's death began to take shape when he brought the Edomite idols to Jerusalem. Lachish was about twenty five miles west of Hebron in the low lying foothills of Judah. This village was heavily fortified; nevertheless, the conspirators killed Amaziah as he sought refuge there. The dead king was brought back to "the city of Judah" (Jerusalem) where he was buried in the royal cemetery.

11. THE REIGN OF UZZIAH (Chapter 26)

TEXT

Chapter 26:1. And all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah. 2. He built Eloth, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers. 3. Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jecholiah, of Jerusalem. 4. And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. 5. And he set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the vision of God: and as long as he

sought Jehovah, God made him to prosper.

6. And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod; and he built cities in the country of Ashdod, and among the Philistines. 7. And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-baal, and the Meunim. 8. And the Ammonites gave tribute to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad even to the entrance of Egypt; for he waxed exceeding strong. 9. Moreover Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate, and at the valley gate, and at the turning of the wall, and fortified them. 10. And he built towers in the wilderness, and hewed out many cisterns for he had much cattle; in the lowland also, and in the plain: and he had husbandmen and vinedressers in the mountains and in the fruitful fields; for he loved husbandry. 11. Moreover Uzziah had an army of fighting men, that 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. 12. The whole number of the heads of fathers' houses, even the mighty men of valor, was two thousand and six hundred. 13. And under their hand was an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. 14. And Uzziah prepared for them, even for all the host, shields, and spears, and helmets, and coats of mail, and bows, and stones for slinging. 15. And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by skillful men, to be on the towers and upon the battlements, wherewith to shoot arrows and great stones. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.

16. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against Jehovah his God; for he went into the temple of Jehovah to burn incense upon the altar of incense. 17. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of Jehovah, that were valiant men: 18. and they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, "It pertaineth not unto thee Uzziah, to burn incense unto

Jehovah, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honor from Jehovah God." 19. Then Uzziah was wroth; and he a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy brake forth in his forehead before the priests in the house of Jehovah, beside the altar of incense. 20. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out quickly from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because Jehovah had smitten him. 21. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a separate house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of Jehovah: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land. 22. Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write. 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:" and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 26:1. The people of Judah now crowned sixteen-year-old Uzziah as their new king. 2. After his father's death, he rebuilt the city of Eloth and restored it to Judah. 3. In all, he reigned fifty-two years, in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecoliah, from Jerusalem. 4. He followed in the footsteps of his father Amaziah, and was, in general, a good king so far as the Lord's opinion of him was concerned. 5. While Zechariah was alive Uzziah was always eager to please God. Zechariah was a man who had special revelations from God. And as long as the king followed the paths of God, he prospered, for God blessed him.

6. He declared war on the Philistines and captured the city of Gath and broke down its walls, also those of Jabneh and Ashdub. Then he built new cities in the Ashdub area and in other parts of the Philistine country. 7. God helped him not only with wars against the Philistines but also in his battles with

the Arabs of Gurbaal and in his wars with the Meunites. 8. The Ammonites paid annual tribute to him, and his fame spread even to Egypt, for he was very powerful. 9. He built fortified towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, and the Valley Gate, and at the turning of the wall. 10. He also constructed forts in the Negeb, and made many water reservoirs, for he had great herds of cattle out in the valleys and on the plains. He was a man who loved the soil and had many farms and vineyards, both on the hillsides and in the fertile valleys. 11. He organized his army into regiments to which men were drafted under quotas set by Je-iel, the secretary of the army, and his assistant, Ma-aseiah. The commander-in-chief was General Hananiah. 12. Twenty-six hundred brave clan leaders commanded these regiments. 13. The army consisted of 307,500 men, all elite troops. 14. Uzziah issued to them shields, spears, helmets, coats of mail, bows, and slingstones. 15. And he produced engines of war manufactured in Jerusalem, invented by brilliant men to shoot arrows and huge stones from the towers and battlements. So he became very famous, for the Lord helped him wonderfully until he was very powerful.

16. But at that point he became proud—and corrupt. He sinned against the Lord his God by entering the forbidden sanctuary of the Temple and personally burning incense upon the altar. 17, 18. Azariah the high Priest went in after him with eighty other priests, all brave men, and demanded that he get out. "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense," they declared. "That is the work of the priests alone, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to this work. Get out, for you have trespassed, and the Lord is not going to honor you for this!" 19. Uzziah was furious, and refused to set down the incense burner he was holding. But look! Suddenly—leprosy appeared in his forehead! 20. When Azariah and the others saw it, they rushed him out; in fact, he himself was as anxious to get out as they were to get him out, because the Lord had struck him. 21. So King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death and lived in isolation, cut off from his people and from the Temple. His son Jotham became vice-regent, in charge of the king's affairs and of the

judging of the people of the land. 22. The other details of Uzziah's reign from first to last are recorded by the prophet Isaiah (son of Amoz). 23. When Uzziah died, he was buried in the royal cemetery even though he was a leper, and his son Jotham became the new king.

COMMENTARY

Uzziah is also called Azariah (II Kings 14:21, Isaiah 6:1). When Amaziah was murdered, Uzziah, only sixteen years of age, was installed as king of Judah. There appeared to be no contest for the throne as there had been in the days of Joash. Eloth was located at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. It was a very strategic port. Solomon's Ophir navy used this as a home port. Jehoshaphat had attempted and failed to establish a navy at Eloth. Uzziah was concerned about the economic welfare of his people. He was granted a long reign of fifty two years. The queen mother's name was Jecholiah. From the time of Bathsheba, the queen mother exercised great authority in Jerusalem. Uzziah received a good report from the chronicler. The good in Amaziah's reign was remembered as a model for Uzziah's kingship. Amaziah's failures were not recalled. Zechariah appeared as a man of God. He "had understanding in the vision of God". He was a "seer" like Samuel had been (I Samuel 9:9). Zechariah's relationship to Uzziah is not detailed. The prophet most likely served as a counsellor to the king. The historian knew the full record of the king's life. "As long as Uzziah sought Jehovah" his government was stable, but the day came when "his heart was lifted up." A summary of Uzziah's achievements is given in verses 6-15. The Philistines were always insisting upon their right to control the coastal plain along the Mediterranean. Even Abraham and Isaac had encounters with this people in their day. More recently they had allied with the Arabians in conflict against Jehoram. Gath is renowned in Bible history as Goliath's home. It was about twenty five miles west of Bethlehem and about fifteen miles from the coast. Jabneh was about thirty miles northwest of Jerusalem and five miles from the coast. Ashdod was near the Great Sea about ten miles

south of Jabneh. Uzziah attacked these three villages and brought them under subjection. Certain Arabians had taken control of territory at Maon, a village about fifteen miles south of Hebron. The Meunim lived at Maon. Nothing more is known about Gur-baal. The historian recorded the fact that "God helped" Uzziah in his conflict with the Philistines. The Ammonites lived on the border of the desert. Their capital, Rabbath, was about twenty five miles east of the Jordan river. These descendants of Lot were forced to pay tribute to Judah. The fame of Uzziah spread even to Egypt in these good years of his reign. He fortified Jerusalem. The gates of a walled city were very necessary and they were also vulnerable to attack. Towers or forts were built at the corner gate on the west side of the city and at the valley gate which probably opened on the valley of Hinnom on the west or south side of the city. The walls of Jerusalem were often extended and strengthened by enterprising kings. Uzziah was very sympathetic with the farmers and herdsmen among his people. Towers were necessary to protect against raiding bands. The wilderness area in Judah was the region west of the Dead Sea, the area around Bethlehem and Tekoa. The lowland was the foothill region (Shephelah) in Judah between the mountains and the coastal plain. Those who kept vineyards, cultivated barley, wheat, flax, and tended olive trees were especially blessed because Uzziah "loved husbandry".

As Uzziah gave attention to the internal development of his kingdom, he did not neglect military provisions. He had an army of three hundred seven thousand five hundred men. Those were organized under twenty six hundred officers. Jeiel, Maazeiah, and Hananiah were responsible to the king for these military registrations. Uzziah is described as a strong military leader who had the respect of the soldiers. Not only did he provide for his men conventional weapons of war, such as spears, bows, and slings; he also produced machines designed to hurl great stones and propel arrows with super-human force.¹ He attained wide fame through the invention and use of these improved military tools. The chronicler leaves the impression

¹Spence, H. D. M., *The Pulpit Commentary*, II Chronicles, p. 315

that Uzziah was "marvellously helped" by Jehovah.

The sin of the king and the judgment that followed is the subject of verses 16-21. The great military leader, the strong friend of his country-men, the king who trusted God became proud and took upon himself liberties that did not pertain to him. He dared to presume to fill the office of priest by going into the Temple (he entered the Holy Place) and standing by the altar of incense just at the door of the Oracle to burn incense on the sacred altar.¹ Azariah was "the chief priest" (verse 20). He, along with eighty regular priests, contested Uzziah's action and charged him with "trespass" against God. The historian observed that these were "valiant men". They dared to accuse the king. They predicted that Jehovah would dishonor Uzziah. Instead of repenting and retreating, the king was furious against his accusers. As he proceeded to burn the incense (the pot or pan was in his hand), the dread disease of leprosy erupted in his forehead. It "rose like the sun". His anger turned to mortal fear. With the priests behind him the king hurriedly left the Temple. Lepers were forced to live apart from the regular community and outside the cities and villages. Since Uzziah was a king, he lived in "a separate house". He was stricken by Jehovah. Very likely, leprosy caused his death. Never again could he go to the Temple. He was unclean. Jotham, Uzziah's son and prince regent, took over the official functions of government.

Uzziah had begun well. His life closed with the ex-king broken in body and spiritually bankrupt. In the very year of Uzziah's death Isaiah experienced his vision of God (Isaiah, chapter 6). The prophet Isaiah wrote an account of Uzziah's life. As he had to live apart from others in the latter years of his life, so in his death, even though buried in the royal cemetery, he was placed in a plot apart from the honored kings of Judah.

¹Schultz, Samuel J., *The Old Testament Speaks*, p. 207

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

LESSON TWENTY-ONE 24-26

- 797. Identify the mother of Joash.
- 798. Where did Joash send to get money to repair the Temple?
Why was this repair so urgent?
- 799. Who was assigned to collect the building fund? What happened?
- 800. For what purpose had Jehovah's Temple been plundered?
- 801. How was the chest used?
- 802. Explain the reference to "Moses' tax".
- 803. Who were the responsible persons in the use of the building funds?
- 804. What kinds of skilled workmen were employed?
- 805. Having repaired the Temple, how were surplus funds used?
- 806. When were burnt offerings usually offered at the Temple?
- 807. How old was Jehoiada at death and where did they bury him? How was he regarded among his people?
- 808. With regard to religion, what happened upon Jehoiada's death?
- 809. What does the record say about prophets?
- 810. Who was Zechariah? What did he say? What happened?
- 811. In connection with Zechariah, explain Jesus' words in Matthew 23:34, 35.
- 812. Who spoke these words in 24:22, "Jehovah look upon it"?
- 813. How could a small band of Syrians defeat a great army of Hebrews?
- 814. How did Joash pass? Why did it happen this way?
- 815. Where was Joash buried?
- 816. According to this account, where would one find the recorded events of Joash's life?
- 817. How long did Amaziah reign? What was his mother's

name?

818. How many Hebrew soldiers did Amaziah number and assemble? Out of which tribes were these called up?
819. Why did Amaziah not carry out a complete purge to secure his throne?
820. How large was the army that he hired and identify this army?
821. Underscore the great truth in the last part of 25:8.
822. What word did the man of God speak to the king?
823. What was Amaziah's concern and how did the man of God answer him?
824. How did the mercenary army react?
825. Against whom did Amaziah go to war?
826. While Amaziah was engaged in battle what happened in Judah?
827. What very foolish thing did Amaziah do?
828. Describe Amaziah's attitude toward the prophet of Jehovah.
829. Explain Amaziah's word, "Come, let us look one another in the face."
830. Why would Joash refer to the thistle and the cedar?
831. Why did Amaziah act so foolishly?
832. Where did Joash and Amaziah meet? What were the results?
833. In what records were Amaziah's acts written?
834. Where did Amaziah die? How did this happen?
835. By what other name was Uzziah known?
836. Carefully locate Eloth.
837. How long did Uzziah rule?
838. Characterize Uaaizh's reign.
839. Name other nations over which Uzziah won victories.
840. Describe Uzziah's experiences in Philistia.
841. What did this king do for Jerusalem?

- 842. Locate the wilderness of 26:10.
- 843. What kind of internal improvements did Uzziah accomplish?
- 844. What were the engines of 26:15?
- 845. Describe Uzziah's army. What are your impressions of Uzziah as a king?
- 846. How was this king "Marvellously helped"?
- 847. Describe Uzziah's sin.
- 848. Who tried to prevent the king from acting foolishly?
- 849. Describe Uzziah's attitude.
- 850. How did Jehovah pass judgment on the king?
- 851. How long was this affliction upon Uzziah? Where did he live?
- 852. Who followed him to the throne?
- 853. Who wrote an account of the acts of Uzziah?
- 854. Where was king Uzziah buried?

LESSON TWENTY-TWO 27-29

THE REIGN OF JOTHAM. AHAZ AND HIS ALLIES. HEZEKIAH, RELIGIOUS REFORMER.

12. THE REIGN OF JOTHAM. (Chapter 27)

INTRODUCTION

Jotham avoided God's house and failed as king in Judah. The door was opened for Ahaz' wicked reign and terrible idolatry. The Damascus altar had no place in Jerusalem. Times were ripe for Hezekiah, one of Judah's most respected kings.

TEXT

Chapter 27:1. Jotham was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jerushah the daughter of Zadok. 2. And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that his father Uzziah had done: howbeit he entered not into the temple of Jehovah. And the people did yet corruptly. 3. He built the upper gate of the house of Jehovah, and on the wall of Ophel he built much. 4. Moreover he built cities in the hill-country of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers. 5. He fought also with the king of the children of Ammon, and prevailed against them. And the children of Ammon gave him the same year a hundred talents of silver and ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. So much did the children of Ammon render unto him, in the second year also, and in the third. 6. So Jotham became mighty, because he ordered his ways before Jehovah his God. 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. 8. He was five and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. 9. And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 27:1. Jotham was twenty-five years old at the time

he became king, and he reigned sixteen years, in Jerusalem. His mother was Jerushah, daughter of Zadok. 2. He followed the generally good example of his father Uzziah—who had, however, sinned by invading the Temple—but even so his people became very corrupt. 3. He built the Upper Gate of the Temple, and also did extensive rebuilding of the walls on the hill where the Temple was situated. 4. And he built cities in the hill country of Judah, and erected fortresses and towers on the wooded hills. 5. His war against the Ammonites was successful, so that for the next three years he received from them an annual tribute of \$200,000 in silver, 10,000 sacks of wheat, and 10,000 sacks of barley. 6. King Jotham became powerful because he was careful to follow the path of the Lord his God. 7. The remainder of his history, including his wars and other activities, is written in The Annals of the Kings of Israel and Judah. 8. In summary, then, he was twenty-five years old when he began to reign and he reigned sixteen years, in Jerusalem. 9. When he died, he was buried in Jerusalem, and his son Ahaz became the new king.

