

# 1 KINGS

*The Book of 1 Kings opens with Israel rising to the pinnacle of power, wealth, and prominence during the administration of its third king, Solomon. The first 11 chapters describe Solomon's legendary wisdom and architectural achievements. In sad contrast, the last 11 chapters detail the "beginning of the end" of all Solomon had built. The book closes with the people of the covenant—both north (Israel) and south (Judah)—wandering far from the God of the covenant.*

Focus	One Nation Becomes Two											
Divisions	Solomon: Third King of Israel		Solomon's Temple Built and Dedicated		Solomon's Fame, Fortune, and Failure		The Kingdom Divides: Israel and Judah		Elijah: God's Spokesman in the Days of Ahab		Ahab's Final Days as King in Israel	
	1	4	5	8	9	11	12	16	17	19	20	22
Topics	The King with a Divided Heart					The Divided Kingdom He Left Behind						
	Dedication					Disruption						
Place	Jerusalem					Northern Kingdom: Israel Southern Kingdom: Judah						
Time	About 130 Years											

# Solomon: Third King of Israel

**I** Wednesday  
April

*1 Kings 1-4*  
*Heart of the Passage:*  
*1 Kings 2:1-4, 3:3-15*



**Overview:** King David's advanced years and restricted activity create a leadership vacuum that Adonijah seeks to exploit by proclaiming himself king. Though he enjoys support from Joab the general and Abiathar the priest, Adonijah is opposed by Nathan, Zadok, and others from David's administration. God had previously made it

clear (and David had privately acknowledged) that Solomon was His choice to succeed David. Now the time has come to make that declaration public and official. Solomon's anointing as the third king in Israel spells the beginning of the end for Adonijah's conspiracy. But while Solomon's position is secure, his need is great for godly wisdom to rule the kingdom—a request which God is only too willing to grant. And along with that wisdom, God provides the blessings Solomon could have requested but didn't: riches, victory, and honor.

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
Solomon's Opposition	Solomon's Retribution	Solomon's Request	Solomon's Organization
Receiving the throne		Ruling the Nation	

*Money won't buy happiness, but it will pay the salaries of a large research staff to study the problem.*



**Your Daily Walk:** How would you respond if God appeared to you as He did to Solomon and extended a blank check invitation: "Ask what I shall give thee" (3:5)? Be honest! Could you resist the urge to ask for riches, power, or fame? Perhaps you can identify with the father who joked, "We have something at our house money can't buy: poverty!" Is there really something in this world more lasting and important than financial success? Do you place wisdom over wealth in your priorities?

Solomon's response to God's offer was exemplary. First, he recognized his need, saying "I am but a little child" (3:7). Next, he recognized his responsibility as king. And finally, he recognized his resource—the wisdom of God. You can do the same! Turn to James 1:5 and pray that verse back to God as the expression of your need for wisdom and as your desire to put God's wisdom to work in one of your responsibilities today.



**Insight:** Following in His Father's Footsteps  
David became known as "the sweet singer of Israel" for his skill in composing half the psalms in Israel's hymnbook. But Solomon was not far behind. According to 4:32, he composed more than a thousand songs himself.

# Solomon's Temple Built and Dedicated

Thursday

April

2



**Overview:** Today's reading features the realization of David's dream to build a house for God, a plan God said would be carried out by David's son (5:5; 2 Samuel 7:12-13). Solomon enlists the help of his father's friend Hiram, king of Tyre, to provide the cedar and fir lumber for the temple and royal palace. With keen organizational skill, Solomon sets the conscripted laborers to work and seeks out a master craftsman to do the intricate decorations. Though David's planning was inspired by the Spirit of God (1 Chronicles 28:11-12), the exact dimensions and details of the temple are not recorded in Scripture. However, the general pattern of the tabernacle and its court is followed. In his address to the people at the dedication of the temple, Solomon offers a majestic prayer to God with the oft-repeated refrain, "Then hear thou in heaven . . . and forgive" (8:30, 34, 36, 39, 49-50).

1 Kings 5-8

Heart of the Passage:

1 Kings 6:1-14; 8:12-61

Chapter 5	Chapter 6	Chapter 7	Chapter 8
Preparation for the Temple	Dimensions of the Temple	Decoration of the Temple	Dedication of the Temple
Construction		Consecration	



**Your Daily Walk:** English clergyman J. B. Phillips wrote a book entitled *Your God Is Too Small*, in which he accused Christians of cutting the infinite God revealed in Scripture down to puny human dimensions. While giving mental assent to an "infinite" God, we often live like (and pray like) He is weak, finite, and fickle in keeping His promises. Solomon could hardly be accused of doing that! In speaking to God, Solomon said, "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee" (8:27). "The LORD is God, and . . . there is none else" (8:60). "There hath not failed one word of all his good promise" (8:56).

What size is *your* God? Make a list of all the evidences of bigness which describe God in chapter 8 (there are at least a dozen). Then ask yourself this question: "In light of God's bigness, can any of my problems be too big for Him? And what should I do with them right now?"



**Insight:** The Missing Wonder of the Ancient World  
The temple Solomon built in Jerusalem is not listed among the seven wonders of the ancient world, most likely because it was destroyed before Antipater drew up his famous list of architectural marvels in about 375 B.C.

God is an infinite circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.

# Solomon's Fame, Fortune, and Failure

3 Friday  
April

1 Kings 9-11

Heart of the Passage:

1 Kings 9:1-9; 11:1-13



**Overview:** A fitting epitaph over Solomon's life might read, "The wise king who acted foolishly." Solomon's spreading fame and mushrooming wealth begin to fill his heart with pride. His wholehearted devotion to God is replaced by a growing love for foreign wives (of whom he will eventually take more than a thousand). At first

Solomon only tolerates the presence of pagan deities; later he accepts them; finally he worships them, while the one true God is forsaken and forgotten. But while Solomon ignores God, God is still very much interested in Solomon. He reminds the wayward king of His covenant with David and declares that, because of Solomon's idolatry, the kingdom will be torn apart, leaving only two tribes for his son.

Chapter 9	Chapter 10	Chapter 11
God's Reminder to Solomon	God's Reward to Solomon	God's Rebuke to Solomon
Warning	Blessing	Chastening

The Christian is strong or weak, depending upon how closely he has cultivated the knowledge of God.



**Your Daily Walk:** Fellowship with God is a lot like electricity. It is a moment-by-moment phenomenon. And when you are enjoying it, you and others around you will know it.

Fellowship depends on constant contact with the Source of power. If something interrupts the connection, the flow of power ceases because the power is not in the receptor but in the Source. Spiritually, the severing of fellowship might not be immediately obvious, but the vitality soon wanes because the power flow has stopped. That is why Scripture warns, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Check up on your own personal fellowship with God. Are you giving God a chance to speak to you daily through His Word? Are you regularly responding to Him in prayer? Are you dealing promptly with sin in your life? Are you filling your thought life with meditation upon His actions and attributes? Why not fellowship with your heavenly Father right now.



**Insight:** Taking to the Sea

Solomon was the first of Israel's kings to create a merchant navy, a refinery fleet which brought smelted copper from the colonial mines of the Phoenicians in Sardinia and Spain. The copper was used in smelting bronze and in the building of Solomon's temple, among other structures.

# The Kingdom Divides: Israel and Judah

Sat.–Sun.

April

4/5



**Overview:** Supporting Solomon in the manner to which he is accustomed puts a heavy burden of taxation on the nation Israel. After Solomon's death, the people demand relief from their crushing taxes. Rehoboam, Solomon's headstrong son and successor, rejects the wise counsel of his father's advisors to follow the foolish advice of his younger associates. Rather than lessen the burden, he multiplies it ten times over! The result is predictable: rebellion, civil war, and a divided kingdom. Only two of the twelve tribes remain true to Rehoboam. The rest form a new nation under the leadership of Jeroboam, who sets up his own system of worship in the north, and in the process sets the pattern for wicked rule which will characterize all his successors.

