

IF MY PEOPLE

PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE: II CHRONICLES II Chr 7:11-22

I. INTRODUCTION

A. TITLE [review from I Chronicles]

1. HEBREW BIBLE

- a. First and Second Chronicles were one book
- b. Title = *Dibre Hayyamim* = *The Words of the Days*—or—*The Events of the Times*
- c. Last book in Hebrew Bible—grouped with ‘Writings’

2. SEPTUAGINT

- a. Greek title = *Παραλειπομένων* = *Of Things Omitted*—from *Samuel* and *Kings*
- b. Divided into two books

3. PROTESTANT BIBLE

- a. Follows Septuagint division into 2 books
- b. Luther used Jerome’s ‘Chronicon’ [describing *Samuel* and *Kings*]
- c. English versions translated/adopted Luther’s title

B. SCOPE—SETTING—HISTORICAL BACKGROUND—II CHRONICLES

1. PERIOD COVERED

- a. Parallels I and II Kings
- b. About 433 years
 - From beginning of Solomon’s reign—**971 BC**
 - To Cyrus’s decree—allowing Remnant to return—**538 BC**
- c. Key phases
 - 971-931 BC 40 years—Solomon’s reign—**Chapters 1-9**
 - 931-587 BC 343 years—rulers of Judah—divided kingdom—**Chapters 10-36**
 - [587]-538 BC Cyrus’s decree—**Chapter 36**

2. SETTING [review from I Chronicles]

- I and II Chronicles tell the history of only Judah—not northern Israel

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- a. Beginning of Period

1. Monarchy united—Solomon securely on throne—Israel at zenith of power
2. One religious center in Jerusalem
 - a. Ark of the Covenant—on Mount Zion
 - b. Preparations made for Temple—but not yet built
3. Subjugation of surrounding nations
 - Amalekites
 - Philistines
 - Moabites
 - Syrians
 - Edomites
 - Ammonites
4. Expanded Kingdom of Israel
 - From the Negev (desert) to the Mediterranean
 - From Gulf of Aqaba—along Jordan River—to Syrian border and Orontes River

b. The rulers of Judah—after Solomon

1. 19 kings and 1 queen
2. 8 good kings—and 12 bad ones

▪ Rehoboam	931-913	
▪ Abijah	913-911	
▪ Asa	911-870	
▪ Jehoshaphat	873-848	
▪ Jehoram	848-841	[co-regent with Jehoshaphat—853-848]
▪ Ahaziah	841	
▪ Queen Athaliah	841-835	[Ahaziah's mother]
▪ Joash	835-796	
▪ Amaziah	796-767	
▪ Uzziah/Azariah	767-740	[co-regent with Amaziah—792-767]
▪ Jotham	740-731	[co-regent with Uzziah—750-740]
▪ Ahaz	731-715	[co-regent with Jotham—735-731]
▪ Hezekiah	715-687	
▪ Manasseh	687-642	[co-regent with Hezekiah—697-687]
▪ Amon	642-640	
▪ Josiah	640-609	
▪ Jehoahaz	609	
▪ Jehoiakim	609-598	
▪ Jehoiachin	598-597	
▪ Zedekiah	597-587	[appointed by Babylon]

3. Religious reform in Judah

a. Eight Judean kings were ‘good’

- Asa II Chr 14-16
- Jehoshaphat II Chr 17-20
- Joash II Chr 23:16-21 & chapter 24
- Amaziah II Chr 25
- Uzziah II Chr 26
- Jotham II Chr 27
- Hezekiah II Chr 29-32
- Josiah II Chr 34-35

b. Total ‘good’ and ‘bad’ years—931-587—344 years

- 225 ‘good’ years—[8 good kings]
- 119 ‘bad’ years—[12 bad rulers]

c. Most of II Chronicles after Solomon tells story of reforming kings

- Over 17 of the 27 chapters
- Over two-thirds [410 of 612 verses]

d. Two Great Reforming Kings [almost 60 years]—and prophets

1. Hezekiah (715-687)—28 years

➤ Prophets—Isaiah and Micah

2. Josiah (640-609)—31 years

➤ Prophets—Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Nahum, and Habakkuk

c. End of Period—**II Chronicles 36**

1. Fall of Judah—**verses 9-20**

a. Jehoiachin—taken captive to Babylon—598 BC

- His release 37 years later (**II Kgs 25:27**)—*not* recorded in **II Chronicles**

b. Zedekiah’s reign—598-587

1. Jehoiachin’s uncle—installed by Nebuchadnezzar II

2. King Josiah’s son

a. Possible hope of reform—[following his father’s example?]