COMMENTARY

Because of Uzziah's leprosy, Jothan had considerable experience in government before he was installed as king of Judah. At age twenty-five he became king in his own right and he held this high office for sixteen years. Nothing more is known about his mother, Jerushah, or her family. In the latter years of Uzziah's reign the people of Judah forsook Jehovah. Jotham came to the throne at a time of spiritual crisis. He was able to provide responsible leadership within certain limits. Whereas Uzziah had entered the Temple to burn incense like a priest, Jotham did not enter "the temple of Jehovah." Even though he led his people back toward God, there was an alienation in that he did not frequent Jehovah's Temple. This should be contrasted with Solomon's early love for God's House. Generally, the people of Judah were in desperate need of a great spiritual revival.

Jotham concerned himself with certain building improve-

ments in Jerusalem such as "the upper gate". This has been described as a gate leading from the king's palace to the court of priests at the Temple. Ophel means "hill" or "mound" and was located in the southeast sector of Jerusalem below the Temple mount. In the regions of Judah he built other fortifications. The ancient rivalry between Judah and the Ammonites continued. Jotham was able to force the Ammonites to pay considerable tribute in the form of wheat and barley. The measure used here was the "cor" which amounted to about three and one-half quarts. Judah was able to collect ten thousand measures each of wheat and barley through each of three succeeding years. In addition, Judah collected one hundred talents of silver each year. The silver talent may be valued at about two thousand dollars. Having considered Jotham's achievements, the historian attributed his success to the fact that the king "ordered his ways before Jehovah". This brief account is a summary of Jotham's life and times. There were other failures, successes, wars. His biography became a part of the significant history of his people. He was accorded a burial with full honors and was succeeded on the throne by Ahaz, his son.

13. THE REIGN OF AHAZ (Chapter 28)

TEXT

Chapter 28:1. Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: and he did not that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, like David his father; 2. but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for the Baalim. 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 Jehovah cast out before the children of Israel. 4. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

5. Wherefore Jehovah his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away of his a great multitude of captives, and brought them to

Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter. 6. For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah a hundred and twenty thousand in one day, all of them valiant men; because they had forsaken Jehovah, the God of their fathers. 7. And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam the ruler of the house, and Elkanah that was next to the king.

8. And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria. 9. But a prophet of Jehovah was there, whose name was Oded: and he went out to meet the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, "Behold, because Jehovah, the God of your fathers, was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage which hath reached up unto heaven. 10. "And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: but are there not even with you trespasses of your own against Jehovah your God? 11. "Now hear me therefore, and send back the captives, that ye have taken captive of your brethren; for the fierce wrath of Jehovah is upon you." 12. Then certain 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 them that came from the war, 13. and said unto them, "Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for ye purpose that which will bring upon us a trespass against Jehovah, to add unto our sins and to our trespass; for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel." 14. So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the assembly. 15. And the men that have been mentioned by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm-trees, unto their

brethren: then they returned to Samaria.

16. At that time did King Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him. 17. For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives. 18. The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the lowland, and of the South of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, and Aijalon, and Gederoth, and Soco with the towns thereof, and Timnah with the towns thereof, Gimzo also and the towns thereof: and they dwelt there. 19. For Jehovah brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he had dealt wantonly in Judah, and trespassed sore against Jehovah. 20. And Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not. 21. For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of Jehovah, and out of the house of the king and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but it helped him not.

22. And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against Jehovah, this same king Ahaz. 23. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him; and he said, "Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me." But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel. 24. And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of Jehovah; and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. 25. And in every city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger Jehovah, the God of his fathers. 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. 27. And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem; for they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 28:1. Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king and he reigned sixteen years, in Jerusalem. But he was an evil king, unlike his ancestor King David. 2. For he followed the

example of the kings over in Israel and worshiped the idols of Baal. 3. He even went out to the Valley of Hinnom, and it was not just to burn incense to the idols, for he even sacrificed his own children in the fire, just like the heathen nations that were thrown out of the land by the Lord to make room for Israel. 4. Yes, he sacrificed and burned incense at the idol shrines on the hills and under every green tree.

5. That is why the Lord God allowed the king of Syria to defeat him and deport large numbers of his people to Damascus. The armies from Israel also slaughtered great numbers of his troops. 6. On a single day, Pekah, the son of Remaliah, killed 120,000 of his bravest soldiers because they had turned away from the Lord God of their fathers. 7. Then Zichri, a great warrior from Ephraim, killed the king's son Ma-aseiah and the king's administrator Azrikam, and the king's second-in-command Elkanah.

8. The armies from Israel also captured 200,000 Judean women and children, and tremendous amounts of booty which they took to Samaria. 9. But Oded, a prophet of the Lord, was there in Samaria and he went out to meet the returning army. "Look!" he exclaimed. "The Lord God of your fathers was angry with Judah and let you capture them, but you have butchered them without mercy, and all heaven is disturbed. 10. And now are you going to make slaves of these people from Judah and Jerusalem? What about your own sins against the Lord your God? 11. Listen to me and return these relatives of yours to their homes, for now the fierce anger of the Lord is upon you." 12. Some of the top leaders of Ephraim also added their opposition. These men were Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai. 13. "You must not bring the captives here!" they declared. "If you do, the Lord will be angry, and this sin will be added to our many others. We are in enough trouble with God as it is." 14. So the army officers turned over the captives and booty to the political leaders to decide what to do. 15. Then the four men already mentioned distributed captured stores of clothing to the women and

children who needed it, and gave them shoes, food, and wine, and put those who were sick and old on donkeys, and took them back to their families in Jericho, the City of Palm Trees. Then their escorts returned to Samaria.

16. About that time King Ahaz of Judah asked the king of Assyria to be his ally in his war against the armies of Edom. For Edom was invading Judah and capturing many people as slaves. 17, 18. Meanwhile, the Philistines had invaded the lowland cities and the Negeb and had already captured Beth-shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Soco, Timnah, and Gimzo with their surrounding villages, and were living there. 19. For the Lord brought Judah very low on account of the evil deeds of King Ahaz of Israel, for he had destroyed the spiritual fiber of Judah and had been faithless to the Lord. 20. But when Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, arrived, he caused trouble for King Ahaz instead of helping him. 21. So even though Ahaz had given him the Temple gold and the palace treasures, it did no good.

22. In this time of deep trial, King Ahaz collapsed spiritually. 23. He sacrificed to the gods of the people of Damascus who had defeated him, for he felt that since these gods had helped the kings of Syria, they would help him too if he sacrificed to them. But instead, they were his ruin, and that of all his people. 24. The king took the gold bowls from the Temple and slashed them to pieces, and nailed the door of the Temple shut so that no one could worship there, and made altars to the heathen gods in every corner of Jerusalem. 25. And he did the same in every city of Judah, thus angering the Lord God of his fathers. 26. The other details of his life and activities are recorded in The Annals of the Kings of Judah and Israel. 27. When King Ahaz died, he was buried in Jerusalem but not in the royal tombs, and his son Hezekiah became the new king.

COMMENTARY

Ahaz became king of Judah about 736 B.C. He was in office during the lifetime of Isaiah, the prophet. The great "Immanuel" prophecy which was so important in Isaiah's

ministry (Isaiah, chapter 7). was announced first of all to Ahaz. This king may also have known Hosea and Micah, although no direct reference is made to them. Ahaz was not a good king. He never followed the ideals of David. He turned, instead, to the Baalism that in his day ruined the northern kingdom. Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had set the pattern for the kings of Israel. He did as he pleased with regard to religion and he disregarded the law of Jehovah. Jeroboam set up calf worship (molten images) at Bethel and Dan. This was repetition of what Israel had done at Sinai in Moses' day. Ahab and Jezebel compounded the troubles of the northern kingdom by bringing in special kinds of Baalism from Phoenicia. There were no limits to Ahaz' idolatry. The valley of Hinnom bounded Jerusalem on the west and the south. Ahaz desecrated this valley with idol worship. "Burning children in the fire" describes Molech worship. Solomon, at an earlier time, (I Kings 11:7, 8), had sinned in the same way by the worship of Chemosh and Molech. The god, Molech, has been described as resembling an ox with outstretched human arms and with a built-in furnace. Whether or not a child placed in the arms of this heathen god perished depended on the control of the flames by the priests of Molech. How any man could so deal with his own children or the children of other parents is beyond our understanding. This king of inhuman conduct was one of the main reasons Jehovah drove the native Canaanites from their homeland. "High places" were special mounds constructed as places of worship. Usually idol worship was practiced in these places. Sometime Jehovah might be worshiped at the "high place". The worship of Baal was often practiced "on the hills" where the devotees could look out over fertile fields supposedly blessed by Baal. Certain features of the worship of Baal and the Asherah (female Baal) could most appropriately be shared "under green trees". Sexual intercourse and the employment of priestesses were characteristics of Canaanite worship from earliest times. Ahaz followed his own pleasure in all of these matters.

Jehovah has always judged His own people when they have despised His Word. His judgment may be delayed or it may come

quite suddenly. In Ahaz' day the Syrians attacked Judah and led great number of them away captive. Damascus, the capital of Syria, was about one hundred thirty miles north northeast of Jerusalem. The Israelites of the northern kingdom under their king, Pekah, came against Judah and killed one hundred and twenty thousand people "in one day". This was certainly a judgment for Judah. Judgment came even into the King's house with the death of Maaseiah, the king's son, at the hands of the Ephraimite warrior, Zichri. Azrikam and Elkanah, both of whom were very close to king Ahaz, were killed. Ahaz should have understood that Jehovah was not pleased with him.

Not only did Pekah and Israel kill many people in the southern kingdom, they also took two hundred thousand captives. They took whatever goods were available to them and brought prisoners of war and goods back to their main city. Samaria was about thirty five miles north of Jerusalem.

Since the days of Jeroboam I there had been much bitterness between the northern and southern kingdoms of the Hebrews. They often engaged in civil war. Jehovah used Israel at this time to chastise Ahaz; however, Pekah and his people did more than Jehovah intended. The pent-up fury of many years was turned loose. Jehovah intervened in behalf of Judah by sending the prophet, Oded. The slaughter of one hundred twenty thousand of Judah was within Jehovah's will. The captivity and cruel treatment of the two hundred thousand was excessive vengeance. So Oded charged Israel with trespass and warned them that Jehovah would turn His wrath upon them. Wise princes of the tribes of Ephraim, Azariah, Berechiah, Jehizkiah, and Amasa rescued the captives from Judah. Their spoil was restored to them. Their physical needs of food and clothing were provided. Their people who were weak and sick were given attention and the entire army of captives was returned to Jericho and released. Jericho was called "the city of palm trees" even in Moses' time (Deuteronomy 34:3). The city was located in the Jordan valley about seven miles above the Dead Sea and about fifteen miles from Jerusalem.

Isaiah urged Ahaz to trust Jehovah (Isaiah, chapter 7). Ahaz

stubbornly refused. He faced real trouble in Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Syria. He attempted an alliance with the Assyrians which failed miserably. Ahaz had to contend with the Edomites and the Philistines. Judah's people in the vicinity of Beersheba, Beth-shemesh, and Timnah suffered because of these enemies. Tiglath-pileser, the Assyrian king, did not keep faith with Ahaz. He took the king's money, but he would not fight Ahaz's enemies. In order to pay the heathen king, Ahaz robbed Jehovah's Temple. Ahaz was a genuine outlaw in his relationship to Jehovah. He "dealt wantonly in Judah".

In the days of the Judges when Jehovah's people were terribly oppressed by their enemies because of their sins, the Hebrews finally would repent and Jehovah would send relief. As Ahaz' troubles increased he compounded his sins by adding to the list of gods he served. He observed that the Syrians had been successful in their military engagements. He reasoned that if he served their gods, his luck might change.¹ He saw a heathen altar in Damascus (II Kings 16:10). Urijah, the priest at Jehovah's Temple, was ordered to make a Damascus altar. This heathen altar replaced Jehovah's altar in the Temple. In due time Ahaz impoverished the Temple and closed the doors. Idolatrous altars "in every corner of Jerusalem" and high places "in every city of Judah" were Ahaz' most notable building projects. So he lived and so he died. He never repented. He was one of Judah's most wicked kings. His history was written not to honor the king or the people, but to describe his obstinate refusal to do Jehovah's will and to detail the judgment sent by God. Even in his funeral he was given a dishonorable discharge from life's duties. He was buried in Jerusalem, but not in that plot reserved for those who had served Jehovah well. Judah needed a strong and righteous king. By God's grace such a man was to sit in Ahaz' seat.

14. THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH (29-32)

TEXT

Chapter 29:1. Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and

¹Clarke, Adam, *A Commentary and Critical Notes*, Vol. II, p. 688

twenty years old; and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. 2. And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that David his father had done. 3. He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of Jehovah, and repaired them. 4. And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the broad place on the east, 5. and said unto them, "Hear me, ye Levites; now sanctify yourselves, and sanctify the house of Jehovah, the God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. 6. "For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of Jehovah, and turned their backs. 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 unto the God of Israel. 8. "Wherefore the wrath of Jehovah was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to be tossed to and fro, to be an astonishment, and a hissing, as ye see with your eyes. 9. "For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. 10. "Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with Jehovah, the God of Israel, that his fierce anger may turn away from us. 11. "My sons, be not now negligent; for Jehovah hath chosen you to stand before him, to minister unto him, and that ye should be his ministers, and burn incense."

12. Then the Levites arose, Mahath, the son of Amasai, and Joel the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites; and of the sons of Merari, Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the son of Jehallelel; and of the Gershonites, Joah the son of Zimmah, and Eden the son of Joah; 13. and of the sons of Elizaphan, Shimri and Jeuel; and of the sons of Asaph, Zechariah and Mattaniah; 14. and of the sons of Heman, Jehuel and Shimei; and of the sons of Jeduthun, Shemaiah and Uzziel. 15. And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and went in, according to the commandment of the king by the words of

Jehovah, to cleanse the house of Jehovah. 16. And the priests went in unto the inner part of the house of Jehovah, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of Jehovah into the court of the house of Jehovah. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad to the brook Kidron. 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 Jehovah; and they sanctified the house of Jehovah in eight days: and on the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end. 18. Then they went in to Hezekiah the king within the palace, and said, "We have cleansed all the house of Jehovah, and the altar of burnt-offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the table of showbread with all the vessels thereof. 19. "Moreover all the vessels, which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away when he trespassed, have we prepared and sanctified; and, behold, they are before the altar of Jehovah."

