



# DISCOVERY UNIT 11

1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah,  
Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

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### **Genealogies and David's Reign, Part 1**

1 Chronicles 1:1—12:40

### **David's Reign, Part 2**

1 Chronicles 13:1—17:27

### **David's Reign, Part 3**

1 Chronicles 18:1—26:32

### **The Final Acts of David**

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2 Chronicles 1:1—9:31

### **Divided Kingdom and Kings of Judah, Part 1**

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### **The Book of Ezra**

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### **The Book of Zechariah**

Zechariah 1:1—14:21

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Malachi 1:1—4:6

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## Genealogies and David's Reign, Part 1

### SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

1 Chronicles 1:1 through 12:40

### KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron; and David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the LORD; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD by Samuel.” (1 Chronicles 11:3)

### BACKGROUND

The purpose of Chronicles was to emphasize the Jews' heritage. The writer recounted Israel's history for the Jews who were attempting to resettle the Promised Land after seventy years in Babylonian captivity. God's people needed encouragement to reestablish their patterns of worship, and assurance that the God of their fathers had not forsaken them. The author clearly felt that the evidence of God's involvement in Israel's past would provide the current generation with a reliable basis for rebuilding. By charting both the good and evil reigns of their nation's kings, he reminded the people of the character of God, of worship that pleases Him, and of God's covenant with them.

The Book of 1 Chronicles begins with a genealogy—an official record of the families of Israel and Judah prior to the captivity. In the post-exilic era, genealogical records ensured that rightful heirs could demonstrate legitimate ownership and thus repossess their inheritances in established tribal areas. In addition, the records would provide a framework for reinstating assigned roles in the Levitical worship system, thus preserving the priesthood and the structure for worship.

The genealogical record also has theological significance. For Jesus to be the Messiah, He had to be a descendant of David. The record found in 1 Chronicles, along with Jesus' lineage given in the New Testament, confirms that Jesus did descend from the line of David. Thus, the genealogy of 1 Chronicles was used centuries later to substantiate that Jesus Christ was indeed the Promised One.

### QUESTIONS

1. The years the Jews had spent in Babylonian exile had been some of the darkest in their nation's history. Their capital city had been destroyed, their Temple burned, and their people slain or taken into captivity. Although the people had returned to their land when the Books of Chronicles were written, David's

descendants no longer ruled as monarchs over Israel. The Davidic lineage preserved through the genealogical records of chapters 1 through 8 reminded the post-exilic Jews of their promised Messiah who would come from that line. Why would the promise of a coming Messiah bring hope? As believers today, what future events are we looking ahead to that bring us hope?

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2. While chapters 1 through 8 are primarily a list of names, the record also gives fragments of information regarding some of the individuals. In chapter 4, the writer paused for a moment and focused on Jabez, a man whose name means “man of sorrow and pain.” Jabez is not remembered for heroic deeds or great oratorical speeches, nor is he referenced elsewhere in Scripture. Based on 1 Chronicles 4:9-10, why did Jabez receive special mention in Scripture?

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3. In 1 Chronicles 5:18-20, the author described a time when men from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh went into battle against an army that was much larger than theirs. These men were deemed “valiant”—they had personal courage as well as skill in military endeavors—but they did not rely on their own capabilities or military strategies. Instead, they “cried to God in the battle.” What was the outcome of that battle, and what can we learn from their example?

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4. Many years before the author of Chronicles compiled his record, King David had done much to bring music into the worship of Israel. In addition to composing numerous psalms and songs offering praise to God, he appointed song leaders and organized

choirs and instrumentalists to perform regularly at the Temple. In 1 Chronicles 6:31-32, the people were reminded of the system of worship that David and his son, Solomon, had instituted in Israel. Why is worship an important part of the Christian life? What role does music have in worship?

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**5.** Chapter 9 focuses on the post-exilic community in Jerusalem and the importance of correct worship as the nation began to rebuild. The writer of Chronicles wanted to ensure that those who had returned from captivity in Babylon reestablished the pattern for Temple worship that David had put in place. Verse 2 identifies several categories of people who served in the Temple worship. According to this verse, what three groups of individuals were responsible for religious duties?

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**6.** In chapter 10, the author of Chronicles turned to the rise of the house of David. The account of Saul's death provides a transition to a focus on David that continues for the remainder of the book. A brief overview of the battle on the slopes of Mount Gilboa is given in verses 1-3. What did Saul do after he was wounded in battle? How was the nation of Israel impacted as a result? 1 Chronicles 10:4-7

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**7.** Following Saul's death, David reigned over Judah for seven-and-one-half years (see 2 Samuel 2:4,11). At the beginning of chapter 11, all of Israel was looking to David for leadership, remembering his previous acts of valor. When the elders of Israel came to David in Hebron, David made a covenant with them "before the LORD," and they anointed David king over all of Israel.

In contrast to Saul's decline and tragic end, verse 9 states that David "waxed greater and greater." Why do you think that was so?

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**8.** Chapters 11–12 list people from every tribe of Israel who came to assist David during the early years of his rule. The concept of "help" is alluded to frequently in chapter 12. For example, verses 16-18 record that the tribes of Judah and Benjamin supported David even though Benjamin was the tribe to which Saul belonged. In verse 18, Amasai pronounced a Spirit-inspired blessing upon those who came to help David. Verses 23-37 provide a list of those from each of the tribes who came to make David king. How does our need for human helpers fit in with God's help?

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## CONCLUSION

The author of Chronicles reviewed the history and heritage of Israel in order to point the newly returned exiles toward the future and their hope in God's promises. He reminded the people that the two cornerstone institutions of Israel—the Davidic monarchy and the Temple—were both founded upon God's unbreakable promises, and the people could have confidence that God would keep His Word to their nation.