b. Reform not fulfilled by Zedekiah—**verse 12**

1. He *did evil in the sight of the Lord his God*

2. And *he did not humble himself before Jeremiah, the prophet who spoke for the Lord*
3. Plus—all the **priests** and **people** were unfaithful to God—**verse 14**
4. Rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar (**v 13**)—587—led to (**vv 15-20**):
 - Total defeat of Judah—and exile to Babylon
 - Destruction of the Temple
 - Destruction of Jerusalem’s city wall
2. Babylonian Captivity—**verses 20-21**
 - a. Jeremiah prophesied—it would last 70 years
 - Original prophesy—**Jer 29:10**
 - Reference here—**II Chr 36:21**
 - b. Calculating the 70 years—two possibilities
 1. Political captivity
 - From initial defeat of Jerusalem—605 BC
 - To return of first Remnant—536 BC
 2. Religious captivity
 - From destruction of first Temple—587
 - To completion of second Temple—516 BC
3. Cyrus’s Decree—538 BC—**verses 22-23**
 - a. Persia defeated Babylon
 1. Cyrus defeated Belshazzar—539 BC
 2. Fulfilled prophesy of **Daniel 5**—*mene mene tekel upharsin*
 - b. The Decree—**v 23**

The Lord God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up!

C. COMPOSITION

1. AUTHORSHIP

- a. Talmudic tradition says—**Ezra** the priest
 1. Educated scribe—**Ezra 7:6**

2. Led some exiles to Jerusalem in 457 BC

b. His Sources

1. Access to a large library—provided by Nehemiah (source: **II Mac 2:13-15**)

2. Internal evidence—of several sources he used in **II Chronicles**

- *The Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah*
- *A Commentary on the Book of the Kings*
- *Chronicles of Nathan the Prophet*
- *The Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite*
- *The Visions of Iddo the Seer*
- *Records of Shemaiah the Prophet*
- *Records of Iddo the Prophet on Genealogies*
- *Treatise of the Prophet Iddo*
- *The Annals of Jehu the Son of Hanani*
- *The Acts of Uzziah by Isaiah the Prophet*
- *The Vision of Isaiah the Prophet*
- *The Records of Hozai*
- *The Writing of David and His Son Solomon*

2. DATE OF WRITING—[review from I Chronicles]

a. Shortly after the main Remnant returned—about 450-430 BC

b. When Judah was led by

- Nehemiah—the governor—political leader
- Ezra—the priest—spiritual leader
- Malachi—the prophet—moral leader

3. TONE

a. Overall *Chronicles* is more positive than *Samuel* and *Kings*

- *Samuel* and *Kings* continually return to theme of judgment for disobedience
- They end with destruction of Israel and captivity of Judah
- Only glimmer of hope at end—release of Jehoiachin—37 years after imprisonment

b. Shift in *Second Chronicles*

1. Account of Solomon's reign is all positive

a. Solomon's wisdom—wealth—and zenith of Israel's power

- b. Building of Temple—installation of Ark—and dedication of people
 - c. Nothing mentioned about Solomon’s apostasy—found in **II Kings 11**
2. **Negative** turn—began with Rehoboam—**chapter 10**
- a. His foolish politics—and tolerance of idolatry
 - b. Division of the kingdom—931 BC
 - c. Basic reason—epitomized in Rehoboam’s attitude