20. Then Hezekiah the king arose early, and gathered the princes of the city, and went up to the house of Jehovah. 21. And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven lambs, and seven he-goats, for a sin-offering for the kingdom and for the sanctuary and for Judah. And he commanded the priests the sons of Aaron to offer them on the altar of Jehovah. 22. So they killed the bullocks, and the priests received the blood, and sprinkled it on the altar: and they killed the rams, and sprinkled the blood upon the altar: they killed also the lambs, and sprinkled the blood upon the altar. 23. And they brought near the he-goats for the sin-offering before the king and the assembly; and they laid their hands upon them: 24. and the priests killed them, and they made a sin-offering with their blood upon 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.

25. And he set the Levites in the house of Jehovah with cymbals, with psalteries, 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 Jehovah by his prophets. 26. And the Levites stood with the instruments of

David, and the priests with the trumpets. 27. And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt-offering upon the altar. And when the burnt-offering began, the song of Jehovah began also, and the trumpets, together with the instruments of David king of Israel. 28. And all the assembly worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt-offering was finished.

29. And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves and worshiped. 30. Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praises unto Jehovah with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped.

31. Then Hezekiah answered and said, "Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto Jehovah: come near and bring sacrifices and thank-offerings into the house of Jehovah." And the assembly brought in sacrifices and thank-offerings; and as many as were of a willing heart brought burnt-offerings. 32. And the number of the burnt-offerings which the assembly brought was threescore and ten bullocks, a hundred rams, and two hundred lambs: all these were for a burnt-offering to Jehovah. 33. And the consecrated things were six hundred oxen and three thousand sheep. 34. But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt-offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till 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. 35. And 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 Jehovah was set in order. 36. And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, because of that which God had prepared for the people: for the thing was done suddenly.

Chapter 30:1. And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto Jehovah, the God of Israel. 2. For the king had

taken counsel, and his princes, and all the assembly in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month. 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. 4. And the thing was right in the eyes of the king and of all the assembly. 5. So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, at Jerusalem: for they had not kept it in great numbers in such sort as it is written. 6. So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, "Ye children of Israel, turn again unto Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that he may return to the remnant that are escaped of you out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. 7. "And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, who trespassed against Jehovah, the God of their fathers, so that he gave them up to desolation, as ye see. 8. "Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were; but yield yourselves unto Jehovah, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever, and serve Jehovah your God, that his fierce anger may turn away from you. 9. "For if ye turn again unto Jehovah, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that led them captive, and shall come again into this land: for Jehovah your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him."

10. So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. 11. Nevertheless certain men of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem. 12. Also upon 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 Jehovah.

13. And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great assembly. 14. And 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. 15. Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month: and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought burnt-offerings into the house of Jehovah. 16. And they stood in their place after their order, according to the law of Moses the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood which they received of the hand of the Levites. 17. For there were many in the assembly that had not sanctified themselves: therefore the Levites had the charge of assembly that had not sanctified themselves: therefore the Levites had the charge of killing passovers for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto Jehovah. 18. For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it is written. For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, "The good Jehovah pardon every one 19. that setteth his heart to seek God, Jehovah, the God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary." 20. And Jehovah hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people. 21. And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites 22. And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that had good understanding in the 22. And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that had good understanding in the service of Jehovah. So they did eat throughout the feast for the seven days, offering sacrifices of peace-offerings, and making confession to Jehovah, the God of their fathers.

23. And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days; and they kept other seven days with gladness. 24. For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the assembly for offerings a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the assembly a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep: and a great number of priests sanctified themselves. 25. And all the assembly of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the assembly that came out of Israel,

and the sojourners that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced. 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. 27. Then the priests, the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy habitation, even unto heaven.

Chapter 31:1. Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake in pieces the pillars, and hewed down the Asherim, and brake 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, every man to his possession, into their own cities.

2. And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service, both the priests and the Levites, for burnt-offerings and for peace-offerings, to minister, and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the camp of Jehovah. 3. He appointed also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt-offerings, to wit, for the morning and evening burnt-offerings, and the burnt-offering for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of Jehovah. 4. Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might give themselves to the law of Jehovah. 5. And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel gave in abundance the first-fruits of grain, new wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly. 6. And the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of dedicated things which were consecrated unto Jehovah their God, and laid them by heaps. 7. In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month. 8. And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed Jehovah, and his people Israel. 9. Then

Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps. 10. And Azariah the chief priest, of the house of Zadok, answered him and said, "Since the people began to bring the oblations into the house of Jehovah, we have eaten and had enough, and have left plenty; for Jehovah hath blessed his people; and that which is left is this great store."

11. Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of Jehovah; and they prepared them; 12. and they brought in the oblations and the tithes and the dedicated things faithfully. And over them Conaniah the Levite was ruler, and Shimei his brother was second; 13. and Jehiel, and Azaziah, and Nahath, and Asahel, and Jerimoth, and Jozabad, and Eliel, and Ismachiah, and 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 the house of God. 14. And Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the porter at the east gate, was over the freewill-offerings of God, to distribute the oblations of Jehovah, and the most holy things. 15. And under him were Eden, and Miniamin, and Jeshua, and Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah, in the cities of the priests, in their office of trust, to give to their brethren by courses, as well to the great as to the small: 16. besides them that were reckoned by genealogy of males, from three years old and upward, even every one entered into the house of Jehovah, as the duty of every day required, for their service in their offices according to their courses; 17. and them that 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 courses; 18. and them that were reckoned by genealogy of all their little ones, their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, through all the congregation: for in their office of trust they sanctified themselves in holiness. 19. Also for the sons of Aaron the priests, that were in the fields of the suburbs of their cities, in every city, there were men that were mentioned by name, to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all that were reckoned by genealogy among the Levites.

20. And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah; and he

wrought that which was good and right and faithful before Jehovah his God. 21. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.

Chapter 32:1. After these things, and this faithfulness, Sennacherib, king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fortified cities, and thought to win them for himself. 2. And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, 3. he took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city; and they helped him. 4. So there was gathered much people together, and they stopped all the fountains, and the brook that flowed through the midst of the land, saying, "Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water?" 5. And he took courage, and built up all the wall that was broken down, and raised it up to the towers, and the other wall without, and strengthened Millo in the city of David, and made weapons and shields in abundance. 6. And 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 spake comfortably to them, saying, 7. "Be strong and of good courage, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there is a greater with us than with him: 8. "with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is Jehovah our God to help us, and to fight our battles." And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

9. After this did Sennacherib king of Assyria send his servants to Jerusalem (now he was before Lachish, and all his power with him), unto Hezekiah king of Judah, and unto Judah that were at Jerusalem, saying, 10. "Thus saith Sennacherib king of Assyria, 'Whereon do ye trust, that ye abide the siege in Jerusalem?' 11. 'Doth not Hezekiah persuade you, to give you over to die by famine and by thirst, saying, "Jehovah our God will deliver us out of the hand of the king of Assyria?"' 12. 'Hath not the same Hezekiah taken away his high places and his

altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, "Ye shall worship before one altar, and upon it shall ye burn incense?" 13. 'Know ye not what I and my fathers have done unto all the peoples of the lands? Were the gods of the nations of the lands in any wise able to deliver their land out of my hand? 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? 15. 'Now therefore let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you after this manner, neither believe ye 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 shall your God deliver you out of my hand?' "

16. And his servants spake yet more against Jehovah God, and against his servant Hezekiah. 17. He wrote also letters, to rail on Jehovah, 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 not the God of Hezekiah deliver his people out of my hand." 18. And they cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language unto the people of Jerusalem that were on the wall, to affright them, and to trouble them; that they might take the city. 19. And they spake of the God of Jerusalem, as of the gods of the peoples of the earth, which are the work of men's hands.

20. And Hezekiah the king, and Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz, prayed because of this, and cried to heaven. 21. And Jehovah sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains, in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth from his own bowels slew him there with the sword. 22. Thus Jehovah 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. 23. And many brought gifts unto Jehovah to Jerusalem, and precious things to Hezekiah king of Judah; so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.

24. In those days Hezekiah was sick even unto death: and he prayed unto Jehovah; and he spake unto him, and gave him a sign. 25. But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. 26. Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of Jehovah came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.

27. And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honor: and he provided him treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of goodly vessels; 28. store-houses also for the increase of grain and new wine and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and flocks in folds. 29. Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him very much substance. 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. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works. 31. Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.

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. 33. And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the ascent of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honor at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 29:1. Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became the king of Judah, and he reigned twenty-nine years, in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. 2. His reign was a good one in the Lord's opinion, just as his ancestor David's had been. 3. In the very first month

of the first year of his reign, he reopened the doors of the Temple and repaired them. 4, 5. He summoned the priests and Levites to meet him at the open space east of the Temple, and addressed them thus: "Listen to me, you Levites. Sanctify yourselves and sanctify the Temple of the Lord God of your ancestors—clean all the debris from the holy place. 6. For our fathers have committed a deep sin before the Lord our God; they abandoned the Lord and his Temple and turned their backs on it. 7. The doors have been shut tight, the perpetual flame has been put out, and the incense and burnt offerings have not been offered. 8. Therefore the wrath of the Lord has been upon Judah and Jerusalem. He has caused us to be objects of horror, amazement, and contempt, as you see us today. 9. Our fathers have been killed in war, and our sons and daughters and wives are in captivity because of this. 10. "But now I want to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel so that his fierce anger will turn away from us. 11. My children, don't neglect your duties any longer, for the Lord has chosen you to minister to him and to burn incense."

12, 13, 14. Then the Levites went into action: From the Kohath clan, Mahath (son of Amasai) and Joel (son of Azariah); From the Merari clan, Kish (son of Abdi) and Azariah (son of Jehallelel); From the Gershon clan, Joah (son of Zimmah) and Eden (son of Joah). From the Elizaphan clan, Shimri and Jeuel; From the Asaph clan, Zechariah and Mattaniah; From the Hamanite clan, Jehuel and Shime-i; From the Jeduthun clan, Shemaiah and Uzziel. 15. They in turn summoned their fellow Levites and sanctified themselves, and began to clean up and sanctify the Temple, as the king (who was speaking for the Lord) had commanded them. 16. The priests cleaned up the inner room of the Temple, and brought out into the court all the filth and decay they found there. The Levites then carted it out to the brook Kidron. 17. This all began on the first day of April, and by the eighth day they had reached the outer court, which took eight days to clean up, so the entire job was completed in sixteen days. 18. Then they went back to the palace and reported to King Hezekiah, "We have completed the

cleansing of the Temple and of the altar of burnt offerings and of its accessories, also the table of the Bread of the Presence and its equipment. 19. What's more, we have recovered and sanctified all the utensils thrown away by King Ahaz when he closed the Temple. They are beside the altar of the Lord."

20. Early the next morning, King Hezekiah went to the Temple with the city officials, 21. taking seven young bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin offering for the nations and for the Temple. He instructed the priests, the sons of Aaron, to sacrifice them on the altar of the Lord. 22. So they killed the young bulls, and the priests took the blood and sprinkled it on the altar, and they killed the rams and sprinkled their blood upon the altar, and did the same with the lambs. 23. The male goats for the sin offering were then brought before the king and his officials, who laid their hands upon them. 24. Then the priests killed the animals and made a sin offering with their blood upon the altar, to make atonement for all Israel as the king had commanded—for the king had specified that the burnt offering and sin offering must be sacrificed for the entire nation.

25, 26. He organized Levites at the Temple into an orchestral group, using cymbals, psalteries, and harps. This was in accordance with the directions of David and the prophets Gad and Nathan—who had received their instructions from the Lord. The priests formed a trumpet corps. 27. Then Hezekiah ordered the burnt offerings to be placed upon the altar, and as the sacrifice began, the instruments of music began to play the songs of the Lord, accompanied by the trumpets. 28. Throughout the entire ceremony everyone worshiped the Lord as the singers sang and the trumpets blew. 29. Afterwards the king and his aides bowed low before the Lord in worship. 30. Then King Hezekiah ordered the Levites to sing before the Lord some of the psalms of David and of the prophet Asaph, which they gladly did, and bowed their heads and worshiped.

31. "The consecration ceremony is now ended," Hezekiah said. "Now bring your sacrifices and thank offerings." So the people from every part of the nation brought their sacrifices

and thank offerings, and those who wished to, brought burnt offerings too. 32, 33. In all, there were 70 young bulls for burnt offerings, 100 rams, and 200 lambs. In addition, 600 oxen and 3,000 sheep were brought as holy gifts. 34. But there were too few priests to prepare the burnt offerings so their brothers the Levites helped them until the work was finished—and until more priests had reported to work—for the Levites were much more ready to sanctify themselves than the priests were. 35. There was an abundance of burnt offerings, and the usual drink offering with each, and many peace offerings. So it was that the Temple was restored to service, and the sacrifices offered again. 36. And Hezekiah and all the people were very happy because of what God had accomplished so quickly.

Chapter 30:1. King Hezekiah now sent letters throughout all of Israel, Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh, inviting everyone to come to the Temple at Jerusalem for the annual Passover celebration. 2, 3. The king, his aides, and all the assembly of Jerusalem had voted to celebrate the Passover in May this time, rather than at the normal time in April, because not enough priests were sanctified at the earlier date, and there wasn't enough time to get notices out. 4. The king and his advisors were in complete agreement in this matter, 5. so they sent a Passover proclamation throughout Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, inviting everyone. They had not kept it in great numbers as prescribed. 6. "Come back to the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel," the king's letter said, "so that he will return to us who have escaped from the power of the kings of Assyria. 7. Do not be like your fathers and brothers who sinned against the Lord God of their fathers and were destroyed. 8. Do not be stubborn, as they were, but yield yourselves to the Lord and come to his Temple which he has sanctified forever, and worship the Lord your God so that his fierce anger will turn away from you. 9. For if you turn to the Lord again, your brothers and your children will be treated mercifully by their captors, and they will be able to return to this land. For the Lord your God is full of kindness and mercy and will not continue to turn away his face from you if you return to him."

10. So the messengers went from city to city throughout Ephraim and Manasseh and as far as Zebulun. But for the most part they were received with laughter and scorn; 11. However, some from the tribes of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun turned to God and came to Jerusalem. 12. But in Judah the entire nation felt a strong, God-given desire to obey the Lord's direction as commanded by the king and his officers.