## NOTES

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## David's Reign, Part 2

### SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

1 Chronicles 13:1 through 17:27

### KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“And David perceived that the LORD had confirmed him king over Israel, for his kingdom was lifted up on high, because of his people Israel.” (1 Chronicles 14:2)

### BACKGROUND

After providing a panoramic view of Israel's history through the genealogical record in the first part of 1 Chronicles, in these chapters the author turned to a focus on David—the great king of Israel who received God's plans for the construction of the Temple and organized how worship was to take place in it.

The history of David as recorded in this book differs slightly from the parallel account preserved by the author of 2 Samuel. While both books cover the same period, the account in 2 Samuel stresses the political aspects of David's kingship, while the author of Chronicles focused on the religious actions David took to establish a framework for the national worship of God.

The events recorded in today's text did not occur immediately after those described in chapter 12, but sometime after David captured Jerusalem and made it his capital. Chapters 13 through 17 record David's two attempts to move the Ark of the Covenant from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem, his appointment of priests and Levites to assist in worship, his desire to build a Temple for God, and God's promise to him regarding his descendants.

### QUESTIONS

**1.** Early in his reign, David determined to make Jerusalem the religious center of the nation and gathered the leaders of Israel to ask for their help and blessing. The Ark of the Covenant had been in Kirjath-jearim for about seventy years after being captured and returned by the Philistines, and 1 Chronicles 13:3 indicates that David's first objective was to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. Although David's intentions were honorable and he consulted with the captains and leaders of Israel about moving the Ark, there is no indication that he consulted with the Lord regarding this move. What was the outcome?  
1 Chronicles 13:7-10

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**2.** Two of David's early military encounters are described in chapter 14. When the Philistines heard that David had been crowned king, they determined to come against him and assembled their army in the Valley of Rephaim. David sought God for guidance regarding how to respond, and God gave him victory in the first battle. However, the Philistines regrouped and prepared to come against Israel once more. Again, David inquired of the Lord before going into battle. What unique method did God use to give David direction in the second encounter? What lessons can we learn from David's two battles with the Philistines? 1 Chronicles 14:13-16

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**3.** After the death of Uzza, David had the Ark temporarily placed in the house of Obed-edom. Chapter 15 records David's transfer of the Ark of God from that location to the dwelling place prepared for it in Jerusalem. In verse 13, David acknowledged his earlier errors, saying, “the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.” Review the first attempt to move the Ark in 1 Chronicles 13:6-10. What did David do differently in this second attempt to move the Ark? 1 Chronicles 15:11-15

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**4.** According to verses 16-24 of chapter 15, David organized singers and four groups of Levites to provide instrumental accompaniment to the great procession bringing the Ark to Jerusalem. The first group of instrumentalists played the cymbals, the second used psalteries, the third had harps, and the fourth consisted of seven priests with trumpets who preceded the Ark. Why do you think David arranged for such an elaborate musical procession to accompany the Ark?

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**5.** In 1 Chronicles 16:1, we read that King David and the people commemorated the placement of the Ark with a celebration that included burnt sacrifices and peace offerings. The burnt sacrifices represented atonement (Leviticus 1:4) and the peace offerings were associated with reconciliation and harmony with God (Leviticus 3:5). What kind of sacrifices and offerings do we bring to God?

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**6.** At the end of this spectacular day of celebration, David arranged for a musical expression of worship to be regularly presented to God. Then he delivered a psalm in which he voiced his personal gratitude. In verses 8-12 of chapter 16, what actions did David instruct the people to take to honor and thank God?

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**7.** The Tabernacle was a tent designed for portability. It was a suitable venue for worship during Israel's time in the wilderness because the people were constantly on the move. However, by this point the people were settled in the land God had given them, and David

desired to build a more permanent structure for God. He shared his desire with the Prophet Nathan, who initially told him, "Do all that is in thy heart; for God is with thee." However, that night God instructed Nathan to tell David he was not to carry out his plan. Nathan was also to give David some far-reaching promises. Briefly summarize what God promised David in 1 Chronicles 17:11-14 and explain why this promise is meaningful for us.

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**8.** David responded to God's promises with a prayer, recorded for us in verses 16-27 of chapter 17. What attitude of heart do you detect in David's prayer?

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## CONCLUSION

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David began his reign with a desire to serve and honor God. His transfer of the Ark of the Covenant from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem, his Levitical appointments, and his desire to build a Temple for God all reflect his purpose of re-establishing and strengthening the worship of God in Israel.

## NOTES

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## David's Reign, Part 3

### SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

1 Chronicles 18:1 through 26:32

### KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Is not the LORD your God with you? and hath he not given you rest on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand; and the land is subdued before the LORD, and before his people. Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God; arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the LORD God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the LORD.”

(1 Chronicles 22:18-19)

### BACKGROUND

The author of 1 and 2 Chronicles clearly believed that direction for his nation could be found in the history of his people—a history about which they needed to be reminded. In his focus on King David, little mention is made of David's failures. Instead, the author highlighted David's strengths and victories, perhaps to encourage the exiles who were rebuilding Jerusalem after their seventy-year captivity in Babylon. He wanted the returning Jews to remember that obedience results in God's blessing, to make the Temple and priesthood a priority, and to believe God's unconditional promises to the descendants of David.

Since Israel was under the control of the Medo-Persian Empire when Chronicles was written, a king from David's line no longer ruled Israel; Jewish political and social power at that point resided in appointed governors and religious leaders. However, God had promised that a future King would rise from David's descendants, so the author of Chronicles retold Israel's history through a priestly and kingly lens to prepare the people for their coming Messiah.