12:14—*He did evil because he did not set his heart to seek the Lord*

- 3. Recurring disobedience—12 rulers—who *did evil in the sight of the Lord*

D. PURPOSES

- 1. TO ENCOURAGE THE REMNANT RETURNING TO JUDEA
- 2. TO GIVE SPIRITUAL ACCOUNT OF REIGNS OF DAVID’S SUCCESSORS

E. THEMES

- 1. UNIFYING THEME—THE TEMPLE OF GOD
- 2. TRUE WORSHIP

- o Attention given to kings who built/restored Temple and implemented religious reform

- Solomon
- Asa
- Jehoshaphat
- Joash
- Hezekiah
- Josiah

- 3. PROMISE AND WARNING

- o Obedience to God brings blessing—disobedience brings judgment

- 4. GOD’S FAITHFULNESS

- o Shown by His securing the return of the Remnant

- 5. HOPE

- o If people repent and turn to God—He will forgive them

F. STRUCTURE

- 1. PART ONE—SOLOMON’S REIGN—**CHAPTERS 1-9**
 - a. Solomon’s inauguration—wisdom—wealth—**chapter 1**

- b. The Temple—**chapters 2-7**
 - Preparation—**chapter 2**
 - Building—**chapters 3-4**
 - Dedication—**chapters 5-7**
 - c. The Splendor of Solomon’s Reign—**chapters 8-9**
 - d. Solomon’s Death—**9:29-31**
2. PART TWO—THE REIGNS OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH—**CHAPTERS 10-36**
- a. **Rehoboam**—**chapters 10-12**
 - b. **Abijah**—**chapter 13**
 - c. **Asa**—**chapters 14-16**
 - d. **Jehoshaphat**—**chapters 17-20**
 - e. **Jehoram**—**chapter 21**
 - f. **Ahaziah**—**22:1-9**
 - g. **Queen Athaliah**—**22:10-23:15**
 - h. **Joash**—**23:16** → **through chapter 24**
 - i. **Amaziah**—**chapter 25**
 - j. **Uzziah**—**chapter 26**
 - k. **Jotham**—**chapter 27**
 - l. **Ahaz**—**chapter 28**
 - m. **Hezekiah**—**chapters 29-32**
 - n. **Manasseh**—**33:1-20**
 - o. **Amon**—**33:21-25**
 - p. **Josiah**—**chapters 34-35**
 - q. **Jehoahaz**—**36:1-3**
 - r. **Jehoiakim**—**36:4-8**
 - s. **Jehoiachin**—**36:9-10**
 - t. **Zedekiah**—**36:11-21**
 - u. **Cyrus’s Decree**—**36:22-23**

II. BIBLICAL TEXT

11 Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord and the king’s palace, and successfully completed all that he had planned on doing in the house of the Lord and in his palace. **12** Then the Lord appeared to Solomon at night and said to him, “I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. **13** If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, **14** and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. **15** Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place. **16** For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that My name may be there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. **17** As for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked, even to do according to all that I have commanded you, and will keep My

statutes and My ordinances, 18 then I will establish your royal throne as I covenanted with your father David, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man to be ruler in Israel.’ 19 “But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, 20 then I will uproot you from My land which I have given you, and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. 21 As for this house, which was exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and say, ‘Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?’ 22 And they will say, ‘Because they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers who brought them from the land of Egypt, and they adopted other gods and worshiped them and served them; therefore He has brought all this adversity on them.’”

III. EXPOSITION

A. BACKGROUND

1. AFTER BUILDING AND DEDICATION OF TEMPLE

- a. Ark of Covenant installed in Holy of Holies—**5:1-10**
 - The Glory of the Lord appeared—**5:11-14**
- b. Solomon’s Blessing [of the people] and Dedication—**6:1-11**
- c. Solomon’s Prayer of Dedication—**6:12-42**
 - The Glory of the Lord appeared—**7:1-3**
- d. Sacrifices Offered—**7:4-7**
 - 22,000 oxen
 - 120,000 sheep
 - The bronze altar was not able to contain it all
 - So much—that Solomon consecrated the middle of the court for burnt offerings
- e. Feast of Dedication—7 days—**7:8**
- f. Dedication of the Altar—another 7 days—**7:9**