13. And so it was that a very large crowd assembled at Jerusalem in the month of May for the Passover celebration. 14. They set to work and destroyed the heathen altars in Jerusalem, and knocked down all the incense altars, and threw them into Kidron Brook. 15. On the first day of May the people killed their Passover lambs. Then the priests and Levites became ashamed of themselves for not taking a more active part, so they sanctified themselves and brought burnt offerings into the Temple. 16. They stood at their posts as instructed by the law of Moses the man of God; and the priests sprinkled the blood received from the Levites. 17, 18, 19. Since many of the people arriving from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun were ceremonially impure because they had not undergone the purification rites, the Levites killed their Passover lambs for them, to sanctify them. Then King Hezekiah prayed for them and they were permitted to eat the Passover anyway, even though this was contrary to God's rules. But Hezekiah said, "May the good Lord pardon everyone who determines to follow the Lord God of his fathers, even though he is not properly sanctified for the ceremony." 20. And the Lord listened to Hezekiah's prayer and did not destroy them. 21. So the people of Israel celebrated the Passover at Jerusalem for seven days with great joy. Meanwhile the Levites and priests praised the Lord with music and cymbals day after day. 22. (King Hezekiah spoke very appreciatively to the Levites of their excellent music.) So, for seven days the observance continued, and peace offerings were sacrificed, and the people confessed their sins to the Lord God of their fathers.

23. The enthusiasm continued, so it was unanimously decided to continue the observance for another seven days, 24.

King Hezekiah gave the people 1,000 young bulls for offerings, and 7,000 sheep; and the princes donated 1,000 young bulls and 10,000 sheep. And at this time another large group of priests stepped forward and sanctified themselves. 25. Then the people of Judah, together with the priests, the Levites, the foreign residents, and the visitors from Israel, were filled with deep joy. 26. For Jerusalem hadn't seen a celebration like this one since the days of King David's son Solomon. 27. Then the priests and Levites stood and blessed the people, and the Lord heard their prayers from his holy temple in heaven.

Chapter 31:1. Afterwards a massive campaign against idol worship was begun. Those who were at Jerusalem for the Passover went out to the cities of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh and tore down idol altars, the obelisks, shame-images, and other heathen centers of worship. Then the people who had come to the Passover from the northern tribes returned again to their own homes.

2. Hezekiah now organized the priests and Levites into service corps to offer the burnt offerings and peace offerings, and to worship and give thanks and praise to the Lord. 3. He also made a personal contribution of animals for the daily morning and evening burnt offerings, as well as for the weekly Sabbath and monthly new moon festivals, and for the other annual feasts as required in the law of God. 4. In addition, he required the people in Jerusalem to bring their tithes to the priests and Levites, so that they wouldn't need other employment but could apply themselves fully to their duties as required in the law of God. 5, 6. The people responded immediately and generously with the first of their crops and grain, new wine, olive oil, money, and everything else—a tithe of all they owned, as required by law to be given to the Lord their God. Everything was laid out in great piles. The people who had moved to Judah from the northern tribes and the people of Judah living in the provinces also brought in the tithes of their cattle and sheep, and brought a tithe of the dedicated things to give to the Lord and piled them up in great heaps. 7, 8. The first of these tithes arrived in June, and the piles continued to grow

until October. When Hezekiah and his officials came and saw these huge piles, how they blessed the Lord and praised his people! 9. "Where did all this come from?" Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites. 10. And Azariah the High Priest from the clan of Zadok replied, "These are tithes! We have been eating from these stores of food for many weeks, but all this is left over, for the Lord has blessed his people."

11. Hezekiah decided to prepare storerooms in the Temple. 12, 13. All the dedicated supplies were brought into the Lord's house. Conaniah, the Levite, was put in charge, assisted by his brother Shime-i and the following aides: Jehiel, Azariah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath, Benaiah. These appointments were made by King Hezekiah and Azariah the High Priest. 14, 15. Kore (son of Imnah, the Levite), who was the gatekeeper at the East Gate, was put in charge of distributing the offerings to the priests. His faithful assistants were Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah. They distributed the gifts to the clans of priests in their cities, dividing it to young and old alike. 16. However, the priests on duty at the Temple and their families were supplied directly from there, so they were not included in this distribution. 17, 18. The priests were listed in the genealogical register by clans, and the Levites twenty years old and older were listed under the names of their work corps. A regular food allotment was given to all families of properly registered priests, for they had no other source of income because their time and energies were devoted to the service of the Temple. 19. One of the priests was appointed in each of the cities of the priests to issue food and other supplies to all priests in the area, and to all registered Levites.

20. In this way King Hezekiah handled the distribution throughout all Judah, doing what was just and fair in the sight of the Lord his God. 21. He worked very hard to encourage respect for the Temple, the law, and godly living, and was very successful.

Chapter 32:1. Some time later, after this good work of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria invaded Judah and laid

siege to the fortified cities, planning to place them under tribute. 2. When it was clear that Sennacherib was intending to attack Jerusalem, 3. Hezekiah summoned his princes and officers for a council of war, and it was decided to plug the springs outside the city. 4. They organized a huge work crew to block them, and to cut off the brook running through the fields. "Why should the king of Assyria come and find water?" they asked. 5. Then Hezekiah further strengthened his defenses by repairing the wall wherever it was broken down and by adding to the fortifications, and constructing a second wall outside it. He also reinforced Fort Millo in the City of David, and manufactured large numbers of weapons and shields. 6. He recruited an army and appointed officers and summoned them to the plains before the city, and encouraged them with this address: 7. "Be strong, be brave, and do not be afraid of the king of Assyria or his mighty army, for there is someone with us who is far greater than he is! 8. He has a great army, but they are all mere men, while we have the Lord our God to fight our battles for us!" This greatly encouraged them.

9. Then King Sennacherib of Assyria, while still besieging the city of Lachish, sent ambassadors with this message to King Hezekiah and the citizens of Jerusalem: 10. "King Sennacherib of Assyria asks, 'Do you think you can survive my siege of Jerusalem? 11. King Hezekiah is trying to persuade you to commit suicide by staying there—to die by famine and thirst—while he promises that "the Lord our God will deliver us from the king of Assyria"! 12. Don't you realize that Hezekiah is the very person who destroyed all the idols, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem to use only the one altar at the Temple, and to burn incense upon it alone? 13. Don't you realize that I and the other kings of Assyria before me have never yet failed to conquer a nation we attacked? The gods of those nations weren't able to do a thing to save their land! 14. Name just one time when anyone, anywhere, was able to resist us successfully. What makes you think your God can do any better? 15. Don't let Hezekiah fool you! Don't believe him. I say it again—no god of any nation has ever yet been able to rescue his people from

me or my ancestors; how much less your God!"

16. Thus the ambassador mocked the Lord God and God's servant Hezekiah, heaping up insults. 17. King Sennacherib also sent letters scorning the Lord God of Israel. "The gods of all the other nations failed to save their people from my hand, and the God of Hezekiah will fail, too," he wrote. 18. The messengers who brought the letters shouted threats in the Jewish language to the people gathered on the walls of the city, trying to frighten and dishearten them. 19. These messengers talked about the God of Jerusalem just as though he were one of the heathen gods—a handmade idol!

20. Then King Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet (son of Amoz) cried out in prayer to God in heaven, 21. and the Lord sent an angel who destroyed the Assyrian army with all its officers and generals! So Sennacherib returned home in deep shame to his own land. And when he arrived at the temple of his god, some of his own sons killed him there. 22. That is how the Lord saved Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem. And now there was peace at last throughout his realm. 23. From then on King Hezekiah became immensely respected among the surrounding nations, and many gifts for the Lord arrived at Jerusalem, with valuable presents for King Hezekiah, too.

24. But about that time Hezekiah became deathly sick, and he prayed to the Lord, and the Lord replied with a miracle. 25. However, Hezekiah didn't respond with true thanksgiving and praise, for he had become proud, and so the anger of God was upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem. 26. But finally Hezekiah and the residents of Jerusalem humbled themselves, so the wrath of the Lord did not fall upon them during Hezekiah's lifetime.

27. So Hezekiah became very wealthy and was highly honored. He had to construct special treasury buildings for his silver, gold, precious stones, and for his shields and gold bowls. 28, 29. He also built many storehouses for his grain, new wine, and olive oil, with many stalls for his animals, and folds for the great flocks of sheep and goats he purchased; and he acquired

many towns, for God had given him great wealth. 30. He dammed up the Upper Spring of Gihon and brought the water down through an aqueduct to the west side of the City of David sector in Jerusalem. He prospered in everything he did. 31. However, when ambassadors arrived from Babylon to find out about the miracle of his being healed, God left him to himself in order to test him and to see what he was really like. 32. The rest of the story of Hezekiah and all of the good things he did are written in The Book of Isaiah (the prophet, the son of Amoz), and in The Annals of the Kings of Judah and Israel. 33. When Hezekiah died he was buried in the royal hillside cemetery among the other kings, and all Judah and Jerusalem honored him at his death. Then his son Manasseh became the new king.

COMMENTARY

Hezekiah's appearance in Judah's history was indeed timely and by divine appointment.¹ How could a man as corrupt as Ahaz be the father of a son who was as godly as Hezekiah? "Hezekiah" means "Jehovah has strengthened". We wonder who it was that named him. Whatever good he accomplished, he had no spiritual heritage from his father upon which to build. Again in history here is God's man for the hour. He began his reign at the age of twenty five and led Judah through twenty nine years. The "Zechariah" named in 29:1 cannot be identified with certainty. The name Abijah means "Jehovah is my father". This woman was Ahaz' wife and Hezekiah's mother. A wife with such a godly name apparently had no good influence on Ahaz. Perhaps she influenced Hezekiah in his godly disposition. The Davidic pattern of righteousness was Hezekiah's ideal. David is called "father" in the sense that the new king was his direct lineal descendant. Ahaz had shut the doors to the Temple. One of the first official acts of Hezekiah was to "open the doors of the house of Jehovah". If religious reformation was to be realized, the king knew that the religious leaders (priests and Levites) had to set the example. In the presence of the Temple the king met these men and told them to concern

¹Elmslie, W. A. L., *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. III, p. 519

themselves with sanctification (genuine holiness), "sanctify yourselves and sanctify the house of Jehovah" (verse 5). The term "filthiness" has to do with everything associated with Ahaz' idolatries. Hezekiah showed his awareness of Judah's crisis as he reviewed the recent history of his people. God's people had trespassed (disregarded Jehovah's rights), forsaken God, turned their backs upon the Lord, put out the lamps in His Temple. Jehovah had permitted His people to be tossed about like a ball. Even Judah's enemies were "astonished" at the sufferings to which Jehovah's people had been subjected. Judah had become as a "hissing" in that they were regarded as shameful even by the nations. As Moses had predicted (Deuteronomy 28:28, 32, 36, 37), the sword and captivity had been experienced in some measure already. Hezekiah enlisted the support of the priests and Levites in the renewal of the covenant with Jehovah.

A very hearty response was made by the ministering priests and Levites. (The student is reminded that every serving priest was a Levite. All Levites could not serve as priests. To serve at the altar and to burn incense, one had to be a Kohathite Levite within certain age limits, and physically perfect. The Merarite and Gershonite Levites could do other tasks related to Temple service if they met certain requirements.) Since all three Levitical families are named here, Kohath, Merari, and Gershon; it is evident that all of the Levites supported Hezekiah's reformation.¹ Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun were Levites who had special responsibility for music and singing in the Temple services in David's day. In Hezekiah's time their descendants joined the great program of religious renewal in Judah. It should be observed that the priests and Levites, first of all, sanctified themselves. They certified their own ceremonial cleanness. They washed their bodies and changed their garments. They committed themselves to God. Next in order, they proceeded with a general house cleaning of the Temple. They began in the "inner part of the house" and they continued through the court removing every suggestion of idolatry, every foreign object with

¹Spence, H. D. M., *The Pulpit Commentary*, II Chronicles, p. 360

which Ahaz had defiled the Temple. All of this "filthiness" and "uncleanness" was dumped in the valley of the Kidron to the East of the Temple. The work just described required a total of sixteen days. Sanctifying the house of Jehovah also meant that all of the sacred furniture and vessels had to be washed. The holy vessels which Ahaz had removed had to be brought out of store rooms and cleansed and replaced in the Temple proper.

If this was the first month of the religious year, it was Abib or Nisan. The Passover was to be kept on the fourteenth day of that month. The keeping of the Passover is not mentioned in this account. This would not mean that it was not observed. The overriding consideration at this time was the cleansing of the Temple and opening the doors to the house of Jehovah. When the priests and Levites reported that all preparations had been made, Hezekiah gathered the princes about him and they met at the Temple. The burnt offering was the basis of all offerings made at the altar (verse 24). It signified complete devotion to Jehovah in that the entire animal was consumed in the fire. The sin offering was made "for the kingdom and the sanctuary and for Judah" (verse 21). The king and the princes (the kingdom), the priests and Levites (the sanctuary), and all of the people (Judah) were included in these offerings. The sin offering was a confession of guilt and a sincere request for pardon. When the blood of the animals was sprinkled on the altar it was displayed before Jehovah and those who offered the sacrifices. The blood was the symbol of life, but it could not be so displayed until there had been death. When the king and other responsible leaders "laid their hands" (verse 23) on the animals, they designated these particular animals for the blood atonement and recognized that the animals were their substitutes. So "atonement for all Israel" was made according to the prescriptions recorded in the book of Leviticus.

The historian is careful to note that all of Hezekiah's actions were according to the best Hebrew tradition. He had named the ancient Levitical families. He had mentioned the chief musicians of David's day. He now refers to the commandment of David, of Gad, and of Nathan (verse 25). Sacred music was very

important in this religious reformation. Percussion instruments (cymbals), strings (harps, psaltery), wind instruments (trumpets), and the great Levitical choir were all used in the praise of Jehovah. The burnt offering would smoulder on the altar throughout the day. Through this period the choir and orchestra sang and played. At twilight another lamb would be placed on the altar to burn slowly through the night (Exodus 29:38, 39). Hezekiah and all of the princes joined in humble worship of Jehovah.