Today's text from 1 Chronicles can be divided into three parts. Chapters 18-20 summarize the military victories of David, and the resulting enhancement of David's reputation in Israel and its neighboring nations. Chapter 21 describes David's sin in taking a census of Israel and the tragic consequences. Bible scholars suggest this event was included because the land David purchased to make an offering to halt the plague that was God's judgment eventually became the site of the new Temple. Chapters 22-26 record the arrangements David made for the building of the Temple and his organization of those who would serve there in various capacities.

### QUESTIONS

1. God's covenant with David included the promise that the Israelites' enemies would be overcome (see 1 Chronicles 17:9). Chapter 18 shows how God fulfilled that promise by helping David defeat the opposing nations that surrounded Israel. The spoil and tribute from the conquered nations resulted in immense wealth for Israel. What did David do with the wealth acquired in this manner?

1 Chronicles 18:8,11

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2. Verse 14 of chapter 18 states that David “executed judgment and justice among all his people.” How would you explain that statement? What are some of the ways a leader could execute judgment and justice in our day?

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3. Chapter 19 describes the rash act by the king of Ammon that led to David's battle with the Ammonites. When King Nahash of the Ammonites died, David sent messengers to extend sympathy to Hanun, Nahash's son and heir. Hanun treated David's men with contempt. His demeaning actions were equivalent to declaring war, so David sent out his “army of mighty men” to confront the Ammonite forces. Prior to the battle, Joab, the commander-in-chief of David's army, made a short but significant speech to the Israelite forces. What did he say to encourage them, and what was the outcome of the battle? 1 Chronicles 19:13, 15, 18-19

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4. Chapter 21 describes David's sin in taking a census of Israel. In verse 3, Joab warned the king that doing

so was both unnecessary and “a cause of trespass” (inviting trouble) for Israel. The parallel account in 2 Samuel 24:4 states that the captains of the army also warned David against taking such a step. However, David went ahead with the census, and his action had dire consequences. Since verse 1 indicates that Satan incited David into taking the census, why do you think David was held responsible?

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**5.** God was displeased with David’s numbering of Israel, and punishment would come. At God’s direction, Gad the seer told David to choose from three judgments. What were the three options Gad presented to David? 1 Chronicles 21:10-12

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**6.** The prophet Gad instructed David to set up an altar and sacrifice to the Lord on the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. This location had both a rich history and a significant future. According to Jewish tradition, it was the spot where Abraham offered Isaac. Soon it would become the site of the Temple (see 2 Chronicles 3:1). Chapter 22 of 1 Chronicles records David’s preparations for building the Temple. What natural materials did King David gather for this purpose? 1 Chronicles 22:3-4, 14

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**7.** Chapter 23 opens by stating that David was old and made Solomon the king. Then he called together the princes, priests, and Levites, and defined how worship was to be conducted and by whom it was to be administered. The Levites were to care for the Temple and its grounds (verse 28) and help prepare the offerings (verse 29). They were also to participate in the musical part of the worship. In verse 30, David instructed them to “stand [be present] every morning to thank and praise the LORD, and likewise at even.” What do you think is implied by that instruction?

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**8.** In chapter 24, David appointed the descendants of Aaron, the first priest of Israel, to serve as priests in the Temple. They were then separated into twenty-four groups that participated on a rotational basis, serving two-week shifts in Jerusalem and the remainder of the year in their hometowns. What phrase in verse 19 stands out to you as being especially significant, and why?

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**9.** Chapter 25 describes King David’s organization of the Levites to provide music as part of the Temple worship. Individuals from the families of Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman were appointed to lead twenty-four teams of musicians who participated on a rotating basis. The order in which the various teams served was determined by casting lots (verse 8). Why do you think this method of selection was used?

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**10.** Verses 1-12 of chapter 26 gives a list of the porters, who also could be called gatekeepers or doorkeepers. Their duties included opening and closing the Temple doors, making sure those who entered were ceremonially clean (see 2 Chronicles 23:19), and confirming that items and equipment were not removed from the area. Other Scriptures indicate they also stored, ordered, and maintained food supplies for Temple workers, cared for the furniture in the house of God, mixed the incense that was used on a daily basis, and accounted for the gifts and sacrifices that were brought by the people. What phrase in verse 12 sums up their duties?

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## **CONCLUSION**

These chapters in 1 Chronicles reminded the returned exiles of the importance of making proper worship a priority, and encouraged them to believe that God’s promises to the descendants of David would one day be fulfilled.



# DISCOVERY

## The Final Acts of David



### SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

1 Chronicles 27:1 through 29:30

### KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Now therefore in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the LORD, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD your God: that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you for ever.” (1 Chronicles 28:8)

### BACKGROUND

Without question, King David was one of the greatest men of the Old Testament. God himself said David was a man after His own heart (see 1 Samuel 13:14). As a shepherd, giant-slayer, and military man, he was resourceful and courageous. As a poet and songwriter, he authored psalms of petition and praise that have blessed the people of God for generations. As a religious leader, he was dedicated and committed. And as king, David was without equal. The ancient Jewish historian Flavius Josephus said of him, “This man was of an excellent character, and was endowed with all the virtues that were desirable in a King.”<sup>1</sup> David’s influence for good in his nation was so profound that many of the kings after him were compared to the standard he established. Although he had weaknesses and failed God on several occasions, he was humble and quick to repent.

Today’s text, which records the closing days of David’s life, has two parts. Chapter 27 ends the record that began in chapter 23 of David’s arrangements for the nation’s religious and civil affairs; this chapter outlines his organization of commanders of the army, officers of the tribes, and administrators of the kingdom. Chapters 28-29 cover events prior to David’s death. At a national convocation, David presented Solomon as his successor and delivered plans for the Temple to him. He offered admonition and personal encouragement to his son, who would not only follow him in ruling the nation but would also take on the tremendous task of building a house for the Lord. The chapter ends with the passing of this revered king of Israel, who “died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour” (1 Chronicles 29:28).