*1 Kings 12–16*

*Heart of the Passage:*

*1 Kings 12*

Chapter 12	Chapter 13	Chapter 14	Chapters 15–16
Rehoboam's Revolt	Jeroboam's Religion	Two Nations at War	Two Nations in Turmoil
Division		Contention	Confusion



**Your Daily Walk:** “Like father, like son” is a familiar and sometimes painfully accurate adage. Do you want to see how a son will turn out? Carefully study the life of his father, and more often than not you'll have your answer. Similarly, if you are curious to know what a girl will be like in 20 years, look at her mother now.

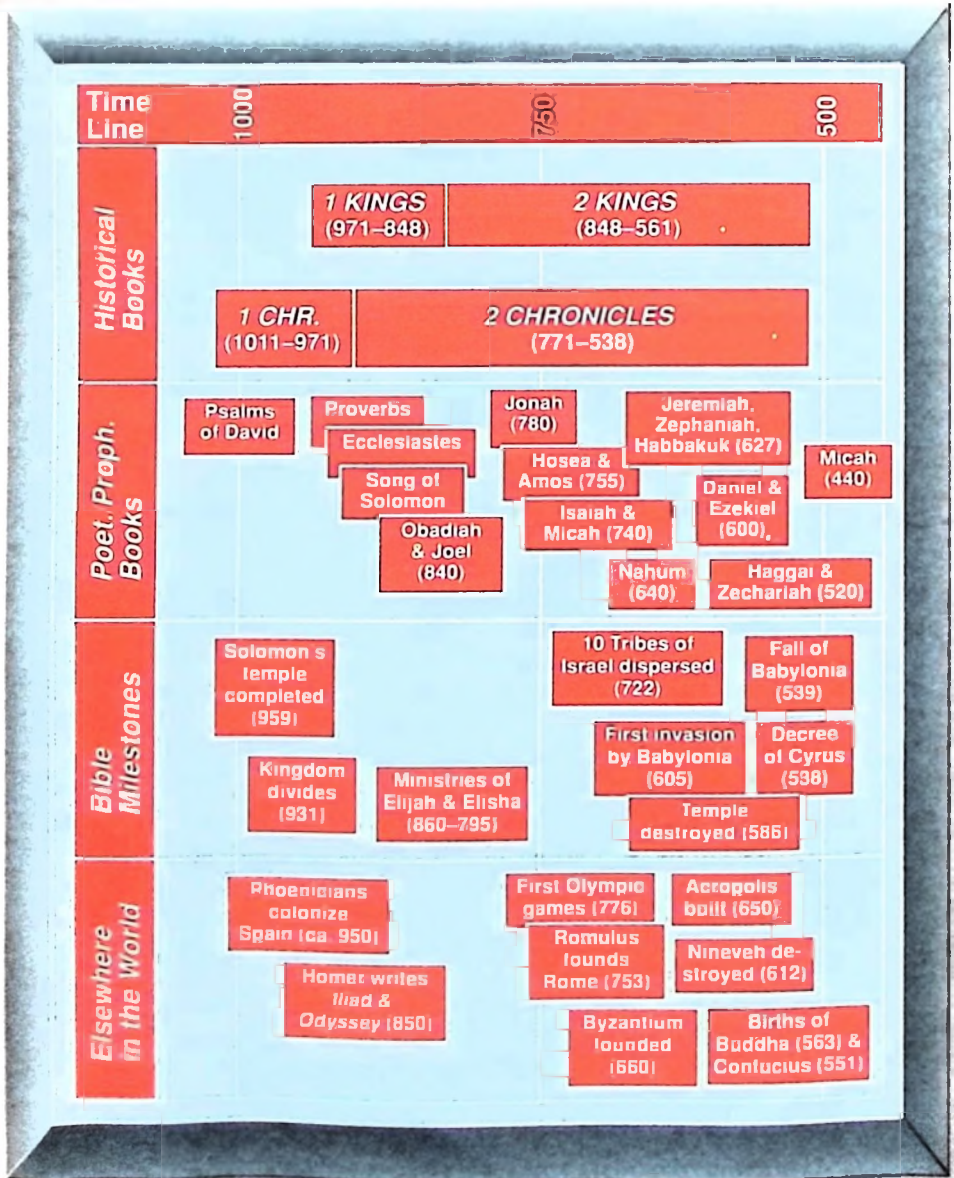
The influence of parents on their children is hard to overestimate. Children are born mimics, and they will imitate others around them (especially their parents) almost from birth. Proper *exhortation* in the lives of children is important, but have you overlooked the importance of proper *example*? Hold up a spiritual mirror and examine your life right now. Make a list of some of the things you like and don't like—about what you see. Now ask yourself this penetrating question: “If my children grow up to follow in my footsteps, will I be pleased where those footsteps lead?” If you're not satisfied with the answer, the time for a mid-course correction is now.

*Children learn best from example; the trouble is, they don't know a good example from a bad one.*



**Insight:** The Long and Short of It  
During the 41-year reign of Asa, the first good king in the southern kingdom of Judah, no fewer than seven different men occupied the throne of Israel in the north. One of them, Zimri, had the dubious distinction of being a king for a total of only seven days.

# Placing the Books of 1 Kings– 2 Chronicles



# Elijah: God's Spokesman

Monday

April

6



**Overview:** Elijah appears on the center stage of Israel's history without introduction. Acting as God's prophetic mouthpiece, he announces to wicked Ahab that Israel will have no more rain except by the prophet's word.

Then Elijah leaves Israel for three years, moving at God's direction first east to the brook

Cherith, then north to the city of Zarephath. In every location God provides for his needs. As the drought intensifies, Elijah returns to challenge Ahab, and the prophets of Baal lose both their jobs and their lives. But when an enraged Queen Jezebel seeks his life, Elijah retreats to the wilderness exhausted, discouraged, and full of self-pity. There God strengthens him, restores him, and sends him forth to minister anew.

*1 Kings 17-19*

*Heart of the Passage:*

*1 Kings 18:20-19:21*

Chapter 17	Chapter 18	Chapter 19
Elijah Faces the King	Elijah Slays the Prophets	Elijah Flees from the Queen
Drought	Downpour	Discouragement



**Your Daily Walk:** Elijah was a fearless man of faith. He stood toe-to-toe with the most powerful man in Israel and boldly announced God's judgment of drought. Three years later he delivered God's challenge to all those who worshiped Baal, called down fire from heaven, and personally "dispatched" the prophets of Baal!

Then suddenly, after the dramatic and exhilarating moment of his greatest achievement for God, Elijah fell victim to the "Lone Ranger" mentality: "I, even I only, am left" (19:10, 14). Strength gave way to self-pity, doubt replaced determination, and the "fearless man of faith" began to falter. Have you faced a similar temptation in your own life, thinking you are the only servant of God in your neighborhood, office, or school (you may be!) and feeling sorry for yourself because of it? Then write out this thought and carry it with you today: "God is never without a witness, and with God I am never alone."

*What  
poison is  
to food,  
self-pity  
is to life.*



**Insight:** Divine Therapy for Human Depression

It should not be surprising that God, who created humans, knows best how to treat their emotional distress and spiritual anguish. For the distraught Elijah, God prescribed rest, food, exercise, solitude, and a job to do—in that order. That's a pretty good prescription for tackling depression in our age as well!

# Ahab's Final Days as Israel's King

7

Tuesday

April

1 Kings 20–22

Heart of the Passage:

1 Kings 21



**Overview:** Today you finish reading the Book of 1 Kings. But the division between 1 and 2

Kings is only literary, not historical. Tomorrow the story will continue as smoothly as if there had been no book division at all (which, in fact, was the case in the original Hebrew). Although God's mercy and patience are great toward Ahab, the rebellious

king of Israel simply refuses to follow God. Yet, Ahab's disobedience pales by comparison with the wickedness of his wife Jezebel. In cruel treachery, she engineers the murder of Naboth so that Ahab can seize his vineyard. At last, Ahab reaps what for so long he has sown.