When the priests had sanctified themselves and the king and princes had given themselves completely to the Lord, then the congregation was charged to do likewise. The thank offering was a variation of the peace offering. It usually followed the burnt and sin offerings and meant that the offerer was in a happy covenant relationship with Jehovah. Because of the great number of persons who wanted to share in the religious services and the correspondingly large number of sacrifices, the priests needed more help. So Levites who were not priests were allowed to help in these services on this particular day. To "flay" an animal meant to kill it, catch the blood, remove the animal's hide, cut the animal into proper portions and lay it out on the altar. Some of the persons who were qualified by birth and family to serve as priests were hesitant to sanctify themselves for this work. Drink offerings (verse 35) were brought with the burnt offerings. They consisted of wine which was poured out as a libation at the base of the altar of burnt offering. This was one of the truly memorable days in Judah's history because Jehovah's house "was set in order". By God's grace and through Hezekiah's leadership the doors of the Temple once more were opened.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

LESSON TWENTY-TWO (27-29)

855. How could Jotham be a good king and not enter into the Temple?
856. What was the length of Jotham's reign?

857. Carefully identify and locate Ophel.
858. Why would Jotham build castles in the forests?
859. Over what enemy did Jotham prevail and what tribute did he receive?
860. How does the Bible record account for the might of Jotham?
861. How old was Jotham at his death?
862. Whose reign is mentioned as a standard of righteousness for the kings of Judah?
863. List the charges brought against Ahaz.
864. Locate the valley of Hinnom.
865. Why is mention made of "green trees"?
866. Carefully identify two powerful kings who caused Ahaz much trouble.
867. Why was there such terrible loss of life in Judah?
868. Who was Zichri?
869. What did the children of Israel do to Judah at this time?
870. Who was Oded? What was the nature of his work?
871. What were the Israelites told to do?
872. Why would the Israelites show compassion to the people of Judah?
873. To what place were the captives returned and what provisions were made for them?
874. To whom did Ahaz appeal for military help?
875. What other enemies did Ahaz and Judah now have to face?
876. Locate Bethshemesh.
877. Explain the phrase, "to deal wantonly".
878. Who was Tiglath-pilneser?
879. Where did Ahaz get monies to buy help?
880. Why did Ahaz worship the Syrian gods?
881. What does the record say about Ahaz and altars?
882. What were the "high places"?

883. Where is the rest of Ahaz' history written?
884. What do you learn in II Kings 16 about the altar from Damascus?
885. How long did Hezekiah reign?
886. Why was Hezekiah not wicked like his father?
887. When did Hezekiah begin to repair the Temple?
888. What instruction did Hezekiah bring to the Levites?
889. Explain the reference to "putting out the lamps".
890. Why should Judah and Jerusalem be "tossed to and fro"?
891. How did Hezekiah describe the condition of his people in 29:9?
892. What was the importance of burning incense?
893. Name the major Levitical families mentioned in 29:12.
894. What was involved in "cleansing the house of Jehovah"?
895. To what place were the unclean things removed? Locate this place
896. How long did it take to cleanse the Temple?
897. To whom was the report of the cleansing brought?
898. What kind of an offering was made according to 29:21? Why was this most appropriate?
899. Explain the importance of sprinkling the blood.
900. Why would the king and other leaders put their hands on the he-goats?
901. For whom were these offerings made?
902. Why are Gad and Nathan mentioned at this time?
903. Explain the meaning of the burnt-offering.
904. What other exercise accompanied the service of the burnt offering?
905. Who were the persons engaging in worship?
906. What other kind of offering did the king tell the people to bring?
907. Distinguish between Levites and priests as in v. 34.
908. What other kinds of offerings are named in v. 35?

909. How many offerings were made according to 29:32, 33?
910. What is the meaning of “flaying” and offering?
911. Why was there so much rejoicing on this occasion?

LESSON TWENTY-THREE 30-33

HEZEKIAH AND THE PASSOVER REORGANIZATION OF TEMPLE PROCEDURES ASSYRIAN INVASION THE REIGNS OF MANASSEH AND AMON

14. THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH—Continued (29-32)

INTRODUCTION

The passover was kept and Hezekiah led in a genuine religious reformation. The Temple became the real house of God again. Priests served and worshipers brought their tithes. God delivered Hezekiah and his people from the Assyrians. Manasseh destroyed much of the good his father had accomplished.

TEXT

(Scripture text in Lesson Twenty-two)

PARAPHRASE

(Scripture text in Lesson Twenty-two)

COMMENTARY

The celebration of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread received Hezekiah's immediate attention. That which was attempted by the king had not been done among Jehovah's people since Solomon's day. He dared to hope that all of the Hebrews, both southern and northern kingdoms, would gather in Jerusalem for the Passover and the week of worship and feasting that followed. One of the main concerns of Jeroboam I was to keep the people of the northern kingdom from attending these celebrations at the Temple. So he had made idolatrous worship convenient and readily available for his people. The summons to the feast were sent out through the length and breadth of the land. "From Beersheba to Dan" (verse 5) covered all of Canaan from south to north, a distance of one hundred and fifty miles. The "posts" (swift runners) carried the

good news calling for genuine repentance, for faithfulness to "Jehovah", the God of the Hebrew patriarchs. In the invitation was expressed the hope that the northern kingdom might not be completely lost to the Assyrians who at that time had led many northern Hebrews captive. The king's appeal was that these northern brethren remember their relationship in the common parentage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Hezekiah urged them not to be stiffnecked (recklessly stubborn); but rather to return (to repent) to Jehovah. Hezekiah's runners remind us of the men sent out by Jesus to the villages of the Jews to tell them He was coming. The posts were as far north as Asher which bordered Phoenicia. Their brethren in the north subjected them to ridicule. A few of the northern Israelites accepted the invitation. The people of Judah showed a willingness to follow Hezekiah's leadership.

The time of the keeping of the Passover as this was done by Hezekiah is a matter of interest. This feast was supposed to be kept during the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month, Abib (Exodus 12:18). When the Hebrews were preparing to leave Mount Sinai the time came for the Passover to be observed. Some of the people were ceremonially unclean and could not share in the feast. For such persons an appointment was made whereby they could keep the Passover one month later on the same day of the month (Numbers 9:11). In Hezekiah's day the decision was made, apparently with Jehovah's approval, that the Passover be kept in the second month, Iyar, because there was a need for more sanctified priests and because a general announcement of the celebration needed to be published.

Many of the priests did what was necessary to qualify themselves to serve in God's House. By special dispensation they were assisted in the preparation of the offerings by the Levites. God's Word required that one be ceremonially clean in order to keep the Passover. Due to the special circumstances of this Passover, some of the ceremonial requirements were relaxed. Hezekiah personally prayed for the whole assembly. He asked Jehovah's forgiveness. The Lord heard the king's prayer;

"He healed the people" (verse 20). The Feast of Unleavened Bread followed immediately upon the Passover and lasted seven days (Exodus 12:15). These were days of worship and of unrestrained joy in the offering of sacrifices to Jehovah. The joyful spirit of the whole assembly is well demonstrated in their request that the usual seven day period be doubled. Many sacrifices were presented to Jehovah and it was truly a religious holiday in Jerusalem.

There had been a concerted effort to destroy every suggestion of idolatry in the city of Jerusalem. When the feast days had passed, attention was given to the destruction of images throughout Judah and even in Ephraim and Manasseh to the North.

Due to Ahaz' utter disregard of the Temple and of Jehovah worship the priesthood was seriously disorganized. David, in his time, had carefully set up the courses of priests and Levites. Hezekiah determined to follow David's example in this matter. Priests were appointed and the king made certain that they were well acquainted with every part of their work. He made all provisions for the daily sacrifices. There was to be an offering on the altar day and night. The people were taught to bring their tithes to the Temple and thus provide for their ministers, the priests and Levites, so the ministers could "give themselves to the law of Jehovah". Grain, wine, oil, honey, sheep and oxen were brought to the Temple. By the third month, Sivan, the harvest of barley and wheat was completed. By the seventh month, Tisri, the vintage, flax, and olive harvest had been gathered. Out of these materials the "heaps" were fashioned. Hezekiah was well pleased with the popular acceptance of his leadership. Azariah, the chief priest, made a good report on the people's "oblations" (offerings). The priests and Levites had all necessary provisions and the people's lives were blessed.

Rooms were provided at the Temple for the storage of the material of the tithes. The Levites who were specially appointed to attend to the storage and use of the tithes are named in this account. Kore had the special assignment of administering the free will offerings. These were associated with the peace

offering and were the only offerings for which an imperfect animal would be accepted. In Joshua's day forty eight Levitical cities were appointed throughout Palestine. With the division of the kingdom, the number of these cities was greatly reduced. Kore and his associates were to fair and were not to respect persons in administering the tithe. All of the Levitical families were to share in the Temple provisions. The serving priests and Levites at this time began their ministries at the age of twenty years. The sons of Aaron were those priests who were of high priestly lineage. The "suburbs" were the pasture lands surrounding each Levitical city. The chronicler commends Hezekiah. His work was good, right, faithful. He sought God with his whole heart.

A more complete record of Hezekiah's encounter with Sennacherib is given in II Kings 18:13 through II Kings 19:37 and in Isaiah, chapters 36 and 37. We have here a summary of these experiences. In Isaiah's day the Assyrians under Tiglath-pileser and Sargon had captured Samaria (722-721 B.C.) and had over-run the northern kingdom. Jerusalem and Judah were to feel the threat of Assyrian dominion when Sennacherib led a powerful army into Judah and camped in the Philistine plain. Sennacherib had already taken several Judean villages and was busy marshaling his forces for an attack on Jerusalem. Hezekiah reasoned that his captial would soon be under siege. He cut off the water supply that might aid the enemy and very skillfully diverted the water so as to bring it into reservoirs within the city.¹ He strengthened the walls of the city, provided his army with necessary weapons, and called them to trust in Jehovah.

As Sennacherib planned his assault on Jerusalem his army was at Lachish about thirty five miles southwest of the capital. He sent a captain named Rabshakeh² to threaten Hezekiah and his people and to offer the opportunity of surrender. Rabshakeh said they would besiege the city. He said that Hezekiah had deceived the Hebrew people. He made his fatal

¹Spence, H. D. M., *The Pulpit Commentary*, II Chronicles, p. 384

²A Babylonian title meaning "Chief Prince".

mistake when he defied Jehovah by challenging His power to deliver Jerusalem and Judah from the Assyrians. This defiance of Jehovah had proved to be Goliath's ruin in David's day. Sennacherib would have come against the city at once, but he had to meet an attack by the Ethiopians under Tirhakah, their king. So Rabshakeh had come and without respect for king or people heaped his insults on his hearers in their own language. Letters were brought from the Assyrian field headquarters which were just as insolent as Rabshakeh's words. Hezekiah spread these scrolls before Jehovah and prayed for guidance. Jehovah answered through Isaiah, the prophet, and predicted that the Assyrians would not build a mound against Jerusalem or shoot an arrow at a Hebrew soldier. In one night one hundred eighty five thousand Assyrian soldiers died in their camp at the hands of "an angel" (verse 21). Sennacherib hurriedly fled to Nineveh, his capital. While he worshiped his god, Nisroch, his two sons killed him and fled to the region of Ararat. Jehovah vindicated His holy name and spared His people.

Hezekiah's boil (cancer) threatened his life. He heard God's word, "Set your house in order. You are to die". He asked the Lord for some more time to complete his reformation and to father a son. Jehovah told him He would add fifteen years to his life and confirmed the same by causing the shadow to reverse on the sun dial (two sun-rises in one day). Hezekiah was a great and good king; but he did not perfectly follow Jehovah. Terrible times were in store for Jerusalem and Judah; but Jehovah was merciful in sparing Hezekiah from the sorrow of those days.

Many internal improvements were made in the kingdom during Hezekiah's time. He added to the national treasury. He built cities. He promoted agriculture. He employed his engineering genius in providing water for Jerusalem. When the visitors came from Babylon, Hezekiah failed to ask Jehovah's will. He treated them like brethren. Jehovah sent Isaiah to condemn Hezekiah in this matter and to tell him that these very people would come at a later day and ruin Jerusalem. "God left

him" in this matter because the king did not seek His counsel. Even in this instance, however, Hezekiah graciously resigned himself to Jehovah's will. He accepted the judgment of the Lord.

Isaiah was well qualified by character and personal knowledge to write about the life and times of Hezekiah. This king was honored in his death. He had been one of Judah's strongest leaders since David's reign.

15. THE REIGN OF MANASSEH. (33:1-19)

TEXT

Chapter 33:1. Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. 2. And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, after the abominations of the nations whom Jehovah cast out before the children of Israel. 3. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; and he reared up altars for the Baalim, and made Asheroth, and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served them. 4. And he built altars in the house of Jehovah, whereof Jehovah said, "In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever." 5. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of Jehovah. 6. He also made his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom; and he practised augury, and used enchantments, and practised sorcery, and dealt with them that had familiar spirits, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger. 7. And he set the graven image of the idol, which he had made, in the house of God, 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 for ever: 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." 9. And Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that they did evil more

than did the nations whom Jehovah destroyed before the children of Israel.

10. And Jehovah spake to Manasseh, and to his people; but they gave no heed. 11. Wherefore Jehovah brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh in chains, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. 12. And when he was in distress, he besought Jehovah his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. 13. And he prayed unto him; and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that Jehovah he was God.

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 compassed Ophel about with it, and raised it up to a very great height: and he put valiant captains in all the fortified cities of Judah. 15. And he took away the foreign gods, and the idol out of the house of Jehovah, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of Jehovah, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. 16. And he built up the altar of Jehovah, and offered thereon sacrifices of peace-offerings and of thanksgiving, and commanded Judah to serve Jehovah, the God of Israel. 17. Nevertheless the people sacrificed still in the high places, but only unto Jehovah their God.

18. Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel, behold, they are written among the acts of the kings of Israel. 19. His prayer also, and how God was entreated of him, and all his sin and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up the Asherim and the graven images, before he humbled himself, behold, they are written in the history of Hozai.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 33:1. Manasseh was only twelve years old when he

became king, and he reigned fifty-five years, in Jerusalem. 2. But it was an evil reign, for he encouraged his people to worship the idols of the heathen nations destroyed by the Lord when the people of Israel entered the land. 3. He rebuilt the heathen altars his father Hezekiah had destroyed—the altars of Baal, and of the shame-images, and of the sun, moon, and stars. 4, 5. He even constructed heathen altars in both courts of the Temple of the Lord, for worshiping the sun, moon, and stars—in the very place where the Lord had said that he would be honored forever. 6. And Manasseh sacrificed his own children as burnt offerings in the Valley of Hinnom. He consulted spirit-mediums, too, and fortune-tellers and sorcerers, and encouraged every sort of evil, making the Lord very angry. 7. Think of it! He placed an idol in the very Temple of God, where God had told David and his son Solomon, “I will be honored here in this Temple, and in Jerusalem—the city I have chosen to be honored forever above all the other cities of Israel. 8. And if you will obey my commands—all the laws and instructions given to you by Moses—I won’t ever again exile Israel from this land which I gave your ancestors.” 9. But Manasseh encouraged the people of Judah and Jerusalem to do even more evil than the nations the Lord destroyed when Israel entered the land.

10. Warnings from the Lord were ignored by both Manasseh and his people. 11. So God sent the Assyrian armies, and they seized him with hooks and bound him with bronze chains and carted him away to Babylon. 12. Then at last he came to his senses and cried out humbly to God for help. 13. And the Lord listened, and answered his plea by returning him to Jerusalem and to his kingdom! At that point Manasseh finally realized that the Lord was really God!