2. SOLOMON’S PRAYER—**6:12-42**

- a. Keep Your **covenant** with **David**
- b. **Listen** to prayers made here—and **forgive**
- c. **Seven Petitions**
 - If a man sins, then makes an oath here Hear, judge him accordingly
 - If we are defeated because we have sinned—and we confess and pray Hear, forgive, restore them to the land
 - When the heavens are shut up, and we pray, confess, and repent Hear, forgive, teach us, and send rain

- If there are famine, pestilence, blight, locusts, grasshoppers, enemies, plague and an individual prays Hear, forgive, and render according to that person's heart
 - When a foreigner comes here and prays Hear and maintain his cause
 - When we go into battle and pray Hear and maintain our cause
 - When we sin, are defeated and exiled; when we repent, pray and return to You with all our heart and soul Hear, maintain our cause, and forgive us
- d. Let your **eyes** be open and your **ears** attentive
- e. **Do not turn away** Your face from Your anointed
- f. **Remember** Your lovingkindness to Your servant **David**

B. MAIN POINTS

1. GOD LISTENS—AND ANSWERS—WHEN WE PRAY

- a. God Himself affirms this—v 12—*I have heard your prayer*
- b. God assures us—He cares and pays attention

v15-16—*Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place . . . and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually*

- c. Evidence—God's answer to Solomon's prayer
 - 1. God addresses three specific concerns Solomon mentioned
 - Drought
 - Locusts
 - Pestilence

2. These are representative—God heard all the rest—but does not list them

2. GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN ALL REALMS OF NATIONAL AND PRIVATE LIFE

- a. Evident in—Solomon's seven petitions
 - **Moral** relations between people—who sin and make oaths
 - **National identity** and success—defeated in battle and displaced
 - **Natural** forces—rain
 - **Everyday problems** of everyday people—famine and disease
 - **People of all nations**—foreigners/aliens
 - **National politics** and defense—when we go into battle
 - **Everywhere**—no matter where we are or go—even in 'exile'—in a 'far country'
- b. Reiterated in—God's answer

- *If I—shut up the heavens—so that there is no rain*
- *If I—command the locust—to devour the land*
- *If I—send pestilence—among my people*

3. GOD'S SEVEN-FOLD WAY OF RESTORATION—verse 14

a. Four things we must do

1. Our four actions

- Humble ourselves
- Pray
- Seek God's face
- Turn from our evil ways

2. Humble ourselves

- a. God forgives the contrite heart—that is broken—and seeks restoration with Him
- b. **All** prayer should be humble—not rushing thoughtlessly—selfishly—or frivolously
- c. Talking with God—should be done in brokenness—not arrogantly or dismissively
- d. Humility—is total reliance on God—not self—the beginning of genuine trust/faith
- e. Total reliance—one of the marks of a 'perfect heart'—whole-hearted devotion to God

3. Pray

- a. God answers prayer—if we want to be forgiven—we must ask!
- b. Our goal should also be to know God better—and to know His will for us
- c. So we understand how even bad circumstances fit into His plan—and how to respond
- d. Knowing His will and *how* to do it—can be done only by talking with Him in prayer

4. Seek God's face

- a. Turning from evil—cannot be done alone—but only with God's help
 1. Repentance is a result of—not a condition for—encountering God
 2. We don't set it right, then go to God—but the reverse
- b. Seeking God—is a key mark of a 'perfect heart'—wholehearted devotion

5. Turn from our evil ways

- a. All is to no avail—if it does not result in dramatic action—rejection of evil
- b. Evil ways cannot coexist in our relationship with God
- c. We cannot serve both God and the world!

6. Lifestyle changes!

- a. Each verb is ‘imperfect’—continuous—unending action
- b. Not just one-time events—but changes in our attitude and relationship with God

b. Three things God promises to do

1. God’s three actions

- God hears
- God forgives
- God heals

2. God hears

- a. Just as He heard Solomon—He affirms this to us also
- b. He also answers—as He did Solomon
- c. He is the only *living* God with *eyes* that see and *ears* that hear

✓ Unlike the gods of this world that are deaf, blind and useless in times of trouble

3. God forgives—He pardons

- a. This does not undo the act or effects of sin
- b. But it lifts the burden—removes its presence—and treats as innocent
- c. Something only the chief executive for executing the law can do

✓ Like a presidential pardon

d. God’s forgiveness is total!