By a careful choice of what to record of King David’s reign, the author of 1 Chronicles emphasized the importance of remaining close to God and obedient to Him. In contrast, 2 Chronicles illustrates how quickly a nation can deteriorate spiritually and socially when it turns away from God.

### QUESTIONS

1. Chapter 27 describes David’s organization of the military commanders, princes of the tribes, and administrators (chief stewards) who would supervise the royal properties of the kingdom. This was the final directive of the assembly David had convened to establish the roles of the nation’s civil, religious, and military leaders. What do you think David’s meticulous organization of kingdom affairs indicates about the nature of his reign?

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2. Chapter 28 contains David’s public ceremony of succession to Solomon, and his last recorded words to the people he had led for so many years. As David addressed the convocation, he had two vital matters to communicate. In verses 3 and 5, what two directives from God did he relate to the people?

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3. Verses 9-10 of chapter 28 record David’s personal charge to Solomon. In it, he related a number of godly principles that he hoped would guide his son through life—ideas that any Christian parent would do well to convey to his or her children. In your own words, what were these principles?

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4. In 1 Chronicles 28:10, David gave Solomon the explicit instruction, “Take heed now; for the LORD hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it.” However, God does not always reveal His plans quite so directly. How can we discern when it is God calling us to a particular task for Him, rather than just our own desires or impressions?

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**5.** Verse 12 of chapter 28 records that David gave his son and successor “the pattern of all that he had by the spirit.” This pattern seemingly was not merely an oral communication, but a written document or possibly even some type of model (see verse 19). Why is the phrase “by the spirit” significant?

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**6.** In his final instructions to Solomon, David advised, “Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD” (1 Chronicles 28:20). What are the dangers of allowing fear to come in when God calls us to do something that seems beyond our abilities? What should we do to vanquish fear when it threatens us?

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**7.** In the first verse of chapter 29, David spoke to the people concerning the Temple construction project, telling them, “The work is great.” He went on to explain that the work was great because the house was to be for God. What four words in verse 2 indicate how David prepared in order to assist his son with this great task? What details provided in verses 2-5 attest to the truth of his statement?

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**8.** David told the assembled congregation, “I have set my affection to the house of my God” (1 Chronicles 29:3), and gave abundantly from his personal fortune toward the construction of the Temple. David’s will- ingness and generosity set a good example for the people of the nation. In verse 5, he asked them, “And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?” The Hebrew word translated *service* implies giving what is needed liberally and voluntarily. Verses 6-9 reveal that in response, the people not only committed to assist in the labor of building the Temple, but they also contributed generously of their personal treasures to finance the project. What important concept about financial resources did David state in verse 14?

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**9.** At the close of 1 Chronicles, the author summa- rized the forty years of David’s reign, and gave a short account of his death. Though David clearly had done his best to pass on his spiritual values and the lessons he had learned to his son Solomon, his real legacy was his relationship with God. What legacy or advice do you want to leave behind when you leave this world?

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## CONCLUSION

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The Book of 1 Chronicles was written as an encouragement to God’s people, to emphasize their spiritual heritage and remind them of doctrinal and moral truths. It reminds us of the need to maintain our spiritual foundation, the value of tracing our own godly heritage, and the importance of passing on God’s truth to the next generation.

1. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston, M.A. (London: William Whiston, M.A., 1737), VII.15.2 (390).

# DISCOVERY

## Solomon's Reign



### SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

2 Chronicles 1:1 through 9:31

### KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.” (2 Chronicles 1:11-12)

### BACKGROUND

The Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles were written after the Jews returned from seventy years in Babylonian captivity. The author (traditionally assumed to be Ezra) wanted to encourage God's chosen people, the Jews, to keep their spiritual heritage alive, so in these books he emphasized the record of Judah's righteous kings who had zealously sought to turn the people back to God.

Much of the material in 2 Chronicles, which spans from 970 B.C. to 538 B.C., adds to the parallel historical record found in the Books of 1 and 2 Kings. The nine chapters of today's text center on the reign of Solomon, the son of David, whose most significant accomplishment was the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. Chapter 1 opens with an account of the new king gathering Israel together at Gibeon and his wise choice when given the opportunity to ask God for whatever he desired. Chapters 2 through 4 describe the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem and its furnishings, and chapters 5 through 7 cover the dedication of the house of God. Chapters 8 and 9 provide concluding commentary on the reign of Solomon, relating some of his other building activities and the visit of the Queen of Sheba. The text concludes with an account of Solomon's death and burial.

As readers of Chronicles today, we want to learn lessons from the past. When we review Judah's history, we see the blessings that accrued to the godly leaders, and the downward spiral of chaos and destruction caused by those who were wicked and idolatrous. While God hates sin, these books remind us that He also desires to forgive and restore those who will turn to Him in humility and repentance.

### QUESTIONS

1. Solomon took the throne of Judah in 970 B.C. as the divinely appointed successor to his father, David. After assembling the leaders and congregation of Israel at Gibeon, he made offerings to God. That very night, the Lord appeared to Solomon and told the new king to ask whatever he desired from Him. Solomon's request is recorded in 2 Chronicles 1:8-10. What characteristics of Solomon are revealed by his response, and how can they serve as an example to us when we bring our requests to God?

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2. Solomon received wisdom directly and miraculously from God. This was not just extensive knowledge or practical know-how—it was the ability to make wise decisions based on proper discernment and good judgment. What are some of the ways God gives us wisdom? How will having this help us with our responsibilities at home, school, work, and in the service of God?