14. It was after this that he rebuilt the outer wall of the City of David and the wall from west of the Spring of Gihon in the Kidron Valley, and then to the Fish Gate, and around Citadel Hill, where it was built very high. And he stationed his army generals in all of the fortified cities of Judah. 15. He also removed the foreign gods from the hills and took his idol from the Temple and tore down the altars he had built on the

mountain where the Temple stood, and the altars that were in Jerusalem, and dumped them outside the city. 16. Then he rebuilt the altar of the Lord and offered sacrifices upon it—peace offerings and thanksgiving offerings—and demanded that the people of Judah worship the Lord God of Israel. 17. However, the people still sacrificed upon the altars on the hills, but only to the Lord their God.

18. The rest of Manasseh's deeds, and his prayer to God, and God's reply through the prophets—this is all written in The Annals of the Kings of Israel. 19. His prayer, and the way God answered, and a frank account of his sins and errors, including a list of the locations where he built idols on the hills and set up shame-idols and graven images (this of course was before the great change in his attitude) is recorded in The Annals of the Prophets.

COMMENTARY

Hezekiah had a wicked father; even so, he served God well. The son born late in Hezekiah's life-time proved to be as wicked as his grandfather, Ahaz.¹ A father's wickedness or righteousness does not guarantee the same character in his offspring. Manasseh began to reign at the age of twelve and he was to have the responsibility of the longest reign (55 years) among the kings of Judah. After Hezekiah there was to be only one more good king in Judah, namely, Josiah. Manasseh hurried the kingdom toward its ultimate destiny. Without restraint Manasseh brought in the gods of the nations. High places, heathen altars, Baalim, Asheroth, passing children through the fire were fully sanctioned by the king. Altars to gods were once more set up in Jehovah's Temple.² The host of heaven", the sun, moon, and stars and worshiped as deities. Fortune-telling, astrology, contact with the dead (familiar spirits) were all practiced openly with the government's consent. Instead of leading Judah toward God, Manasseh "seduced" his people and

¹Elmslie, W. A. L., *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. III, p. 533.

²Schaff, Philip, *Lange's Commentary, Chronicles*, p. 262.

they became more wicked than the native Canaanites with whom Joshua had contended in his day.

"Jehovah spake to Manasseh" most likely through prophets. There was no inclination to hear God. The Assyrians came and took Manasseh captive. They bound him like a criminal and he was utterly humiliated. In captivity the king came to his senses, repented of his sins and Jehovah mercifully restored him to the throne in Jerusalem. After returning to Jerusalem Manasseh attempted to fill his office honorably. The walls of Jerusalem were strengthened. Gihon was in the Kidron valley just east of Ophel. The fish gate was in the south-east sector of the wall of the city. The king began to cleanse the city of its idols and he also removed gods and altars from Jehovah's Temple. He worshiped Jehovah at the altar designated for this devotion. He was not able to centralize all Jehovah worship at the Temple. Some Jehovah worship was conducted at "high places" in the city and the country. The prayer of Manasseh was regarded as very important. Careful records of this prayer were kept in the annals of his reign. "Hozai" may be a proper name. It also means "seers". A seer was a prophet, one who spoke for God to man. These persons also kept written records about important events. Manasseh's wickedness was also a part of the record of his life. The good he accomplished did not erase the evil he had done. He probably was not granted the highest burial honors in that he was "buried" in his own house".

16. THE REIGN OF AMON (33:20-25)

TEXT

Chapter 33:20. So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

21. Amon was twenty and two years old when he began to reign; and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. 22. And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, as did Manasseh his father; and Amon sacrificed unto all the graven images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them. 23. And he

humbled not himself before Jehovah, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but this same Amon trespassed more and more. 24. And his servants conspired against him, and put him to death in his own house. 25. But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 33:20, 21. When Manasseh died he was buried beneath his own palace, and his son Amon became the new king. Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign in Jerusalem, but he lasted for only two years. 22. It was an evil reign like the early years of his father Manasseh; for Amon sacrificed to all the idols just as his father had. 23. But he didn't change as his father did; instead he sinned more and more. 24. At last his own officers assassinated him in his palace. 25. But some public-spirited citizens killed all of those who assassinated him, and declared his son Josiah to be the new king.

COMMENTARY

Amon, Manasseh's son, reigned only two years. The principal feature of his reign was the re-installation of the images and idolatries which Manasseh had brought to Jerusalem. He was a very irresponsible prince and king. A conspiracy resulting in his death cut his reign short. He made no significant contribution to the lives of his people.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

LESSON TWENTY-THREE (30—33)

912. Who was invited to share in the Passover?
913. When did they decide to observe the Passover? Was this the appointed time as in Exodus?
914. How extensive was the territory from which people were invited to come to the celebration?
915. What are "posts" as in 30:6?
916. Why name Abraham, Isaac, and Israel?

917. How might the people hope to have Jehovah's wrath removed?
918. What is the promise in 30:9?
919. Where was Zebulun?
920. How were the messengers received?
921. Locate Asher's territory.
922. What was the feast of unleavened bread?
923. Just when was this passover kept?
924. Why were priests and Levites ashamed?
925. How would an ordinary worshiper in the assembly sanctify himself?
926. Who were the responsible persons in killing the passover lambs?
927. What prayer did Hezekiah offer especially for those of the northern regions of Canaan relative to the passover?
928. Explain the "healing of the people" as in 30:20.
929. How long did the feast of unleavened bread last?
930. How were the days of unleavened bread spent? What did the people do?
931. Explain the reference to "other seven days".
932. How was the joy in Jerusalem described?
933. After this great passover what happened in Judah?
934. What were these pillars?
935. Describe the responsibility assumed by Hezekiah relative to the Temple.
936. What were the morning and evening offerings?
937. Explain the reference to the portion of the priests in 31:4.
938. List the material things brought to the Temple by the Hebrews.
939. What happened from the third to the seventh month?
940. What was the content of Azariah's report?
941. For what purpose were chambers prepared in the Temple?

942. What was Kore's assignment?
943. From what age did they number the Levites?
944. From what age did they number the priests?
945. What were the suburbs?
946. How is the work of Hezekiah evaluated in the conclusion of chapter 31?
947. Explain the phrase, "this faithfulness" in 32:1.
948. Name the capital of Assyria and locate it.
949. Why would Hezekiah be concerned about the fountains?
950. What was Millo?
951. Explain the last statement in 32:7.
952. Evaluate Hezekiah's leadership.
953. Carefully locate Lachish.
954. Why did Sennacherib's servants come to Jerusalem?
955. What charge did the enemy bring against Hezekiah regarding altars and high places?
956. What charge did the Assyrians bring against the gods of other nations?
957. Explain the fatal mistake that the Assyrians make at this time?
958. What language did the Assyrian envoys use?
959. In the critical hour what great man of God came to Hezekiah's aid?
960. How was it that Assyria suffered heavy defeat?
961. How did Sennacherib die and where did his death occur?
962. Trace the reference in II Kings and state how many soldiers Assyria lost in one night.
963. When it appeared that Hezekiah would die, how many years were added to his life? What was the sign?
964. Was Hezekiah perfect? Explain.
965. Describe the wealth and material provisions of Hezekiah.
966. Explain the reference to the waters of Gihon.
967. How did Hezekiah deal with the Babylonian ambassa-

- dors? Look in II Kings for Isaiah's word to the king.
968. Who wrote a history of Hezekiah?
969. How did Jerusalem respond to Hezekiah at his death?
970. How long did Manasseh reign?
971. Who set the pattern for Manasseh's religion?
972. Make a list of the sinful acts of Manasseh.
973. Explain the reference to children passed through fire.
974. What is augury?
975. How did he desecrate the Temple?
976. Just how wicked did Manasseh and his people become?
977. How was Manasseh removed from the throne?
978. How did Manasseh accomplish his re-instatement as king?
979. Carefully locate Gihon and Ophel.
980. Identify the "mount of the house of Jehovah".
981. How were the high places used at this time?
982. Where are the accounts of Manasseh's life recorded?
983. How is the reign of Amon described?
984. How long did Amon reign and what caused his death?
985. What happened to the conspirators?

LESSON TWENTY-FOUR 34—36

JOSIAH'S REFORMATION THE LAST DAYS OF THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY. THE DECREE OF CYRUS

17. THE REIGN OF JOSIAH (Chapter 34—35)

INTRODUCTION

Josiah and Hilkiah led Judah in a wonderful revival of faith in God. The passover was a time of great rejoicing. Josiah's untimely death shortened Judah's time as a kingdom. Babylon came. Jerusalem was ruined. Captivity followed. At the end of the captivity Cyrus released the Jews for their return to Jerusalem.

TEXT

Chapter 34:1. Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. 2. And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, and walked in the ways of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left. 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; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the molten images. 4. And they brake down the altars of the Baalim in his presence; and the sun-images that were on high above them he hewed down; and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them and strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. 5. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and purged Judah and Jerusalem. 6. And so did he in the cities of Manasseh and Ephraim and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, in their ruins round about. 7. And he brake down the altars, and beat the Asherim and the graven images into powder, and hewed down all the sun-images throughout all the land of Israel, and returned to Jerusalem.

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 Jehovah his God. 9. And they came to Hilkiah the high priest, and delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, 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. 10. And they delivered it into the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of Jehovah; and the workmen that wrought in the house of Jehovah gave it to mend and repair the house: 11. even to the carpenters and to the builders gave they it, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to make beams for the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed. 12. And the men did the work faithfully: and the overseers of them 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 that were skilful with instruments of music. 13. Also they were over the bearers of burdens, and set forward all that did the work in every manner of service: and of the Levites there were scribes, and officers, and porters.

14. And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of Jehovah given by Moses. 15. And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah." And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan. 16. And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and moreover brought back word to the king, saying, "All that was committed to thy servants, they are doing. 17. "And they have emptied out the money that was found in the house of Jehovah, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and into the hand of the workmen." 18. And Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, "Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book." And Shaphan read therein before the king. 19. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the

words of the law, that he rent his clothes. 20. And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, 21. "Go ye, inquire of Jehovah for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of Jehovah that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of Jehovah, to do according unto all that is written in this book."

22. So Hilkiah, 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 dwelt in Jerusalem in the second quarter); and they spake to her to that effect. 23. And she said unto them, "Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: 'Tell ye the man that sent you unto me,' 24. Thus saith Jehovah, 'Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah. 25. 'Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore is my wrath poured out upon this place, and it shall not be quenched.' 26. "But unto the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of Jehovah, thus shall ye say to him 'Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: As touching the words which thou hast heard, 27. "because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and hast humbled thyself before me, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith Jehovah. 28. "Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof.' " " And they brought back word to the king.

29. Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. 30. And the king went up to the house of Jehovah, 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 Jehovah. 31. And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before Jehovah, to walk after Jehovah, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of covenant that were written in this book. 32. And he caused all that were found in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. 33. And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were found in Israel to serve, even to serve Jehovah their God. All his days they departed not from following Jehovah, the God of their fathers.

Chapter 35:1. And Josiah kept a passover unto Jehovah in Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. 2. And he set the priests in their offices, and encouraged them to the service of the house of Jehovah. 3. And he said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, that were holy unto Jehovah, "Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; there shall no more be a burden upon your shoulders. Now serve Jehovah your God, and his people Israel; 4. "and prepare yourselves after your fathers' houses by your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son. 5. "And stand in the holy place according to the divisions of the father's houses of your brethren the children of the people, and let there be for each a portion of a fathers' house of the Levites. 6. "And kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare for your brethren, to do according to the word of Jehovah by Moses."

7. And Josiah gave to the children of the people, of the flock, lambs and kids, all of them for the passover-offerings, unto all that were present, to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bullocks; these were of the king's substance. 8. And his princes gave for a freewill-offering unto the people,

to the priests, and to the Levites. Hilkiah and Zechariah and Jehiel, the rulers of the house of God, gave unto the priests for the passover-offerings two thousand and six hundred small cattle, and three hundred oxen. 9. Conaniah also, and Shemaiah and Nethanel, his brethren, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, the chiefs of the Levites, gave unto the Levites, for the passover-offerings five thousand small cattle, and five hundred oxen.

So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their place, and the Levites by their courses, according to the king's commandment. 11. And they killed the passover, and the priests sprinkled the blood which they received of their hand, and the Levites flayed them. 12. And 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 unto Jehovah, as it is written in the book of Moses. And so did they with the oxen. 13. And they roasted the passover with fire according to the ordinance: and the holy offerings boiled they in pots, and in caldrons, and in pans, and carried them quickly to all the children of the people. 14. And afterward they prepared for themselves, and for the priests, because the priests the sons of Aaron were busied in offering the burnt-offerings and the fat until night: therefore the Levites prepared for themselves, and for the priests the sons of Aaron. 15. And 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 seer; and the porters were at every gate: they needed not to depart from their service; for their brethren the Levites prepared for them.

16. So all the service of Jehovah was prepared the same day, to keep the passover, and to offer burnt-offerings upon the altar of Jehovah, according to the commandment of king Josiah. 17. And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days. 18. And there was no passover like to 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 that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 19. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept.

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. 21. But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, "What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war; and God hath commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not. 22. Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Neco from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. 23. And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, "Have me away; for I am sore wounded." 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 sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. 25. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations unto this day; and they made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the lamentations. 26. Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his good deeds, according to that which is written in the law of Jehovah, 27. and his acts, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 34:1. Josiah was only eight years old when he became king. He reigned thirty-one years, in Jerusalem. 2. His was a good reign, as he carefully followed the good example of his ancestor King David. 3. For when he was sixteen years old, in the eighth year of his reign, he began to search for the God of his ancestor David; and four years later he began to clean up Judah and Jerusalem, destroying the heathen altars and the shame-idols on the hills. 4. He went out personally to watch as

the altars of Baal were knocked apart, the obelisks above the altars chopped down, and the shame-idols ground into dust and scattered over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. 5. Then he burned the bones of the heathen priests upon their own altars, feeling that this action would clear the people of Judah and Jerusalem from the guilt of their sin of idol-worship. 6. Then he went to the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, even to distant Naphtali, and did the same thing there. 7. He broke down the heathen altars, ground to powder the shame-idols, and chopped down the obelisks. He did this everywhere throughout the whole land of Israel before returning to Jerusalem.

8. During the eighteenth year of his reign, after he had purged the land and cleaned up the situation at the Temple, he appointed Shaphan (son of Azaliah) and Ma-aseiah, governor of Jerusalem, and Joah (son of Joahaz), the city treasurer, to repair the Temple. 9. They set up a collection system for gifts for the Temple. The money was collected at the Temple gates by the Levites on guard duty there. Gifts were brought by the people coming from Manasseh, Ephraim, and other parts of the remnant of Israel; as well as from the people of Jerusalem. The money was taken to Hilkiah the High Priest for accounting, 10, 11. and then used by the Levites to pay the carpenters and stonemasons, and to purchase building materials—stone building blocks, timber, lumber, and beams. He now rebuilt what earlier kings of Judah had torn down. 12. The workmen were energetic under the leadership of Jahath and Obadiah, Levites of the subclan of Merari. Zechariah and Meshullam, of the subclan of Kohath, were the building superintendents. The Levites who were skilled musicians played background music while the work progressed. 13. Other Levites superintended the unskilled laborers who carried in the materials to the workmen. Still others assisted as accountants, supervisors, and carriers.