✓ He is faithful and just—to cleanse **all** unrighteousness—**I Jn 1:9**

✓ He blots out and chooses not to remember—**Is 43:25, Jer 31:34**

4. God heals—He restores

- a. First—this begins with God restoring our relationship with Him
- b. Second—He heals and strengthens our soul
- c. Third—He extends this healing to/through us to our land

c. This is not a legalistic ‘formula’

1. But a guide to restoring our relationship with God

2. It does not obligate God—to give us what we want—just because we follow the ‘steps’

d. God favors godly nations—and punishes ungodly ones

1. Consequences of obedience/disobedience—are shared socially regardless of who we are
 2. But following ‘godly’ principles does not make us a ‘Christian’ nation
4. WE DO NOT INHERIT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF OUR FOREFATHERS
- a. God made a **new covenant** with Solomon—**vv 17-20**—*But as for you . . .*
 - b. It is possible to benefit from forefathers’ blessings—or suffer from their sins—for a while
 - c. But each generation is accountable for its own relationship with God
 - d. Do not disrespect the righteous standards set by previous generations
 1. God used David’s obedience as the standard for Solomon
 2. Permissive societies reject the ‘puritan’ values of their fathers as ‘old-fashioned’
 3. But ‘truth’ and ‘right’ are constant—regardless of the generation
 - e. Remember—we are always “just one generation away from paganism!”
5. GOD STILL BLESSES—AND PUNISHES SOCIETIES
- a. God blessed Israel
 1. It prospered under David’s righteous rule
 2. This set the stage for reaching its zenith under Solomon—who began well
 - b. God’s covenant with Solomon—was clear-cut—two options
 - Walk before me as David walked—and I will establish your throne permanently
 - Turn, forsake my laws, and seek other gods—and I will uproot you from My land
 - c. This had national and widespread social consequences
 1. God warns—idolatry will result in destruction of the Temple itself
 2. The very symbol of Israel’s identity and God’s presence would be destroyed
 3. Solomon’s idolatry—infected and destroyed the whole nation—not just his throne
6. GOD’S PATIENCE CAN RUN OUT—NO ‘GODLY’ SOCIETY IS SECURE FOREVER
- a. Judah became **presumptuous** in its relationship with God
 - b. It had survived much longer than most modern nations
 - **464** years—from **Saul** to **Babylonian** Captivity
 - 464 years ago—1553—Bloody Mary became queen
 - 464 years ago—50 years before first permanent English colony in America
 - c. It had survived more problems—but always reformed—and recovered

- **23** generations of kings/queens—**13** bad kings (including Saul)
- **10** periods of reform—including David and early Solomon
- Over **60%** of the time—they had good kings—with reform! [285 of 464 years?]

d. But longevity and occasional reform are not enough!

e. America's situation

1. We have been a nation only **half** the time of Judah! [241 years—cf 464 years]

2. We have experienced significant '**revival**' or 'reform' **six** times

- Puritans
- First Great Awakening
- Second Great Awakening
- Mid-late 19th century town-city revivals
- Early-20th century—Billy Sunday—after Welsh revival
- Mid-20th century—Billy Graham—after WW II

7. AS GOD'S PEOPLE—WE HAVE A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO PRAY

a. God wants **all people to pray** to Him—and to call upon His name

b. But this **promise** is given to a **special people**—'*My people who are called by My name*'

1. Literal translation—*My people who call themselves by My name*

2. Specifically—rooted in the Davidic covenant—**II Sam 7** and **I Chr 17**

3. Originally to true Israelites—who obeyed the conditions of that covenant

4. Now the new Israel—the Church who follows God's anointed—Jesus Christ

c. With the promise comes the **responsibility**

1. Not to pray *just* for ourselves—but for our whole nation

2. Most people do not realize we are in peril—and will not humble themselves and pray!

3. Our responsibility as God's people—to **intercede** for our neighbors and nation

I Tim 2:1-4—*First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

4. **National Day of Prayer—this week—Thursday, 4 May**