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3. God was pleased with Solomon's request for wisdom. Based on verses 11-12 of chapter 1, what additional blessings did the Lord grant Solomon?

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4. Chapter 2 reveals that Solomon spared no effort in the construction of the Temple. He employed over 100,000 people to quarry the right stones from the mountains and bring them to the Temple site. He asked the king of Tyre to sell him the renowned cedars of Lebanon from his territory for the Temple building project. He sought out craftsmen who were “cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,

and in iron, and in purple, and crimson, and blue, and that can skill to grave” (2 Chronicles 2:7). Why do you think Solomon incorporated superior materials and the work of professional artisans as he began his God-given task? What application do you see for us as we work in the service of the Lord?

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**5.** Chapter 3 indicates that the permanent house of the Lord was located on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. The Holy of Holies (or Most Holy Place) in the Temple’s interior is described in verses 8-14. Using these verses, briefly describe this most sacred place within the Temple in your own words.

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**6.** When the Temple was completed, the implements that had been prepared and the gifts King David had dedicated were brought into the Temple treasury. Then Solomon called Israel together for the ceremonial dedication and the moving of the Ark of the Covenant to its new location in the Temple. All twenty-four divisions of priests were present for this sacred occasion. They joined the “Levites which were the singers,” the instrumentalists playing cymbals, psalteries, and harps, and 120 priests playing trumpets. Together, the whole group made “one sound . . . in praising and thanking the Lord” (2 Chronicles 5:12-13). According to verses 13-14, what happened as this was done?

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**7.** Solomon’s prayer of dedication, recorded in 2 Chronicles 6:12–42, did not imply that God could be contained in the Temple or found only there. However, he did ask God to manifest His presence in the Temple in a special way and to be particularly attentive to the prayers offered there. In verses 22-39, Solomon made seven specific petitions to God, and each was directly associated with worship at the Temple. Name at least three of the petitions made in these verses.

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**8.** After the Temple dedication, God appeared again to Solomon and assured the king that his prayer had been heard. However, the blessings promised were

provisional. In 2 Chronicles 7:14, God told Solomon that when trouble came upon the people because of their sins, four conditions would need to be met to obtain forgiveness and forestall judgment: they would need to humble themselves, pray, seek after God, and turn away from their sinful behavior. When those conditions were met, God promised that He would hear from Heaven, forgive their sins, and heal their land. What are some of the conditions we need to meet in order to benefit from the promises in the Bible?

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**9.** The first twelve verses of chapter 9 describe the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon’s kingdom. Since King Solomon’s wisdom was widely known, she came with great and difficult questions for him. According to verse 2, “Solomon told her [answered] all her questions.” At times, people may come to us with “hard questions” related to our faith. How can we be sure our responses will reflect godly wisdom?

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**10.** While Solomon accomplished much during his reign, he drifted away from God in his later years. In verses 29-31 of chapter 9, the writer omitted any reference to this; he simply reported that Solomon reigned for forty years, that he died and was buried in the city of David, and that his son Rehoboam succeeded him on the throne. Considering the many advantages God had blessed Solomon with, these few closing words seem like a sad obituary. What legacy do you want to leave behind when you pass from this world?

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## CONCLUSION

Solomon began his reign of Judah with humility and dependence upon God and in response, God blessed him with wisdom, fame, and riches. He had many accomplishments during his forty-year reign, but he ultimately strayed from devotion to the true God. His deviation brought changes not only to his own life, but also to Israel.



## Divided Kingdom and Kings of Judah, Part 1

### SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

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2 Chronicles 10:1 through 20:37

### KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

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“Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.” (2 Chronicles 20:17)

### BACKGROUND

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After covering the reigns of David and Solomon in previous chapters of 1 and 2 Chronicles, today’s text begins when Israel divided into two nations: the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Chapter 10 to the end of 2 Chronicles is the history of the kings of Judah. There is a pattern evident throughout these chapters: when the king followed God, the people did as well, resulting in national peace. When the king turned from God, the people also often rebelled, and suffered the consequences.

After Solomon’s death in 930 B.C., his son Rehoboam ascended to the throne. The new ruler solicited advice from Solomon’s counselors as well as his own peers, but he did not seek God for help. When he took the recommendation of his contemporaries, the ten northern tribes declared their independence, leaving only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin under Rehoboam’s control. To strengthen Judah, Rehoboam fortified fifteen cities to the west and south of Jerusalem. However, he did evil and allowed the people of Judah to worship idols, “because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord” (2 Chronicles 12:14).

Abijah followed Rehoboam on Judah’s throne, and reigned three years. Although Abijah was not righteous, God worked for Judah during this time because the people continued to worship and honor Him. Chapter 13 describes a battle that took place between the armies of Abijah and those of Jeroboam, ruler of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Through God’s power, Judah won even though they were greatly outnumbered by Israel.

The next king of Judah, Asa, ruled over the nation for forty-one years; his reign is summarized in chapters 14 through 16. Asa did right before God at the beginning of his reign and there was peace and prosperity in the land for ten years. Chapter 15 records that in the fifteenth year of his reign, Asa was warned by the prophet Azariah to continue seeking God. His first recorded act after this warning was to “put away the abominable idols” throughout the land (15:8). Then he gathered all

the people of Judah together, and they were joined by some from the northern tribes who wanted to be part of a committed return to God. The people renewed their covenant with God, pledging to seek Him with all their hearts. Sadly, after God had given Asa great victories, he stopped trusting the Lord, became resistant to God, and suffered from disease.