Chapter 20	Chapter 21	Chapter 22
Ahab's Winning Battle with Syria	Ahab's Winning Battle with Naboth	Ahab's Losing Battle with Death
Victories of Ahab	Vineyard of Naboth	Verdict of God

*God not only sees all men, He sees through them.*



**Your Daily Walk:** You can outsmart your friends; you can outsmart your family; you can outsmart your enemies; and sometimes you can even outsmart yourself. But you can never outsmart God.

Consider the life of Ahab. Warned by a prophet of God not to go into battle, Ahab gambled with his life—and lost. He concluded that a clever battlefield disguise would make it impossible for anyone to recognize him. Even God. And the result? “A certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness” (22:34). A lucky shot . . . or a divine bull's-eye?

Trying to outsmart God has never been a wise move. Even the Psalmist David learned that, in the game of hide-and-seek, God always wins (Psalm 139:7-12). But if you find yourself playing the game, the choice is yours: Remove the disguise you've been hiding behind and come to God in humble repentance . . . or wait for God Himself to unmask you. To his sorrow Ahab selected the second course. Tell God right now which path you choose.



**Insight:** An Unjust Act of Justice (21:1-16)

Naboth's cruel and unjust murder, masterminded by Queen Jezebel, was nonetheless carried out “justly.” Cursing the king was a capital offense (Exodus 22:28), a crime that had to be confirmed by at least two witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15). Even in her wicked deed, Jezebel followed the letter of the law.



# 2 KINGS

*In 1 Kings, one nation becomes two; in 2 Kings, two nations become none. Nineteen consecutive evil kings consistently lead Israel downhill. Even the miracle-working ministry of Elisha cannot stop the nation's slide. Meanwhile to the south, the occasional good king in Judah is powerless to reform the evils of his many bad predecessors. The "tale of two nations" ends disastrously: Israel is dispersed by Assyria (chapters 1–17); Judah is marched off to exile in Babylon (chapters 18–25).*

FOCUS	Two Nations Become None													
DIVISIONS	Reign of Jehoram			Record of Elisha		Revenge of Jehu and Reforms of Joash			Ruin of Israel			Reforms of Hezekiah Ruin of Judah		
	1	3	4	8	9	12	13	17	18	20	21	25		
TOPICS	Elisha						Kings and Queens of Israel and Judah							
	Downfall of Israel						Downfall of Judah							
PLACE	Israel and Judah						Judah							
TIME	About 130 Years						About 155 Years							

# Reign of Jehoram

# 8

Wednesday

April

2 Kings 1-3

Heart of the Passage:

2 Kings 2



**Overview:** While 1 Kings centers around the ministry of Elijah, 2 Kings focuses on the ministry of Elisha. After Elijah makes his last prophetic utterance—the prediction of Ahaziah’s death for turning to lifeless idols rather than to the living God—he is taken up to heaven in a whirl-

wind, leaving his understudy Elisha to continue the prophetic work of calling the nation back to God. With the mantle of Elijah on his shoulders and a double portion of Elijah’s spirit to fortify him, Elisha wastes no time beginning his prophetic and miraculous ministry. He predicts that God will fill the valleys of Edom with water, enabling King Jehoram to defeat the forces of Moab and turn back the enemy threat.

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3
Fire from Heaven	Whirlwind from Heaven	Water from Heaven
Elijah’s Ministry Ends . . . and Elisha’s Ministry Begins		

Though you may ask God to do something for you, He generally wants to do something in you.



**Your Daily Walk:** If a miracle is defined as “something so difficult that only God can do it,” what area of your life needs a miracle most? And how does it compare with these “miracle stories”?

The Lord said to Abraham, “Is any thing too hard for the LORD?” (Genesis 18:14). And Abraham fathered Isaac at age 100.

Jeremiah affirmed, “Nothing [is] too hard for thee” (Jeremiah 32:17). And God delivered His people from exile.

The angel told Mary, “For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37). And a virgin gave birth to the Savior.

When Elisha instructed Jehoram to dig trenches because God was going to fill them with water in spite of a drought, Elisha assured the king, “This is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD” (2 Kings 3:18). The next morning, the waters came.

What challenge in your life seems too big for anyone but God? Write your name by one of the stories above as your testimony of confidence in God’s ability to do the impossible in your life as well.



**Insight:** Going to School with the Prophets

The “sons of the prophets” (1 Kings 20:35; 2 Kings 2:3; 5:22) were probably young men studying the law and the history of Israel in order to teach the people. Samuel may have set up these schools as part of his circuit-riding ministry (1 Samuel 7:15-17).

# Record of Elisha

Thursday

April

9



**Overview:** Elisha, the great miracle worker of God, performs no fewer than eight miracles in the space of today's section: provides an "oil well" for a destitute widow, gives new life for a dead boy, makes poisoned stew harmless, multiplies bread for a hungry crowd, cures a leprous army captain, makes an ax head defy the law of gravity, reads the mind of an enemy king, opens the eyes of a servant to see the angels of God, and closes the eyes of the enemy to the same spectacle. In each case, God's power at work in the *individual* shows His readiness to do the same in the *nation* He has called His own.

2 Kings 4-8  
Heart of the Passage:  
2 Kings 4-6

Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapters 6-8
Elisha and the Shunammite Woman	Elisha and the Syrian Captain	Elisha and the Syrian King
Provision	Purification	Protection



**Your Daily Walk:** If you wear glasses, then you're probably familiar with the term *myopia*. Myopia, simply defined, is improper focus. Images appear fuzzy or blurred because the eye is incapable of bringing the light to a sharp focus. Physical myopia can be detected and corrected quite easily.

But there is a similar visual problem in the spiritual realm. Let's call it "spiritual myopia." The symptoms: clear focus when it comes to identifying problems, but great difficulty in focusing on the reservoir of power and protection which God has provided to meet those problems head-on. Spiritual myopia is the condition Elisha's servant suffered from when he focused on the *problem* (6:15) but not the *provision* (6:17). He saw only a horde of Syrians, while Elisha saw the host of angels.

On a 3x5 card, draw a small eye chart (similar to what you would find in an ophthalmologist's office) using the words of 2 Kings 6:16 and place it on your mirror or mantel. Let it remind you often of the importance of proper spiritual focus in your walk with God.



**Insight:** How to Fly Off the Handle

In Biblical times the iron head of an ax was attached to the handle by thongs. Thus, it was common for the head to fly off the handle whenever the thongs broke or slipped. Accidents with axes were so common that a special provision was included in the law of Moses to handle such cases (Deuteronomy 19:1-6).

*It is not the darkness that blocks your vision so much as what is between you and God.*

# Jehu's Revenge, Joash's Reform

# 10

Friday

April

2 Kings 9-12

Heart of the Passage:

2 Kings 9-10



**Overview:** Anointed king over Israel at Elisha's direction, Jehu wastes no time carrying out his mission. He heads straight for the city of Jezreel, where Jehoram is recuperating from his battle wounds. There he slays the ruling heir of Ahab's house in the vineyard of Naboth for which Ahab had committed murder a generation before!

But Jehu is far from finished. In addition, he kills Ahaziah, king of Judah (who was making an untimely visit to Jehoram), Jezebel (Jehoram's wicked mother-in-law), and finally the entire surviving family of Ahab, thus fulfilling God's sentence of death. But while Jehu is executing judgment in Israel, a different and potentially more dangerous execution is taking place in Judah. Athaliah, Ahab's daughter and the mother of Ahaziah, seizes the throne and seeks to liquidate the rest of the royal line. The sole surviving heir, Joash, grows up to be Judah's youngest monarch and one of Judah's greatest reformers.