14. One day when Hilkiah, the High Priest, was at the Temple recording the money collected at the gates, he found an old scroll which turned out to be the laws of God as given to Moses! 15, 16. "Look!" Hilkiah exclaimed to Shaphan, the

king's secretary. "See what I have found in the Temple! These are the laws of God!" Hilkiyah gave the scroll to Shaphan, and Shaphan took it to the king, along with his report that there was good progress being made in the reconstruction of the Temple. 17. "The money chests have been opened and counted, and the money has been put into the hand of the overseers and workmen," he said to the king. 19. Then he mentioned the scroll, and how Hilkiyah had discovered it. So he read it to the king. 19. When the king heard what these laws required of God's people, he ripped his clothing in despair, 20. and summoned Hilkiyah, Ahikam (son of Shaphan), Abdon (son of Micah), Shaphan the treasurer, and Asaiah, the king's personal aide. 21. "Go to the Temple and plead with the Lord for me!" the king told them. "Pray for all the remnant of Israel and Judah! For this scroll says that the reason the Lord's great anger has been poured out upon us is that our ancestors have not obeyed these laws that are written here."

22. So the men went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum (son of Tokhath, son of Hasrah). (Shallum was the king's tailor, living in the second ward.) When they told her of the king's trouble, 23. she replied, "The Lord God of Israel says, 'Tell the man who sent you, 24. " 'Yes, the Lord will destroy this city and its people. All the curses written in the scroll will come true. 25. For my people have forsaken me and have worshiped heathen gods, and I am very angry with them for their deeds. Therefore, my unquenchable wrath is poured out upon this place.' 26. "But the Lord also says this to the king of Judah who sent you to ask me about this: Tell him, the Lord God of Israel says, 27. 'Because you are sorry and have humbled yourself before God when you heard my words against this city and its people, and have ripped your clothing in despair and wept before me—I have heard you, says the Lord, 28. and I will not send the promised evil upon this city and its people until after your death.' " So they brought back to the king this word from the Lord.

29. Then the king summoned all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem, 30. and the priests and Levites and all the people

great and small, to accompany him to the Temple. There the king read the scroll to them—the covenant of God that was found in the Temple. 31. As the king stood before them, he made a pledge to the Lord to follow his commandments with all his heart and soul, and to do what was written in the scroll. 32. And he required everyone in Jerusalem and Benjamin to subscribe to this pact with God, and all of them did. 33. So Josiah removed all idols from the areas occupied by the Jews, and required all of them to worship Jehovah their God. And throughout the remainder of his lifetime they continued serving Jehovah, the God of their ancestors.

Chapter 35:1. Then Josiah announced that the Passover would be celebrated on the first day of April, in Jerusalem. The Passover lambs were slain that evening. 2. He also re-established the priests in their duties, and encouraged them to begin their work at the Temple again. 3. He issued this order to the sanctified Levites, the religious teachers in Israel: “Since the Ark is now in Solomon’s Temple and you don’t need to carry it back and forth upon your shoulders, spend your time ministering to the Lord and to his people. 4, 5. Form yourselves into the traditional service corps of your ancestors, as first organized by King David of Israel and by his son Solomon. Each corps will assist particular clans of the people who bring in their offerings to the Temple. 6. Kill the Passover lambs and sanctify yourselves and prepare to assist the people who come. Follow all of the instructions of the Lord through Moses.”

7. Then the king contributed 30,000 lambs and young goats for the people’s Passover offerings, and 3,000 young bulls. 8. The king’s officials made willing contributions to the priests and Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the overseers of the Temple, gave the priests 2,600 sheep and goats, and 300 oxen as Passover offerings. 9. The Levite leaders—Conaniah, Shemaiah, and Nethanel, and his brothers Hashabiah, Je-iel, and Jozabad—gave 5,000 sheep and goats and 500 oxen to the Levites for their Passover offerings.

10. When everything was organized, and the priests were standing in their places, and the Levites were formed into

service corps as the king had instructed, 11. then the Levites killed the Passover lambs and presented the blood to the priests, who sprinkled it upon the altar as the Levites removed the skins. 12. They piled up the carcasses for each tribe to present its own burnt sacrifices to the Lord, as it is written in the law of Moses. They did the same with the oxen. 13. Then, as directed by the laws of Moses, they roasted the Passover lambs and boiled the holy offerings in pots, kettles, and pans, and hurried them out to the people to eat. 14. Afterwards the Levites prepared a meal for themselves and for the priests, for they had been busy from morning till night offering the fat of the burnt offerings. 15. The singers (the sons of Asaph) were in their places, following directions issued centuries earlier by King David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the king's prophet. The gatekeepers guarded the gates, and didn't need to leave their posts of duty, for their meals were brought to them by their Levite brothers.

16. The entire Passover ceremony was completed in that one day. All the burnt offerings were sacrificed upon the altar of the Lord, as Josiah had instructed. 17. Everyone present in Jerusalem took part in the Passover observance, and this was followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread for the next seven days. 18. Never since the time of Samuel the prophet had there been such a Passover—not one of the kings of Israel could vie with King Josiah in this respect, involving so many of the priests, Levites, and people from Jerusalem and from all parts of Judah, and from over in Israel. 19. This all happened in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah.

20. Afterwards King Neco of Egypt led his army (against the Assyrians) at Carchemish on the Euphrates River, and Josiah declared war on him. 21. But King Neco sent ambassadors to Josiah with this message: "I don't want a fight with you, O king of Judah! I have come only to fight the king of Assyria! Leave me alone! God has told me to hurry! Don't meddle with God or he will destroy you, for he is with me." 22. But Josiah refused to turn back. Instead he led his army into the battle at the Valley of Megiddo. (He laid aside his royal

robes so that the enemy wouldn't recognize him.) Josiah refused to believe that Neco's message was from God. 23. The enemy archers struck King Josiah with their arrows and fatally wounded him. "Take me out of the battle," he exclaimed to his aides. 24, 25. So they lifted him out of his chariot and placed him in his second chariot and brought him back to Jerusalem where he died. He was buried there, in the royal cemetery. And all Judah and Jerusalem, including even Jeremiah the prophet, mourned for him, as did the Temple choirs. To this day they still sing sad songs about his death, for these songs of sorrow were recorded among the official lamentations. 26. The other activities of Josiah, and his good deeds, and how he followed the laws of the Lord, 27. all are written in The Annals of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

COMMENTARY

In the history of the northern kingdom one last strong king, Jeroboam II, reigned from about 782 to 753 B.C. This period may be called "the Indian Summer of Israel". Jeroboam did not fear Jehovah; but he managed the government wisely so as to extend the borders of his kingdom and raise the living standards of the people. Within thirty years of the end of his reign Samaria was under Assyrian siege. Jeroboam was Israel's last hope. In like manner, Josiah was Judah's last hope.¹ He was only eight years old when he was placed on the throne. Like Joash who had the able assistance of the priest, Jehoiada, Josiah had the strong support of the priest, Hilkiah. This great high priest must share any commendation Josiah received for being a good king. Josiah's father and grandfather provided no real spiritual heritage. From the very beginning of his reign he sought Jehovah's will. Much idolatrous rubbish had been brought back into Jerusalem by Amon. This was destroyed under the new king. When Jeroboam I set up calf worship at Bethel, a prophet out of Judah predicted that one day Josiah would desecrate the heathen altars (I Kings 13:2). Josiah fulfilled this prediction (verses 5 and 6). The destruction of

¹Schultz, Samuel J., *The Old Testament Speaks*, p. 220

idolatry was widespread under Josiah.

The Temple needed repairing. Money was collected from the people in Judah and Benjamin and from certain sections out of the northern kingdom. Responsible persons such as Shaphan, Maaseiah, and Joah turned the money over to the high priest, Hilkiah, who administered the funds for Temple renewal. Carpenters, stone-masons, and other skilled artisans worked faithfully. The priests and Levites had the responsibility of over-seeing the work. At this time musicians were appointed. Door-keepers, Temple officers, and scribes (students of God's Law) were designated for service.

In the year 620 B.C., when the Temple renewal project was making good progress, "the book of the Law" was found in one of the storage rooms of the Temple. This was a most significant discovery. All evidence points to the complete Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) as "the book of the Law". This book was found at this time because it had been lost through carelessness and disuse. It was more than just the Book of Deuteronomy which liberal critics say had been written by some enterprising priests about thirty years before. This liberal theory supposes that the priests "planted" the book and conveniently "found" it at this time.¹ This theory denies the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the sincere faithfulness of Hilkiah and his associates. Such "explanation" of these events must be unalterably opposed by the honest student of God's Word.

The discovery of the book of the Law laid the foundation for a genuine revival of true religion in the days of Hilkiah and Josiah. Shaphan was a careful student of Jehovah's written Word. It was he who carried the "book" to the king. When Josiah heard God's Word he immediately became a mourner. "He rent his clothes". The king commanded Hilkiah and the other chief officers to get more information about what he had learned from the "book". "Inquire of Jehovah", the king

¹Harrison, Ronald K., *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 43-46
Larue, Gerald A., *Old Testament Life and Literature*, pp. 246, 247
Oehler, Gustave F., *Old Testament Theology*, p. 414

ordered. He knew that God's will and purpose had been totally disregarded. How could he and his people once more experience the grace and forgiveness of Jehovah? Huldah was a prophetess who was in Jerusalem. She had been called by God to speak for Him. Through her Jehovah revealed to Josiah that judgment was soon to come upon the southern kingdom "because they have forsaken me" (verse 25). Wrath like fire would be poured out upon Judah and it would not be quenched until it had accomplished its work. Josiah would be spared all of the troubles that were to come because he loved God and sought His will.

When Huldah's prophetic word was brought to the king he called a great convocation at the Temple. The whole populace out of Judah and Jerusalem was gathered to hear the reading of Jehovah's Word. This Word was "the book of the covenant" because it told about Jehovah's agreement with His people and their pledge to serve the one true God. The covenant which Jehovah entered into with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was renewed and the king caused the people "to stand to it". Josiah remained true to Jehovah throughout his life-time.

The original details of the Passover are recorded in Exodus, chapter 12. This book must have been a part of the "book" discovered by Hilkiah because Josiah was careful to keep the feast just as it was written".¹ Once more the priests were respected leaders among the Hebrews. They were to serve according to their courses and they were to be careful to follow God's Word in all matters. The king provided thirty thousand lambs and kids for this passover. In addition to these, the princes brought in hundreds of other animals for "passover-offerings". The Passover animals were killed. Their blood was properly applied. The animals were "roasted" according to the original directions. All of the congregation shared in this wonderful memorial of the day when Israel became a free people. After all of the people were served in respect to the Passover, the priests and Levites served themselves. The priests and Levites also attended the Passover ritual in behalf of the musicians and the gate-keepers.

¹Spence, H. D. M., *The Pulpit Commentary*, II Chronicles, p. 428

Concerning this celebration the historian observed that “there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet” (verse 18). It was a religious exercise long remembered among the Hebrew people. “No king of Israel ever kept such a passover as Josiah kept” (verse 18).

The city of Carchemish was on the Euphrates River far to the north of Canaan (about three hundred and seventy five miles from Jerusalem). Neco came up out of Egypt to go to war against Babylon in the regions far to the north and east. Josiah thought he had a responsibility with regard to these eastern allies, so he attempted to intercept the king of Egypt. Neco tried to move along the coastal plain and through the valley of Megiddo near Mount Carmel without any delay in relation to Josiah or Judah. The battlefield of Megiddo is one of the world’s most famous military arenas. The “Armageddon” of Revelation is named after this well known plain resulting from a break in the Lebanon mountain chain near Mount Carmel. Neco claimed that God had sent him on his mission and said that if Josiah would fight against him, Josiah would be “meddling with God”. Josiah’s action here was ill-advised. He was mortally wounded in the battle. His reformation ended with his untimely death. He was accorded a very honorable burial and all of his people deeply mourned his departure. Josiah died in 609 B.C. Jeremiah, the prophet, began his ministry about 626 B.C. and was able to share many of the joys the people knew under Josiah’s good reign. Jeremiah was renowned for his “lamentations” in which “the weeping prophet” poured out his sorrow for his people.

18. THE REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ (36:1-3)

TEXT

Chapter 36:1. Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father’s stead in Jerusalem. 2. Joahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. 3. And the king of Egypt deposed him at Jerusalem, and fined the

land a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 36:1. Josiah's son Jehoahaz was selected as the new king. 2. He was twenty-three years old when he began to reign, but lasted only three months. 3. Then he was deposed by the king of Egypt, who demanded an annual tribute from Judah of \$250,000.

COMMENTARY

Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, was put on Judah's throne during the crisis of Josiah's death. His name meant "Jehovah hath grasped", or "He has taken hold of me". The Egyptians asserted power over Jerusalem and took Jehoahaz (Joahaz) captive into Egypt. Eliakim (Jehoiakim) was Jehoahaz' brother. After Jehoahaz had reigned only three months, the Egyptians put Eliakim on the throne.

19. THE REIGN OF ELIAKIM (JEHOIAKIM) (36:4-8)

TEXT

Chapter 36:4. And the king of Egypt made Eliakim his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. And Neco took Joahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt.

5. Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah his God. 6. Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. 7. Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of Jehovah to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon. 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: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 36:4. The king of Egypt now appointed Aliakim, the brother of Jehoahaz, as the new king of Judah. (Eliakim's name was changed to Jehoiakim.) Jehoahaz was taken to Egypt as a prisoner.

5. Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years, in Jerusalem; but his reign was an evil one. 6. Finally Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon conquered Jerusalem, and took away the king in chains to Babylon. 7. Nebuchadnezzar also took some of the golden bowls and other items from the Temple, placing them in his own temple in Babylon. 8. The rest of the deeds of Jehoiakim, and all the evil he did, are written in The Annals of the Kings of Judah; and his son Jehoiachin became the new king.

COMMENTARY

Jehoiakim became king at the age of twenty-five and ruled uneasily through eleven difficult years. In his time Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians came and took him captive along with other Hebrews (such as Daniel and his brethren). Jehoiakim made no attempt to serve Jehovah. The Babylonians robbed the Temple of many of its treasures in his time. Judah's light dimmed quickly during Jehoiakim's reign.