Chapters 17 through 20 record the reign of Jehoshaphat, who succeeded his father Asa. Because he sought God and followed the Lord’s commandments, God established the kingdom in his hand, and “he had riches and honour in abundance” (2 Chronicles 17:5). God brought mighty deliverances when Jehoshaphat looked to the Lord for help. However, later in his life he made an unwise military alliance with the wicked King Ahab of Israel, and this led to Judah’s involvement in a conflict with Syria in which Ahab was killed. Jehoshaphat’s life was spared and he returned safely to Jerusalem, but he was rebuked by Jehu the prophet for his alliance with Ahab. The final chapter of today’s text relates the invasion of Judah by the combined forces of the Moabites, Ammonites, and other allies, Jehoshaphat’s prayer, and the subsequent deliverance of Judah and defeat of her enemies.

Today, God is still willing to “show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” (2 Chronicles 16:9). We can learn from the example of the kings of Judah how important it is to avail ourselves of that promise.

### QUESTIONS

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1. When Rehoboam was made king, the people of Israel (led by Jeroboam) requested that the “heavy yoke” put upon them by Solomon be reduced. What did Rehoboam’s two groups of counselors suggest his response should be? Whose advice did he follow?  
2 Chronicles 10:6-11

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2. As the Northern Kingdom of Israel plunged into idolatry, some of the Levites and other true worshippers of God migrated to Judah. These people “set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel” (2 Chronicles 11:16). What does it mean to set our hearts to seek God and what will be some of the evidences?

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**3.** Chapter 12 records that at the beginning of King Rehoboam’s reign, he seemed to listen to God’s prophet and to obey. However, when he was stronger and the kingdom appeared to be going well, he forsook God. As a result, God allowed the king of Egypt and his allies to capture many of Judah’s fortified cities, and then come toward Jerusalem. When the prophet told Rehoboam and the princes this invasion was because they had forsaken God, what was their reaction?  
2 Chronicles 12:6

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**4.** Abijah, Rehoboam’s son, had war with the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Israel had turned away from God and served idols. In contrast, Judah had maintained the worship and sacrifices as commanded by God. What was Abijah’s warning to Jeroboam and Israel? (See 2 Chronicles 13:12.) Given the relative size of the opposing armies, how can the outcome of the battle be an encouragement to us today?

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**5.** The forty-one-year rule of Asa is covered in 2 Chronicles chapters 14-16. His beginning was good. During the first part of his reign, he commanded the people of Judah to seek God, and the Lord gave them rest from their enemies for ten years. According to 2 Chronicles 14:7, Asa recognized this as an opportunity to build defenses against potential future attacks. What spiritual lesson can we learn from this?

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**6.** The end of 2 Chronicles 14 tells how God gave Asa and Judah victory over the Ethiopians who came against Judah with far larger forces. In Chapter 15, God sent a prophet to warn Asa of the necessity to continue to lean on God. In response, Asa instituted reforms. He put away the idols in Judah, removed anything related to the practice of idolatry, and restored the altar of the Lord. Then he gathered the people of Judah, as well as some from the Northern Kingdom who wanted to truly serve God, and they entered into a covenant to serve God with all their hearts. What was the result?  
2 Chronicles 15:15 and 19

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**7.** In chapter 16 we read that despite the victory God gave Asa and Judah over the Ethiopians and their allies, when Israel began to fortify a border city, Asa hired the armies of Syria to help instead of relying on God. In response, God sent Hanani the seer to rebuke Asa. According to verse 10, what was Asa’s reaction? What can we learn from this exchange?

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**8.** When Jehoshaphat became king, he purposed to serve God. We read in 2 Chronicles 17:7-9 that one of the programs he instituted was to educate the people regarding God’s Law. Teaching God’s Word is vital today as well. What are some ways people can be taught the truths of the Bible?

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**9.** Chapter 20 of 2 Chronicles describes the miraculous deliverance God gave Judah when a great number of enemy forces invaded. Jehoshaphat responded to the threat of invasion in three ways: he feared, he set himself to seek God, and he called the nation to pray and fast. His prayer in verses 6-12 ends with these words, “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.” What was God’s response through the prophet, Jahaziel, and what strategy did Judah use? 2 Chronicles 20:14-17, 21

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## **CONCLUSION**

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The same God who worked for the people of Judah wants to work for us today. May we seek to obey His instructions and trust Him with all our hearts. As we do, He will be glorified in us, He will be with us as we face spiritual battles, and we can expect Him to be mindful of every detail of our lives.

# DISCOVERY

## Kings of Judah, Part 2



### SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

2 Chronicles 21:1 through 32:33

### KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes.” (2 Chronicles 29:8)

### BACKGROUND

In this portion of 2 Chronicles, the author continues his history of the kings of Judah. He traced the achievements and failures of nine rulers, beginning with King Jehoram in 848 B.C. and continuing through the reign of King Hezekiah, which ended with his death in 687 B.C. Of these rulers, only four—Joash, Amaziah, Jotham, and Hezekiah—followed God and led the people in renewing their commitment to Him. Although not perfect in every regard, those four attempted to obey God’s laws, did away with the places of idol worship, refrained from alliances with ungodly nations, and generally encouraged the people in the worship of the one true God. One other king, Uzziah, had a positive beginning and accomplished much good for Judah, but pride was his downfall near the end of his rule.

Today’s text reveals that throughout the history of Judah, the nation fluctuated between obedience to God and apostasy. The reigning king’s response to God affected the spiritual condition of the people and determined whether or not God would send judgment upon the nation. When David’s descendants on Judah’s throne were faithful to God, Judah experienced victory in battle, success in government, and peace with other nations. Conversely, when the rulers led the people into idolatry, the nation suffered.