Chapter 9	Chapter 10	Chapter 11	Chapter 12
Jehu Slays Two Kings	Jehu Slays Ahab's House	Athaliah Slays Her Own House	Joash Repairs God's House
Jehu's Ministry of Judgment			Joash's Ministry of Reform

*Get on fire for God, and men will watch you burn.*



**Your Daily Walk:** Whatever else you can say about Jehu (and you can say plenty!), his single-minded attention to the task God had given him is exemplary. Jehu was a man with a divine calling, a man with a mission, who lost no time in carrying it out. He brought to fulfillment the prophecy of Elijah against the house of Ahab (1 Kings 21:19-24) and completely rid Israel of the heathen worship of Baal for a time. God approved of Jehu's ministry and rewarded him for it.

How do you tackle the assignment God has set before you? Carelessly? Halfheartedly? Or with the zeal of a Jehu? Whether you are a student or a parent, a minister or an office worker, you can put your heart into your work—if the God of Jehu is in your heart.



**Insight:** Judgment Can Be Murder  
Jehu was anointed as God's instrument for the task of exterminating the house of Ahab, and along with it, the worship of Baal. Baalism was so viciously cruel that only a person of Jehu's relentlessness could have done the job. By the end, Jehu had indeed wiped out the entire house of Ahab and had thoroughly purged the nation of Baal worshippers.

# Ruin of Israel

Sat.–Sun.

April 11/12



**Overview:** On his deathbed, Elisha offers King Joash of Israel the opportunity to rout utterly his Syrian enemy. But the king's lack of faith results in something far short of complete victory, and presents a picture of the problem that has plagued Israel's kings for centuries.

The alliance between Israel and Judah, secured under Jehoshaphat, now gives way to constant warfare. Anarchy and apostasy rip the land of Israel as first one king after another is assassinated. When Israel and Syria form an alliance against Judah, Ahaz (king of Judah) buys the help of Assyria. But the downward spiral continues, and soon the 10 tribes in the north are deported to the remotest corners of the Assyrian empire, while other conquered peoples are imported to fill the vacuum.

*2 Kings 13–17*  
*Heart of the Passage:*  
*2 Kings 13, 17*

Chapter 13	Chapter 14	Chapter 15	Chapters 16–17
Elisha Dies	Jeroboam II Reigns	Anarchy Reigns	Assyria Prevails
Decline in Israel		Dispersion of Israel	



**Your Daily Walk:** Historians and political scientists have developed elaborate explanations for the conquest of Israel, and later of Judah. “These were small countries,” they say, “in the buffer zone between large, powerful neighbors to the south (Egypt) and north (Assyria and Babylonia).” But the Bible states that the conquest and exile were God’s judgment because of the sin of His people. Israel forsook the Lord, turned to idols, and ignored the repeated message of God’s prophets to “shape up or ship out.” They had no one to blame but themselves.

That Biblical principle remains in force today for nations as well as individuals, Christians as well as unbelievers. God will deal with an individual, with a family, or with a nation according to the unchanging principle that “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). By the way, when was the last time you “sowed” a word for God by means of a brief phone call or letter to one of your elected officials? If an issue is crucial, and God has spoken in His Word concerning it, can you afford to remain silent?

*The power of man can never reverse the sentence of God.*



**Insight:** It's a Long Way to Captivity

In the Assyrian dispersion, many Israelites were resettled in northern Mesopotamia (more than 400 miles away) and others in the area of the Medes (a full 1,000 miles from Samaria).

# Reforms of Hezekiah

**13** Monday  
April

2 Kings 18-21

Heart of the Passage:

2 Kings 18, 20



**Overview:** With the captivity and deportation of Israel, the curtain drops on the northern 10 tribes. But what of their countrymen in the south? Will they learn from Israel's calamity and turn back to God? At this crucial juncture, God raises up Hezekiah, who does "that which [is] right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that

David his father did" (18:3). Spiritually, Hezekiah institutes sweeping reforms to bring the nation back to a wholehearted worship of God. Politically, he refuses to pay tribute any longer to Assyria, choosing instead to trust God for protection from reprisal. In answer to his prayer, God decimates the Assyrian army, breaking the back of that once mighty nation. However, by the time of his death, Hezekiah's pride and negligence ensure that Judah's days are numbered.

Chapter 18	Chapter 19	Chapter 20	Chapter 21
Assyria at the Door	Assyria on the Run	Hezekiah on His Deathbed	Manasseh on the Rampage
Hezekiah's National Problems		Hezekiah's Personal Problems	

*People may spurn your appeals, reject your messages, and oppose your arguments, but they are helpless against your prayers.*



**Your Daily Walk:** If you're looking for some help in your prayer life, why not spend some time studying an Old Testament character whose every recorded prayer was answered.

Hezekiah was a man of faith (18:5) and a man of prayer. His first reaction when confronted with a problem was to bring it before the Lord. Whether the problem was 185,000 uninvited Assyrians (19:35) or a painful illness (20:7), Hezekiah took it to the Lord in prayer. And when he prayed, things happened!

Prayer is not a magic formula, but verbal communication with the sovereign God of creation. Examine your own prayer habits. Are they built on a personal relationship with God? Are you strengthening your prayer life with daily exercise? Are you more comfortable talking to God today than you were a year ago? Try this: Every time you get into or out of your car today, spend a few seconds in prayer. You'll find it habit-forming!



**Insight:** Smashing a Pagan Python

Hezekiah's zealous reform included even the destruction of the bronze serpent which Moses had made in the wilderness (Numbers 21:8-9), to which the people were burning incense.

# Ruin of Judah

Tuesday

April

14



**Overview:** Those who do not learn from history are destined to repeat it, and Judah is no exception. Though Israel has been swept away in judgment, the southern kingdom continues its pagan “business as usual.” Good King Josiah makes a last desperate attempt to turn the nation back to God. He locates the long-lost book of the law and institutes sweeping reforms. But though he can impose a change of *actions* on the people, only wholehearted repentance can change the *attitudes* of godlessness and self-indulgence that are the root of the problem. As a result, when Josiah dies, his successors revert to their pagan patterns and practices. At last, God brings down the curtain on the southern kingdom as Babylonian soldiers topple the walls, homes, and temple of once-mighty Jerusalem.

2 Kings 22–25

Heart of the Passage:

2 Kings 22–23

Chapter 22	Chapter 23	Chapter 24	Chapter 25
Recovery of the Law	Reform of the Nation	Siege of Jerusalem	Sack of Jerusalem
Reforms by Josiah		Removal of Nebuchadnezzar	



**Your Daily Walk:** *Think:* What is the most important book in the world to you? Assuming your answer is “the Bible” . . .

*Think:* How many days this month have you spent time in the Bible? Assuming your answer is “at least one” . . .

*Think:* How did you respond to the truth you encountered there? Assuming your answer is an honest one . . .

*Think:* Are you satisfied with your response to that truth? If your answer is anything less than a resounding “yes” . . .

*Reread* 2 Kings 23:2-3. The power of God’s Word to change lives is perhaps nowhere more evident than in those two verses.

The Word pierced where no man-made sword could reach: to the very heart of the king, priests, prophets, and people, turning them back to God. The result: a national spiritual awakening.

God’s Word convicts, but only you can commit yourself to doing God’s will. Is there an area of your life where a response is overdue? *Think.*



**Insight:** The Short and Long and Short and Long of It  
The length of the reigns of the last four kings in Judah is easy to remember once you see the pattern. The sequence is 3 months—11 years—3 months—11 years.