20. THE REIGN OF JEHOIACHIN (36:9, 10)

TEXT

Chapter 36:9. Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. 10. And at the return of the year king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of Jehovah, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 36:9. Jehoiachin was eight years old when he

ascended the throne. But he lasted only three months and ten days, and it was an evil reign as far as the Lord was concerned. 10. The following spring he was summoned to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. Many treasures from the Temple were taken away to Babylon at that time, and King Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin's brother Zedekiah as the new king of Judah and Jerusalem.

COMMENTARY

Whether Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin, was eight or eighteen years of age (II Kings 34:8) when he became king, he reigned only three months and served no good purpose while he was on the throne. Once more the Babylonians came "at the return of the year" (in the springtime) and robbed the Temple taking more captives (like those among whom Ezekiel lived). Jehoiachin was deported to Babylon. Jehovah's predictions through Moses in Deuteronomy, chapter 28, were being literally fulfilled.

21. THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH (36:11-17)

TEXT

Chapter 36:11. Zedekiah was twenty and one years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: 12. and he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah his God; he humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of Jehovah. 13. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart against turning unto Jehovah, the God of Israel. 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 Jehovah which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. 15. And Jehovah, 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: 16. but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of Jehovah

arose against his people, till there was no remedy.

17. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or virgin, old man or hoary-headed: he gave them all into his hand.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 37:11. Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king and he reigned eleven years, in Jerusalem. 12. His reign, too, was evil so far as the Lord was concerned, for he refused to take the counsel of Jeremiah the prophet, who gave him messages from the Lord. 13. He rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, even though he had taken an oath of loyalty. Zedekiah was a hard and stubborn man so far as obeying the Lord God of Israel was concerned, for he refused to follow him. 14. All the important people of the nation, including the High Priests, worshiped the heathen idols of the surrounding nations, thus polluting the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. 15. Jehovah the God of their fathers sent his prophets again and again to warn them, for he had compassion on his people and on his Temple. 16. But the people mocked these messengers of God and despised their words, scoffing at the prophets until the anger of the Lord could no longer be restrained, and there was no longer any remedy.

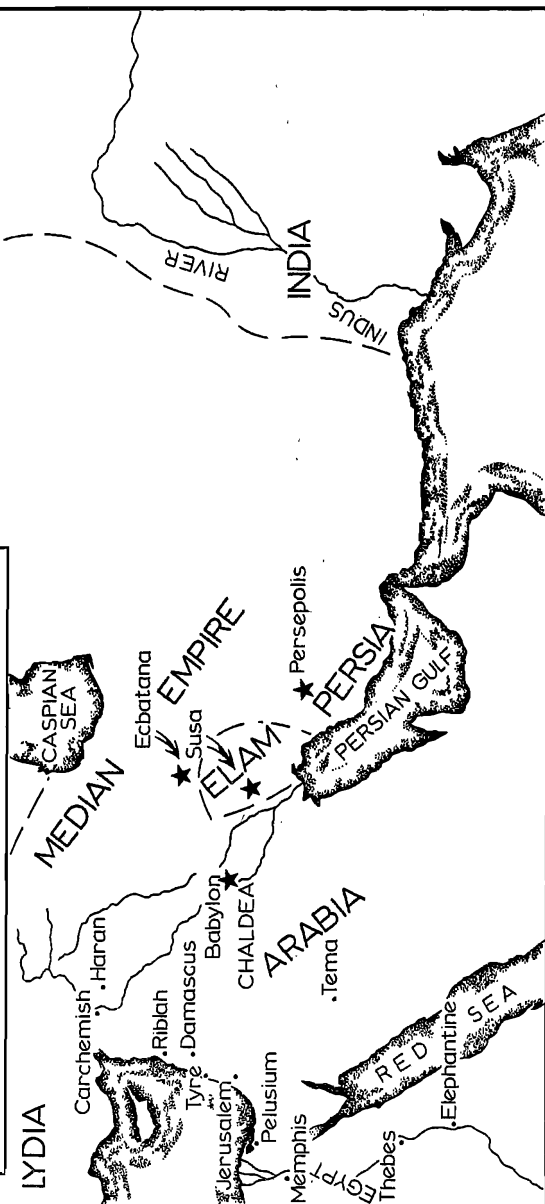
17. Then the Lord brought the king of Babylon against them and killed their young men, even going after them right into the Temple, and had no pity upon them, killing even young girls and old men. The Lord used the king of Babylon to destroy them completely.

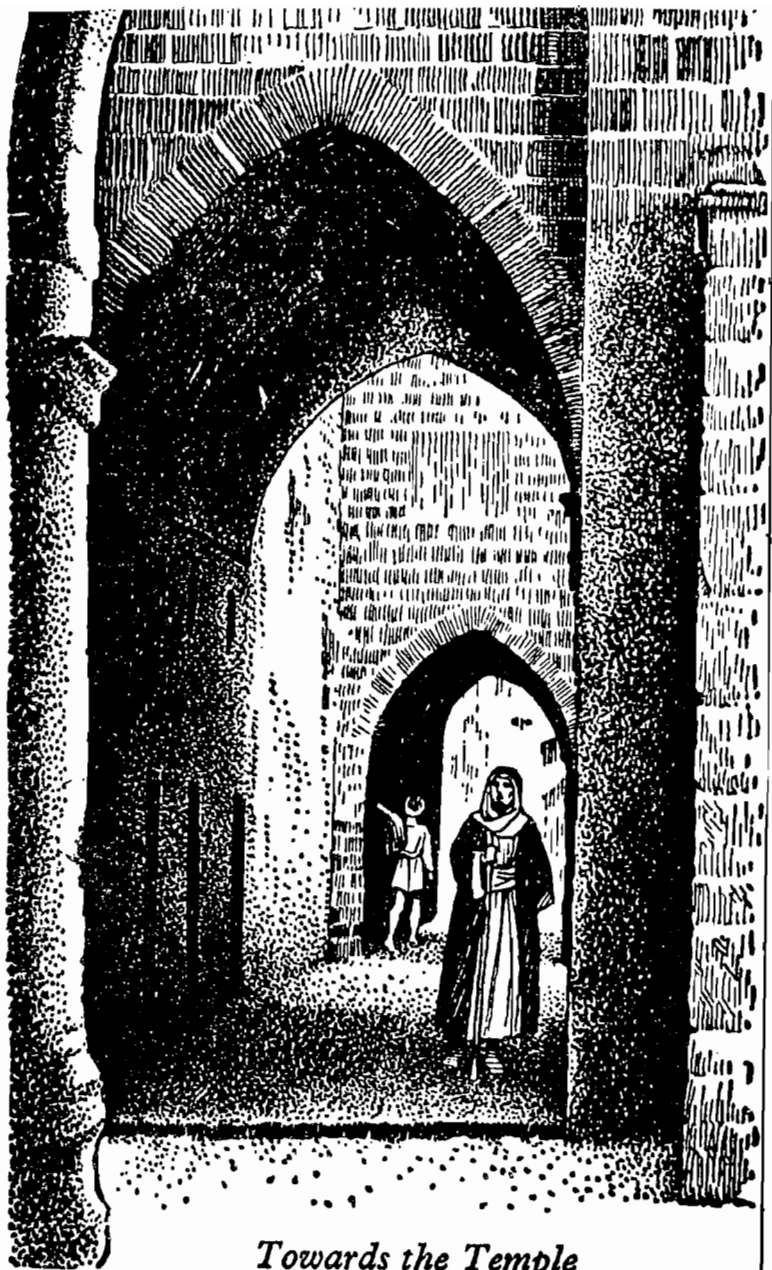
COMMENTARY

Jehoiachin's brother, Zedekiah, was put on the throne in Judah. Whatever he did was subject to Babylonian approval. The twenty-one year old king was to reign over Judah for the last eleven years of her history prior to the Babylonian captivity. Even though the time of judgment was so near,



**PLACES IN THE
BABYLONIAN (625 - 539)
AND PERSIAN (539 - 325)
EMPIRES**





Towards the Temple

Zedekiah made no real effort to do Jehovah's will. Jeremiah worked with the king. He tried to strengthen him in the Lord, but Zedekiah's goodness was anemic. Idolatries increased in Jerusalem and Judah. God's Temple was desecrated even by the priests who should have consecrated it. Prophets, such as Jeremiah, were ridiculed and thrown into dungeons and cisterns. All hope was gone. "There was no remedy" (verse 16).

22. JERUSALEM OVERTHROWN (36:18-21)

TEXT

Chapter 36:18. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of Jehovah, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. 19. And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. 20. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: 21. to fulfill the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths: for as long as it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 36:18. He also took home with him all the items, great and small, used in the Temple, and treasures from both the Temple and the palace, and took with him all the royal princes. 19. Then his army burned the Temple and broke down the walls of Jerusalem and burned all the palaces and destroyed all the valuable Temple utensils. 20. Those who survived were taken away to Babylon as slaves to the king and his sons until the kingdom of Persia conquered Babylon.

21. Thus the word of the Lord spoken through Jeremiah came true, that the land must rest for seventy years to make up for the years when the people refused to observe the Sabbath.

COMMENTARY

Does God mean what he says? Would He really allow the city of David to be destroyed? Certainly He would protect that “building of all buildings”, Solomon’s Temple!¹ It could never be removed! So, many had reasoned. In 587 B.C. the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar came for the third time against Jerusalem. They besieged the city for eighteen dreary months. During those terrible days the Hebrews were reduced to cannibalism to try to keep a remnant alive. Finally, in desperation, Zedekiah tried to escape. The Babylonians captured him and took him to Riblah far to the north on the Orontes River. There they killed his sons in his presence, gouged out the king’s eyes and led him to Babylon. Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard for Babylon, was specifically assigned the detail of the destruction of the Temple. When they had carried out everything of value in that marvelous building, they burnt the Temple. Jerusalem was left in complete desolation. It was now ready for the jakals, owls, and scorpions of the desert. Many Hebrews died in the siege of Jerusalem. Others of them died at the hands of the Babylonians. A remnant was taken captive and deported to Babylon a thousand miles to the east by way of Damascus and Haran and the Euphrates River. Seventy years were to be spent in this captivity to compensate for the Sabbatical years which God’s people had neglected to keep. For a period of five hundred years the Hebrews disregarded the seventh year. Through many of those years they also treated the Sabbath day as if it were a common day. Jeremiah had predicted that the captivity would extend through seventy years (Jeremiah 29:10). The writer of Chronicles knew that the Persian empire would incorporate and follow the Babylonian empire. So the Hebrews were taken captive by Babylon and those who were born in captivity were given their freedom by Persia.

¹Clarke, Adam, *A Commentary and Critical Notes*, Vol. II, p. 708

23. THE EDICT OF CYRUS (36:22, 23)

TEXT

Chapter 36:22. Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 23. "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, 'All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all his people. Jehovah his God be with him, and let him go up.' "

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 36:22, 23. But in the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to make this proclamation throughout his kingdom, putting it into writing: "All the kingdoms of the earth have been given to me by the Lord God of heaven, and he has instructed me to build him a Temple in Jerusalem, in the land of Judah. All among you who are the Lord's people, return to Israel for this task, and the Lord be with you." This also fulfilled the prediction of Jeremiah the prophet.

COMMENTARY

Isaiah had predicted that Cyrus, king of Persia, would be a deliverer for the Hebrew people (Isaiah 44:28). Two hundred years before Cyrus appeared he was named by Isaiah as a shepherd for Jehovah. In the year 536 B.C. Cyrus came upon the stage of world history.¹ He was a shepherd king. His origin is obscure. All of the evidence in God's Word points to Cyrus' coming as an act of God. Daniel continued until the third year of the reign of Cyrus (Daniel 10:1). Daniel could very well have been Jehovah's agent who acquainted Cyrus with God's purpose for His people. The seventy years were fulfilled. The time had

¹Grosvenor, Melville, B., *Everyday Life in Bible Times*, pp. 278-286

Spence, H. D. M., *The Pulpit Commentary*, II Chronicles, p. 440

come for the Hebrews to be released. Cyrus published his decree and all of the Hebrews who desired to do so were free to go back to Palestine to build Jehovah's House. Ezra and Nehemiah tell how fifty thousand Jews (most likely a name given in derision of Judah) came back under the leadership of the Davidic prince, Zerubbabel and the priest, Jeshua, and how they finished Zerubbabel's Temple (the second Temple) about 516 B.C.¹

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

LESSON TWENTY-FOUR 34-36

986. How old was Josiah when he became king?
987. Why refer to David as Josiah's father?
988. Describe Josiah's reformation.
989. Explain the reference to the house of the priests.
990. How far to the north did Josiah's reform reach?
991. What were the Asherim?
992. According to 34:8 what very important project did Josiah undertake?
993. Carefully identify Hilkiah.
994. Who contributed to Josiah's program?
995. What kind of materials had to be provided?
996. Which of the tribes had special oversight of the work?
997. Describe the remarkable discovery made by Hilkiah.
998. Who was Shaphan?
999. Why did Josiah tear his garments?
1000. Who was Huldah?
1001. Concerning Jerusalem, what does Jehovah intend to do?
1002. How will Jehovah deal with Josiah?
1003. Explain the phrase, "to be gathered to one's fathers".
1004. For what purpose was a meeting called at the Temple?
1005. How long did Josiah serve Jehovah?

¹Cook, F. C., *The Bible Commentary*, I Samuel-Esther, pp. 432-433

1006. When was the passover kept by Josiah? Relate to the record in Exodus.
1007. Where was the ark to be housed?
1008. How would a priest sanctify himself?
1009. Who supplied the materials for the great passover?
1010. How was the passover lamb actually prepared?
1011. What is a caldron?
1012. Explain the nature of the ministry of the sons of Asaph.
1013. Relate the feast of unleavened bread to the passover.
1014. How is this passover compared with other passovers?
1015. Who was Neco?
1016. Carefully locate Carchemish.
1017. Locate Megiddo.
1018. How did Josiah go into battle?
1019. Who is this Jeremiah of 35:25?
1020. Who followed Josiah to the throne?
1021. What finally happened to Joahaz?
1022. Who was Jehoiakim and what finally happened to him?
1023. Who followed Jehoiakim to the throne and what happened to this king?
1024. Name Judah's last king.
1025. What was the nature of the oath which Nebuchadnezzar required of Judah's last king?
1026. Describe religion in Jerusalem at this time.
1027. Explain the attitude of the people toward the prophets.
1028. Who were the Chaldeans?
1029. What happened to the Temple?
1030. Describe the overthrow of Jerusalem.
1031. Name the empire that was to follow Babylon in world leadership.
1032. How long did the Babylon captivity last?
1033. How did this captivity relate to the sabbaths?

1034. What was the content of the declaration made by Cyrus, King of Persia?
1035. How did this decree affect the Hebrew people?
1036. What is the date of Cyrus' decree?

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