Just as Judah’s faithfulness to God was key to her peace and survival as a nation, so our obedience to God as individuals is vital to our peace and spiritual survival today. If we forget that all our blessings and benefits come from God, we are in danger of the same spiritual and moral collapse that Judah ultimately experienced.

### QUESTIONS

1. Chapter 21 describes the reign of King Jehoram, who succeeded his father Jehoshaphat on the throne of Judah. He was married to Athaliah, the idolatrous daughter of Israel’s wicked King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. Verse 6 of chapter 21 notes that Jehoram “walked in the way of the kings of Israel.” This was a negative evaluation, because while the Southern

Kingdom of Judah had both godly and wicked kings, the Northern Kingdom of Israel had only evil rulers. According to verses 8-10, what were some of the consequences to Jehoram and Judah because he forsook the God of his fathers?

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2. Chapter 22 of 2 Chronicles relates that Athalia used the death of her son Ahaziah (Jehoahaz) to assume control of the kingdom. She immediately destroyed all the royal family—her own grandchildren—to eliminate any who might resist her efforts to gain the throne. The only survivor was Ahaziah’s youngest son, Joash. Ahaziah’s sister, Jehoshabeath, and her husband, Jehoiada the high priest, concealed the baby Joash in the Temple and then kept him hidden for six years before establishing him on the throne of Judah. Why do you think this couple risked their own lives to preserve the life of the young prince?

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3. After establishing Joash upon the throne of Judah, Jehoiada continued to be a powerful influence for good in the kingdom. Verses 16-17 of chapter 23 record that he led the people in making a covenant of recommitment to God and then in destroying the temple of Baal at Jerusalem. In verse 18-21, Jehoiada reinstated worship practices based on what God had revealed to Moses and David. What significance do you see in the statement in 2 Chronicles 24:2 that Joash did what was right in God’s sight “all the days of Jehoiada the priest”?

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4. Chapter 25 is a record of the twenty-nine-year reign of Amaziah, who ascended the throne of Judah following the death of his father, Joash. While Amaziah began his reign doing what was right in the sight of the Lord, verse 2 indicates that he did not serve God with

a perfect heart. What do you think “a perfect heart” means in this context? What actions of Amaziah as described in verse 14 support your evaluation?

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**5.** The fifty-two-year reign of King Uzziah, described in chapter 26, was the second longest in Judah’s history. Uzziah had a positive beginning and accomplished much good for Judah. Read verses 6-15 and summarize what material changes Uzziah made for the nation.

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**6.** After accomplishing so much for the Kingdom of Judah, what led to Uzziah’s downfall? 2 Chronicles 26:16

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**7.** Verses 9-15 of chapter 28 tell of a remarkable act of courage: the intervention of the prophet Oded, who reproved Israel’s military leaders as they were returning home from battle. What did he tell them and what was the result?

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**8.** If we face circumstances in our lives that require courage, what can we learn from the prophet Oded that might help us?

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**9.** Chapters 29 through 32 of 2 Chronicles are a record of the twenty-nine-year reign of King Hezekiah, the fifteenth king of Judah. Hezekiah is considered by many Bible scholars to be the greatest of the reformer kings of the nation. Verse 2 of chapter 29 states that “he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.” The people of Judah had turned from God to idols, but Hezekiah attempted to completely wipe out all vestiges of idolatrous worship—he destroyed or removed pagan altars, idols, and temples. Based on the following verses, what other actions did Hezekiah take toward reform in Judah? 2 Chronicles 29:3-5, 10, 20-21; 30:1; 31:2

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**10.** In Hezekiah’s time, the Assyrian Empire was the superpower that controlled most of the Middle East. Chapter 32 records how Sennacherib tried to overthrow Judah in order to force the people to pay tribute. Hezekiah made diligent efforts to fortify Jerusalem against the expected assault: he strengthened the city walls, added another wall around the city, and prepared armament. He also diverted the spring outside the city that provided Jerusalem with water, channeling the water through an underground tunnel to provide a water supply in event of a siege. Based on 2 Chronicles 32:6-8 and 20, what other and even more important actions did Hezekiah take to prepare for the assault?

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## CONCLUSION

The history recorded for us by the author of Chronicles teaches that a nation that does not follow God and abide by His instructions will never be successful.





## Final Kings of Judah and Captivity

### SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

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2 Chronicles 33:1 through 36:23

### KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

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“Go, enquire of the LORD 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 the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book.” (2 Chronicles 34:21)

### BACKGROUND

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Today’s text describes the reigns of the last six kings of Judah and concludes the books of Chronicles. From his vantage point in the post-exilic period, the author reviewed the Israelite monarchy in order to encourage God’s people to keep their faith and traditions of worship alive.

Second Chronicles summarizes the reigns of twenty kings of Judah, spanning from 970 B.C. to 586 B.C., when Judah was conquered by the forces of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar and ceased to exist as an independent nation. The Northern Kingdom of Israel preceded Judah into captivity in 722 B.C. when the nation fell to Assyria. As in 1 Chronicles, the author’s focus in 2 Chronicles was on moral lessons from the reigns of Judah’s rulers, rather than a complete record of historical facts. For example, he devoted two entire chapters to the rule of righteous King Josiah, while the reigns of the final four evil kings of Judah are summarized in just sixteen verses.

In today’s text, chapter 33 describes the reign of Manasseh, who followed his father Hezekiah in ruling Judah. Manasseh was a desperately evil king, but when he faced the bitter consequences of his sins, he humbly repented. God restored him to the throne of Judah, and he went on to institute spiritual reform in the nation. However, that reform was short-lived; Manasseh’s son and successor, Amon, was also evil and was killed by his servants after just two years on the throne. Chapters 34-35 are a record of the reign of King Josiah, who ruled for thirty-one years—a time of peace, prosperity, and reform in the nation. The concluding chapter of 2 Chronicles summarizes the reigns of the nation’s last four kings: Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim (originally Eliakim), Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah (originally Mattaniah). The final, chaotic years of Judah are covered in verses 17-21, which describe the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the people to Babylon.