*The degree of our spiritual vigor is in direct proportion to the time we spend in God’s Word.*

# I CHRONICLES

*Recalling the period of Jewish history from 2 Samuel through 2 Kings, the priestly writer of Chronicles focuses on the exciting life and righteous reign of King David (in 1 Chronicles) and the fortunes of the southern kingdom of Judah (2 Chronicles). The first book falls into two parts: Chapters 1–9 trace David’s royal family tree all the way back to Adam; chapters 10–29 detail David’s successful administration as Israel’s second king, showing the importance of proper worship for God’s covenant people.*

<b>Focus</b>	A Priestly View of David's Reign										
<b>Divisions</b>	David's Family Tree		David's Throne and Capital Established		David's Influence and Kingdom Expanded		David's Worship and Kingdom Organized		David's Kingdom Passed On to Solomon		
	1	9	10	16	17	21	22	27	28	29	
<b>Topics</b>	Ancestry		Activity		Anticipation				Advice		
	Royal Roots		Righteous Reign								
<b>Place</b>	United Kingdom of Israel										
<b>Time</b>	Thousands of Years		About 40 Years								



# 1 CHRONICLES

*Recalling the period of Jewish history from 2 Samuel through 2 Kings, the priestly writer of Chronicles focuses on the exciting life and righteous reign of King David (in 1 Chronicles) and the fortunes of the southern kingdom of Judah (2 Chronicles). The first book falls into two parts: Chapters 1–9 trace David’s royal family tree all the way back to Adam; chapters 10–29 detail David’s successful administration as Israel’s second king, showing the importance of proper worship for God’s covenant people.*

Focus	A Priestly View of David's Reign				
Divisions	David's Family Tree	David's Throne and Capital Established	David's Influence and Kingdom Expanded	David's Worship and Kingdom Organized	David's Kingdom Passed On to Solomon
	1	9 10	16 17	21 22	27 28 29
Topics	Ancestry	Activity	Anticipation		Advice
	Royal Roots	Righteous Reign			
Place	United Kingdom of Israel				
Time	Thousands of Years	About 40 Years			

# David's Family Tree

Wednesday

April

15



**Overview:** Chronicles is more than merely a repetition of the books of 2 Samuel through 2 Kings. Though it covers the same period of history, Chronicles approaches the task from an entirely different perspective. It focuses on religious (not political) history, giving special attention to events surrounding the temple (not the palace) and the southern kingdom of Judah (the continuing kingly line of David). Down through the centuries God has been providing a witness for Himself and protecting a people from which would ultimately come the Messiah of Israel—a fact clearly seen in the table of genealogies.

*1 Chronicles 1–9*  
*Heart of the Passage:*  
*1 Chronicles 1*

Chapters 1–3	Chapter 4	Chapters 5–8	Chapter 9
Genealogy from Adam to Exile	National 2 Tribes	National 10 Tribes	Genealogy After the Exile
Historical	National		Levitical



**Your Daily Walk:** Before you write off today's section as a lost cause in your pursuit of excitement in daily Bible reading, look beyond the monotonous repetition of "begat" and "these are the sons of" to see the personalities and events involved. For example:

- How many of the names do you recognize?
- For how many of the characters can you recall at least one fact or story from the Old Testament?
- Who would you say are the five most important people mentioned in these lists? Why did you select those five?
- How many reasons can you think of why God might want to include these chapters in His Word?

The opening chapters of 1 Chronicles give not only the historical roots of God's people, but also the spiritual roots. Can you trace yours? Who are the important people in your spiritual heritage? Which of them are still alive today? Is there a tangible way you could say "thank you" for their role in your spiritual development? You might want to begin a page of "spiritual roots" in the back of your Bible and add to it as your research continues.



**Insight:** Curious Omissions in a Copious List  
Chapters 1–9 may seem like an exhaustive genealogy, but they are not. Careful study reveals several significant omissions, including the family of Eli and the tribes of Zebulun and Dan.

*One live coal may set a whole stack on fire.*

# David's Throne Established

# 16

Thursday

April

1 Chronicles 10–16

Heart of the Passage:

1 Chronicles 11, 13, 15



**Overview:** Think of 1 Chronicles as a sort of “divine commentary” on the Book of 2 Samuel, a second volume covering the action-packed life of King David. With the passing of Saul, the new shepherd-king assumes the throne and promptly establishes his new capital at Jerusalem, “city of peace,” the place around which virtually

the entire history of the nation will revolve. Along with his new capital, David selects a corps of mighty men who will support him during his reign. David next attempts to return the ark of God to its proper place—a task which proves more difficult than anticipated! But when at last the ark safely rests in Jerusalem, David leads the nation in a celebration of praise.

Chapter 10	Chapters 11–12	Chapters 13–15	Chapter 16
Saul's Collapse	David's Companions	David's Confusion	David's Celebration
King of the Covenant		Ark of the Covenant	

*It takes dedicated teachers to produce consecrated pupils.*



**Your Daily Walk:** No man is an island . . . and very few are peninsulas! It is difficult and often dangerous to attempt to stand alone without the support of others who share your convictions and commitments.

Today's reading devotes 78 verses to the naming of David's “mighty men”: his trusted friends, confidants, bodyguards, and counselors—in short, the backbone of his kingly court. Without them, David might never have risen to the greatness which he would later achieve. Even though his role as king was unique in the nation, God never intended David to function as a “solo performer” in the palace.

Perhaps you will never rise to the place of power and prominence of a King David. But everyone can be a “mighty” man or woman in the life of another person. Think about those who exercise leadership over you, such as your minister or boss. 1 Chronicles 11:10 says David's mighty men gave him strong support in his kingdom. Can that be said of you in your support of your pastor? Your boss? What are one or two ways you can do something “mighty” for them this week?



**Insight:** A Thoroughly Anointed King

David's anointing as king over all Israel (11:3) was in fact his third anointing. The first was done privately by Samuel (1 Samuel 16:13), the second publicly as king over Judah (2 Samuel 2:4).

# David's Kingdom Expanded

Friday

April

17



**Overview:** While David enjoys a palace of cedar, the ark of God resides in a mere tent—a fact that prompts David to contemplate a monumental building project. Even the Prophet Nathan encourages David in his God-honoring ambition. But then through the prophet, God delivers a ringing “Thou shalt not” (17:4) and a heartwarming promise of an ongoing dynasty and an eternal kingdom for David’s descendants. However, David, the mighty man of war, must leave the fulfillment of his dream to his son Solomon and concentrate instead on the business of enlarging the kingdom God has entrusted to him.

*1 Chronicles 17–21*  
*Heart of the Passage:*  
*1 Chronicles 17–18*

Chapter 17	Chapters 18–20	Chapter 21
Desire of David's Heart	Defeat of David's Enemies	Deception of David's Mind
Covenant	Conquest	Census



**Your Daily Walk:** Consider the following list of contrasts taken from the lives of a father and son: David and Solomon. David was a man of war; Solomon was a man of peace. David dreamed of building the temple; Solomon erected and dedicated the temple.

David was told by God, “I will not give you what you asked for”; Solomon was told, “I will give you what you did not ask for.” And yet, in spite of the differences in their lives, there is one resounding similarity: Both men glorified God in their lifetimes.

There is something far more painful than being denied a cherished dream or ambition, and that is undertaking the ambition anyway, only to find that God is not in it. Has God set up a red light in your path? And are you ignoring the signal or looking for alternate routes to His glory? Each time you stop for a red light today, commit one of your dreams or goals to God. Where He has put a period, don't put a question mark.



**Insight:** No Cover-up Intended! David's sin with Bathsheba and his subsequent murder of Uriah took place between 20:1 and 20:2. In his effort to focus on themes of true worship and kingship the chronicler was selective in his choice of material. He omitted details of David's private life, not because he wanted to whitewash the past, but because he knew those incidents were already known and recorded.

*You cannot lift your children to a higher plane than the one on which you live yourself.*

# David's Worship and Kingdom Organized

18/19

Sat.–Sun.

April

1 Chronicles 22–27  
Heart of the Passage:  
1 Chronicles 22–23



**Overview:** Though David's desire to build a house for God must wait, nothing keeps him from making preparations. He chooses a most appropriate site (the threshing floor of Ornan), gathers the building materials, charges his son Solomon with the duty of finishing the task, and enlists the support of all the key men in Israel.

Then he outlines the 24 orders of priests, 24 divisions of singers and musicians, gatekeepers, treasurers, and other officeholders who will oversee the military and civil affairs of the nation in its new place of corporate worship.

Chapter 22	Chapters 23–24	Chapter 25	Chapters 26–27
Instructions for Solomon	Levites & Priests	Arrangements for . . . Musicians	Officers
David's Temple Preparations			

Don't handicap your children by making their lives too easy.



**Your Daily Walk:** What are you doing today to help your children accomplish great things for God tomorrow? David is a marvelous example of a farsighted father. The greatness which Solomon would later achieve was in large measure due to the careful planning and provision which David made before his own death. Though Solomon receives the acclaim for building the temple which bears his name, it was David who drew the blueprints, gathered the materials, signed up the workers, and instituted a vigorous public relations program to ensure support for the project. In his heart David envisioned greatness for Solomon that he himself would never achieve, and he did his best to pave the way for it.

What sort of heritage will you leave for your children and even your grandchildren to build upon? Will they someday be able to thank God for your farsightedness in building a library, providing for their education, or instilling a vision for ministry that they can continue after you are gone? Plan a "Project for Future Greatness" and begin it this week.



**Insight:** An Ironic Twist to the Priestly Office  
In chapter 24 the priests were divided into 24 orders or "courses" for service in the temple. They were called "governors of the house of God" (v. 5) and had charge of the sacrifices. Their work was to cease with the coming of Christ, but ironically it was the priests themselves who engineered the crucifixion of Christ (Matthew 27:1, 6, 20, 41).

# David's Kingdom Passed On to Solomon

Monday

April

20



**Overview:** Today's reading forms a fitting conclusion to the life of David, for here he is portrayed in all his wisdom and humility as David the counselor, encourager, exhorter, and worshiper. In sharp contrast to the bitter infighting and civil unrest that characterized David's ascension to the throne, Solomon's ascension is attended by national worship and rejoicing. Even David's death cannot dampen the mood of optimism and thanksgiving the nation feels for the godly leadership they enjoy. The crowning epitaph of David's life is that "he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour" (29:28).

*1 Chronicles 28-29*  
*Heart of the Passage:*  
*1 Chronicles 29:22-30*

Chapter 28					Chapter 29				
David's Sayings . . .					David's Supplication		David's Successor		
1	to Israel	8	9	to Solomon	21	1	19	20	30
The Final Days of David's Reign									



**Your Daily Walk:** The saddest contradiction to the Christian life is all too often the average Christian funeral. While bereavement is a necessary part of any loved one's passing, the Christian has cause for rejoicing when a brother or sister in Christ is finally "absent from the body, and . . . present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). There is hope and comfort in those words that the world knows nothing about.

The one sermon you can be sure everyone important to you will hear is the one that will be preached over your casket. Have you given any thought to the words you want spoken on that occasion? Will those in attendance hear a clear presentation of the Good News of Jesus Christ? Will they find out why you could die fearlessly, knowing it would bring you face to face with your Lord?

Jesus Christ turned every funeral He ever attended into a cause for celebration. The morbid wailing of the mourners would be cut short by the miraculous life-giving touch of the Savior, and the dead would live again. What plans are you making today to ensure that your funeral tells as eloquently as your life that "for me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21)?



**Insight:** David's Building and Loan Association (29:1-9) Before David's death, he had diligently gathered a "temple building fund" of gold and silver from personal and national contributions that would, by modern standards, be valued at several billion dollars.

*Death is only a horizon, and a horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight.*

# 2 CHRONICLES

*The Book of 2 Chronicles spans four centuries of Judah's history from the glory days of Solomon to the conclusion of the Babylonian Exile. Following the death of Solomon, a succession of good and bad kings rises to power. As go the leaders, so go the people, until finally the spiritually bankrupt nation is carried off into captivity. But the final verses of 2 Chronicles sparkle with hope. After 70 years, the Persian King Cyrus decrees the rebuilding of God's house and the return of God's people.*

Focus	A Priestly View of Judah's Demise																	
Divisions	Solomon's Temple Erected		Solomon's Temple Dedicated		Rehoboam's Kingdom Divided		Asa's Reforms		Jehoshaphat's Reforms		Judah's Kings & Queens		Ahaz's Corruption		Hezekiah's Reforms		Judah's Last Days	
	1	5	6	9	10	12	13	16	17	20	21	25	26	28	29	32	33	36
Topics	A King's Glory				A Kingdom's Disgrace													
	Judah's Zenith				Judah's Ruin													
Place	Southern Kingdom of Judah																	
Time	About 40 Years						About 400 Years											

# Solomon's Temple Erected

Tuesday

April

21



**Overview:** A father's dream becomes a son's delight as Solomon undertakes the greatest architectural feat of his lifetime: building the temple in Jerusalem. Great quantities of men and materials, plus seven years of Solomon's life, are invested in the task of completing the house of the Lord. When at last the temple stands finished with the ark of the covenant in place, Solomon leads the people and musicians in heartfelt praise to God. "And when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the LORD . . . then the house filled with . . . the glory of the LORD" (5:13-14).

2 Chronicles 1-5  
Heart of the Passage:  
2 Chronicles 1, 5

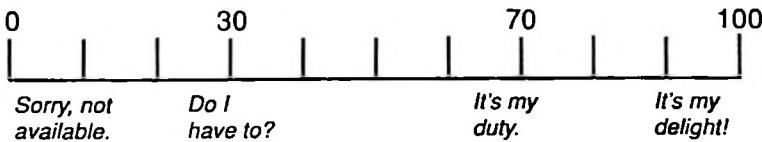
Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapters 4-5
Promoting the King	Planning the Temple	Building the Temple	Furnishing the Temple
Solomon's Wisdom		Solomon's Works	



**Your Daily Walk:** When commissioned by God to do a job, Solomon allowed nothing to stand in the way of completing his God-given assignment. With breathtaking speed he organized more than 150,000 workers and tons of materials to ensure that the task went ahead smoothly.

Solomon's zeal and enthusiasm for God left scant time for coffee breaks as long as there was still work to be done!

If you were to evaluate the degree of your own enthusiasm for God's service, where would it fall on the following scale?



Earlier this month you learned that whatever you do, you should do it *heartily* "as to the Lord" (Colossians 3:23). Now add another thought from 1 Corinthians 10:31—whatever you do, do it *honorably*, "to the glory of God." That's service both you and God can delight in.



**Insight:** Gold, Gold, Everywhere

Nearly every feature of the temple, including the walls, doors, nails, and furnishings, involved gold or gold overlay—a fact made possible by the enormous preparations of King David (1 Chronicles 22:14) in which he set aside 100,000 talents (3,750 tons) of gold!

*By the time you get your shoulder to the wheel, your nose to the grindstone, and your ear to the ground, it's usually time for lunch.*



# Solomon's Temple Dedicated

# 22

Wednesday

April

2 Chronicles 6-9

Heart of the Passage:

2 Chronicles 6, 9



**Overview:** In a setting fit for a king's inauguration, Solomon now leads the nation in dedicating the newly completed temple to the glory and worship of the God of Israel. Kneeling on a specially constructed bronze scaffold, Solomon prays one of the most majestic and moving invocations found anywhere in the Bible. He overflows

with praise to God, thanking Him for His unchanging character and unfulfilling promises on behalf of the nation. When Solomon finishes, the glory of God fills the temple, prompting the people to respond, "He is good; for his mercy endureth for ever" (7:3). But even in the midst of worship and rejoicing, there is cause for concern. By night, God appears to Solomon to warn him that if the nation fails to remain true to God, He will uproot the people from their beloved homeland and will destroy the magnificent temple which they have labored so long to complete.

Chapter 6	Chapter 7	Chapter 8	Chapter 9
A Prayer of Dedication	A Promise of Forgiveness	A King's Reputation	A King's Vast Riches
Solomon's Relationship to God		Solomon's Relationship to Goods	

If the service of God is worth anything, it is worth everything.



**Your Daily Walk:** What do these three words all have in common: *salt, magnet, light*? (Hint: They all end in *t*, but that's not it!)

Answer: They are all descriptions of your task as a Christian.

Each day you live here on earth, you are to be like salt, (making others thirsty for God), a magnet (drawing others to God), and light (showing the way to God). The queen of Sheba came hundreds of miles to learn firsthand of the wisdom and wealth of Israel's king (9:1). Notice her conclusion: "Blessed be the LORD thy God: because thy God loved Israel" (9:8). After looking at Solomon's life, the queen gave glory to Solomon's God! Is that what happens from day to day when others rub shoulders with you?

Carry a packet of salt, a small magnet, or a book of matches with you today. Then every time you reach into your pocket or purse, remember your God-given role—and practice it.



**Insight:** Great Achievements of a Great Monarch

Chapter 8 describes more than a dozen of the major accomplishments of Solomon's reign militarily, architecturally, religiously, and commercially. How many can you find?

# Rehoboam's Divided Kingdom

Thursday

April

23



**Overview:** Solomon is barely cold in his grave when the nation turns from worship to waywardness in its commitment to God.

Solomon's son Rehoboam imposes a foolish tax increase, prompting a bitter division of his kingdom. On the verge of civil war with Jeroboam (the newly established king of the northern 10 tribes), Rehoboam obeys the word of the prophet and breaks off the conflict. But once his kingdom is established, he forsakes the law of the Lord yet again. God sends a stinging rebuke in the person of Shishak, king of Egypt, who defeats Rehoboam's army and plunders the wealth of the Lord's house.

*2 Chronicles 10–12*  
*Heart of the Passage:*  
*2 Chronicles 10*

Chapter 10	Chapter 11	Chapter 12
Rehoboam Follows Bad Counsel	Rehoboam Follows the Lord	Rehoboam Forsakes the Lord
Divided Kingdom	Devoted King	Disciplined King



**Your Daily Walk:** Is your religion

- ... like a spare tire? (You only use it in an emergency.)
- ... like a wheelbarrow? (Easily upset and must be pushed.)
- ... like a bus? (You ride it only when it goes your way.)
- ... or like a pacemaker? (Something you rely on constantly.)

Rehoboam's up-and-down spiritual life could well be likened to a spare tire! When times were tough, he turned to God; when things were running smoothly, he forsook the Lord. Remember God's words through the Prophet Hosea: "They were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me" (Hosea 13:6).

Take stock of your own life at this time. Are things going well? Enjoying good health? Job secure? Refrigerator full? Then watch out! Now is the time Satan would love to trip you up by turning you away from the Source of your supply. On the memo line of each check you write today, add the words "Don't forget!" This might even provide an opportunity to witness for your Lord.



**Insight:** "Dear Diary, Today I Plundered a Temple . . ."

Inscriptions found on Egyptian temple walls show Shishak's military success in plundering the Jerusalem temple during Rehoboam's reign (12:9). One picture shows Shishak holding a group of Israelites by the hair and hitting them with a club—a painfully accurate rendering.

*The person who is ashamed of his religion probably has a religion of which he ought to be ashamed.*

# Asa's Reforms

# 24

Friday

April

2 Chronicles 13-16

Heart of the Passage:

2 Chronicles 15-16



**Overview:** Abijah, king of Judah, is used by God to discipline and defeat Jeroboam, king of Israel. During their battle, 500,000 Israelites fall—a shattering defeat from which Jeroboam will never fully recover. What Abijah accomplishes in the military sphere, Asa attempts to duplicate in the

spiritual realm. He removes all traces of foreign religion from the land and commands the people to return to the careful observance of God's statutes. But toward the end of his reign, Asa faces a threat from Baasha (king of Israel) and seeks an alliance of protection with the king of Syria. Even on his deathbed he puts his trust in earthly physicians alone, rather than in the Great Physician.

Chapter 13	Chapters 14-15	Chapter 16
Abijah's Spiritual Recession	Asa's Spiritual Reforms	Asa's Spiritual Regression
Reliance on an Army	Reliances on God	Reliance on Syria

*Weave in faith, and God will find the thread.*



**Your Daily Walk:** Stand in the middle of the floor, reach down, grasp your shoelaces (straps, buckles, or whatever else is holding your shoes on), and see how far off the floor you can lift yourself. Try it three times.

Things were looking bad for King Asa. Baasha, king of Israel, had sealed off all escape routes, and the situation looked hopeless. So Asa grabbed hold of his own bootstraps and gave them a good yank. He turned to Ben-hadad, king of Syria, and bribed him to come to his rescue. From all outward appearances, the strategy worked!

But God saw it differently. Previously, Asa had trusted in the Lord, not in foreign powers. Now he was turning from trust in God to trust in bootstraps, and God disciplined him for doing so.

What is the pattern of your life: belief or bootstraps? faith or footwork? trust or trickery? God or self? Each time you put on or change your shoes today remind yourself that it's always safe to trust the Lord.



**Insight:** The Prophet with the Dubious Distinction (16:7-10) Hanani the seer, who condemned Asa for his reliance on foreign armies rather than on the Lord, becomes the earliest "persecuted prophet" in the pages of the Bible. (But check Luke 11:47-51 for the name of one other man who, though seldom thought of as a prophet, might also lay claim to this rather dubious distinction!)

# Jehoshaphat's Reforms

Sat.–Sun.

April

25/26



**Overview:** Only 10 verses are given to godly King Jehoshaphat in 1 Kings, but the chronicler devotes a full four chapters to his life, and with good reason. Jehoshaphat knows that the key to spiritual revival in the nation is a renewed interest in and commitment to the law of the Lord. He institutes a nationwide “Bible study program,” using the princes, Levites, and priests as teachers—an effort which God richly blesses with peace and prosperity. In contrast to his predecessors, Jehoshaphat manages to make peace with the king of Israel. But a friendly visit nearly costs him his life as he becomes entangled in a war between Israel and Syria. His reaction to divine rebuke, his appointment of judges to rule “not for man, but for the LORD” (19:6), and his godly response in the face of crisis all point to the day-by-day reality of his faith!

*2 Chronicles 17–20*  
*Heart of the Passage:*  
*2 Chronicles 17, 20*

Chapter 17	Chapters 18–19	Chapter 20
Seeking the Lord in Worship	Seeking the Lord in Ramoth-Gilead	Warfare Against Moab and Ammon
Jehoshaphat's Righteous Reforms		



**Your Daily Walk:** Chapter 20 describes perhaps the most curious battle scene found anywhere in Scripture. Jehoshaphat leads his army out to confront the combined forces of Moab and Ammon. His battle plan is simple: “Set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD” (20:17). Then, as if to add insult to injury, Jehoshaphat selects singers to go before the army and chant choruses of praise. While the singers sing and the soldiers stand at attention, God produces a mighty victory for Judah as the enemy forces oblige and “every one [helps] to destroy [one] another” (20:23)!

Have you learned yet the lesson Jehoshaphat and the people of God learned? When the battle seems overwhelming, when the enemy is large and imposing, don't turn and run. Instead, stand still, sing out, and watch God work.

*Regeneration has made our hearts a battlefield.*



**Insight:** A Big Mistake  
Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab (18:1–19:11) was a serious blunder, fully deserving the rebuke of the Prophet Jehu. The prophet's question, “Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD?” (19:3) rebuked Jehoshaphat and prompted him to restore justice and priestly order in Judah.

# Judah's Kings and Queens

27

Monday

April

2 Chronicles 21–25

Heart of the Passage:

2 Chronicles 21–22



**Overview:** Jehoram's life is living proof that a bad marriage can undo even the best of upbringings. Raised by a godly father and grandfather, Jehoram marries the wicked daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, embraces her pagan deities, and leads the nation into idol worship once again. The atmosphere of trust and affection which characterized his

father's administration is replaced by a mood of suspicion and jealousy. As Jehoram's first public act, he slays all his brothers and many key rulers in the nation—a move designed to secure his position as king, but which in fact leads to an excruciating and premature death. In rapid succession, his son, wife, and grandson come to the throne in a tale of family intrigue that must be read to be believed! Joash and Amaziah both become long-reigning kings with halfhearted commitments.

Chapter 21	Chapter 22		Chapters 23–24	Chapter 25
Jealous Jehoram	Healed Ahaziah <sup>9</sup>	Usurper Athaliah <sup>12</sup>	Junior Joash	Immature Amaziah
Wicked Rulers			Righteous Rulers	

*Sometimes the right enemies can do you more good than the wrong friends.*



**Your Daily Walk:** Rotten apples have a curious property. No matter how many good apples you pack around a rotten one, you can't make the rotten one good. But you can ruin an awful lot of good apples.

The same is true in the relationships people have with each other. One corrupting friendship is enough to drive a person away from God, even in the presence of countless righteous lives . . . provided that friendship is close enough and lasts long enough to exert its corrupting influence.

That's why your close friends will mark you for life. That's why your choice of a life mate is critically important. God states very clearly in His Word, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14). Examine your relationships. And if you're courting disaster, make the necessary changes now—before the "rotten apple" becomes you.



**Insight:** The Unenviable Life of a Ruler in Judah  
All five of the rulers discussed in today's reading met violent deaths. Four were murdered and one was stricken by God with an incurable disease.

# Ahaz's Corruption

Tuesday

April

28



**Overview:** King Uzziah does mighty things for the nation of Judah both militarily and architecturally. But spiritually his life resembles a roller coaster. "As long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper. . . . But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction" (26:5, 16). Uzziah dies a leper's death for his halfhearted devotion to God. By contrast, his grandson Ahaz has wholehearted zeal for false gods and pagan practices! Ahaz introduces images of Baal, worship on the heathen high places, and infant sacrifice. Though God repeatedly tries to warn Ahaz of the danger of his ways and to turn the king's heart back to Him, there is no response. Only one question remains: How long will God's patience continue with His rebellious people?

2 Chronicles 26-28  
Heart of the Passage:  
2 Chronicles 28

Chapter 26	Chapter 27	Chapter 28
Uzziah and His Battles	Jotham and His Building Projects	Ahaz and His Unbelief
Good and Evil	Good	Evil



**Your Daily Walk:** In the carpentry business, a 2 x 4 can come in many different lengths. But every 2 x 4 has one thing in common: It is about 2 inches thick and 4 inches wide.

When God disciplines an individual, or a family, or a church, or a nation, often He does so with a painful set of circumstances. And though it would be easy to liken such an experience to being "hit over the head with a 2 x 4," there is a fundamental difference: 2 x 4s used like that are for *punitive* reasons; God's discipline is *therapeutic*.

Think back over the life of Ahaz as you have seen it unfold in 2 Chronicles 28 and 2 Kings 16. How did God try to get his attention and change his course of action through . . .

defeat in battle? \_\_\_\_\_

the word of the prophet? \_\_\_\_\_

enemy occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

Before you are too hard on Ahaz, is there a lesson God has been waiting patiently for you to learn as well?



**Insight:** A Pagan Practice Punishable by Death  
Infant sacrifice by fire was a brutal Canaanite ritual introduced into Judah by Ahaz. Not only was it abhorrent for human reasons, it was also a capital offense under the Mosaic law, punishable by stoning (Leviticus 20:1-5).

*God loves  
His  
people  
when He  
strikes  
them as  
much as  
He strokes  
them.*

# Hezekiah's Reform

29

Wednesday

April

2 Chronicles 29–32

Heart of the Passage:

2 Chronicles 29, 32



**Overview:** The Assyrian assault and dispersion of Israel are totally omitted at this point in the Chronicles account, though they have a profound impact on Hezekiah's life and rule in Judah. Inheriting a disorganized country and a heavy burden of tribute to Assyria, Hezekiah nevertheless puts first things first. In the very first month of his

administration he reopens and repairs the house of the Lord. He restores the long-neglected temple worship and Passover celebration, and declares war on idol worship and pagan practices. When the Assyrian King Sennacherib besieges Jerusalem and the situation looks hopeless, Hezekiah puts his faith to work once again in earnest prayer for deliverance. God answers his plea and crowns his life with prestige and power.

Chapter 29		Chapter 30	Chapter 31	Chapter 32
Revival of Righteousness 1	Restoration of Worship 20	Preparation for Passover	Provision to Priests	Protection for God's People
Hezekiah's Righteous Reforms				

*If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference; He is praying for me.*



**Insight:** “Dear Diary, It Was a Bad Day in Jerusalem . . .” Sennacherib’s own account of this invasion has been found on a clay prism, which he himself made. It is now in the Oriental Institute Museum in Chicago, and reads in part: “As for Hezekiah, king of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, 46 of his fortified cities . . . I besieged and captured . . . 200,150 people . . . I took as booty. Hezekiah himself I shut up like a caged bird in Jerusalem, his royal city. I built a line of forts against him, and turned back everyone who came forth out of his city gate.”

No Assyrian king would ever record a defeat, especially one as devastating as the Jerusalem debacle, but it is significant that Sennacherib did not claim to have taken Jerusalem—a most remarkable confirmation of Biblical history.



**Your Daily Walk:** Wouldn’t it be wonderful to know that someone like Hezekiah was praying for you every day? Here was a man whose every recorded prayer was answered. Wouldn’t you like to have that kind of “clout” working for you? Then read and ponder the marginal sermon-in-a-sentence by Robert Murray McCheyne, Scottish missionary and preacher who never lived to see his thirtieth birthday. Now what do you think?

# Judah's Last Days

Thursday

April

30



**Overview:** The final century of Judah's national history reads like a bad dream.

After Manasseh's 55-year reign of terror and apostasy, even a godly reformer like Josiah is powerless to prick the hearts of the people, though for a time he is able to stem the external appearances of evil. But after his death the nation swiftly returns to its abominable ways. Oppressed and eventually overthrown by the Babylonians, the people of Judah are slaughtered, their homes and temple destroyed, their city walls leveled. The survivors are dragged off to Babylon, there to ponder their fate for 70 long years. But in the midst of this doom and destruction shines a ray of hope. Cyrus, king of Persia, issues a decree: The house of the Lord must be rebuilt in Jerusalem. Who among His people is willing to return?

*2 Chronicles 33–36*

*Heart of the Passage:*

*2 Chronicles 34; 36:17-23*

Chapter 33	Chapters 34–35	Chapter 36
The Lawless Days of Manasseh and Amon	The Law-abiding Days of Josiah	The Last Days of Judah
Rebellion	Reform	Ruin



**Your Daily Walk:** For the Jews, Jerusalem represented their place of greatest failure. To stare at the rubble of what was once mighty Jerusalem—with its shattered temple and broken-down walls—must have broken the heart of even the most callous of God's people. They had failed Him. They had gone their own sinful ways. And they had been punished.

Now, through Cyrus, God was calling His people back to “the scene of the crime” for a second chance.

Have you failed God in recent days, then gone off to your own personal exile? Take heart—you are in good company! Abraham, Moses, and Jonah (to name a few) suffered similar setbacks. But they emerged from failure to accomplish great things for God. And you can too.

Is God calling you back to repentance, back to your family, school, or job? Will you answer that call . . . right now?

*Some people never change their opinion because, after all, it has been in the family for generations.*



**Insight:** Judah's Final Kings—Brothers in the Business

For more than three centuries the kingdom of Judah had passed in an orderly fashion from father to son, interrupted only briefly by the reign of Queen Athaliah. But in Judah's final frantic years, like a top winding down and toppling over, the kingdom passes quickly between three sons and a grandson of Josiah.