The last two verses of 2 Chronicles record the decree of King Cyrus of Persia in 538 B.C., which allowed the Jewish exiles in Babylon to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their Temple. In orchestrating their return, God reassured the people of His presence and reaffirmed that His promises would never fail.

### QUESTIONS

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1. In any ranking of corrupt kings, Manasseh would be near the top. Several of the heinous sins of this fourteenth ruler of Judah are mentioned in chapter 33. Verse 2 states that he “did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen . . .” Manasseh’s apostasy and evil actions influenced the people of Judah to turn away from the reforms of his father, Hezekiah. However, when Manasseh was carried away captive to Babylon, he “besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly” (verse 12), crying out to God for deliverance. What details provided in the text prove that Manasseh’s repentance was genuine? How did God respond?  
2 Chronicles 33:13-16

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2. Even the brief description in chapter 33 of Manasseh’s actions before he repented is horrifying. He worshiped pagan gods, rebuilt the high places destroyed by his father Hezekiah, and offered his own sons as burnt sacrifices. His blatant sin could make one wonder how God could ever forgive such an individual. What does God’s response to Manasseh tell us about His nature?

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3. Amon, who followed Manasseh on the throne of Judah, was twenty-two years of age when he began to rule. The author of Chronicles described Amon’s reign only briefly, and characterized this king as being “evil in the sight of the LORD.” When Amon was

assassinated by his servants, the people appointed his son Josiah as his successor. Although Josiah's father and grandfather had set an example of wickedness, Josiah chose to follow God. What actions early in Josiah's reign indicated his purpose to lead Judah in seeking the God of David? 2 Chronicles 34:3-7

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**4.** After Josiah's energetic campaign to rid Judah of idolatry, he began cleansing the neglected Temple in Jerusalem, much as his predecessor Hezekiah had done (see 2 Chronicles 29). In the process, God's Word was rediscovered. When it was read to Josiah, he was shocked and distressed to see how far his nation had departed from God's commandments. What did Josiah do in response to what he heard from God's Word? 2 Chronicles 34:19-22, 29-33

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**5.** Chapter 35 focuses on the celebration of the Passover called for by Josiah as part of the reforms he instituted in Judah. The last Passover of note had taken place in the days of Hezekiah (see 2 Chronicles 30:1-3) and Josiah knew that after so many years had elapsed, it would take an enormous amount of preparation to properly conduct this one. Verse 2 indicates that he "set the priests in their charges [duties], and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD." The priests needed to be both "set" (appointed) and "encouraged" to accomplish the needed work. In verses 4 and 6, Josiah commanded the Levites to "prepare yourselves" and to "sanctify yourselves, and prepare your brethren." In what ways can we prepare ourselves to serve God effectively and offer spiritual encouragement to others?

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**6.** The battle described in verses 20-24 of chapter 35 took place in 609 B.C. Three years earlier, forces of the growing Babylonian Empire had overthrown the Assyrian capital of Nineveh, and Pharaoh Necho of Egypt had allied himself with the remaining Assyrians in an attempt to halt Babylon's further expansion. Necho's armies marched through Judah on their way to join the Assyrians. Verse 21 indicates that Josiah was warned not to interfere by a pagan king. Although this king was momentarily used as a messenger for God, this was an unusual source for counsel. As Christians, where do we go for counsel and instruction?

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**7.** Chapter 36 covers the final years of Judah by summarizing the reigns of the nation's last four kings—all of whom were evil. Verses 14-16 indicate that the people "transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen." They polluted the Temple, mocked God's messengers, and despised His words. What judgment did God send upon them as a result? 2 Chronicles 36:17-20

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**8.** The concluding words of 2 Chronicles 36 (verses 22-23) are a brief appendix in which the author recorded the proclamation of Cyrus, King of Persia, and his request for volunteers to return to Jerusalem to build a house for God. What is indicated by the fact that Cyrus' spirit was "stirred up" by the Lord seventy years after the enactment of God's judgment?

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## CONCLUSION

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As we read the Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, we are reminded that trouble comes when the laws of God are abandoned, and blessings come when the instructions of God are followed. This was an important message for the exiles at the end of their captivity in Babylon, and it is still an important message for us today.

# DISCOVERY

## The Book of Ezra



### SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Ezra 1:1 through 10:44

### KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel, did eat, and kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.” (Ezra 6:21-22)

### BACKGROUND

The Book of Ezra provides a vital link in the historical record of the Jewish people. In 722 B.C., the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel. When the Southern Kingdom of Judah was overthrown by Nebuchadnezzar’s armies in 586 B.C. and the people were carried away to Babylon, Israel ceased to exist as an independent nation. Ezra records how the Jews returned to their homeland, their struggle to survive, and their efforts to rebuild what had been destroyed.

Restoration is a main theme of the book: not only restoration of the exiles to their homeland, but also restoration of the proper worship of God after years of captivity. Ezra reminded the people that despite their failure to obey God and abide by their covenant with Him, He had not forgotten them.

The Book of Ezra can be divided into two sections. Chapters 1-6 document the first return of exiles under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the people’s rebuilding of the Temple despite opposition to their efforts, and the eventual completion and dedication of the Temple. Chapters 7-10 record Ezra’s journey to Jerusalem about fifty-eight years later with a second group of returnees, and his efforts to bring about spiritual reformation.

Both sections offer hope for every generation. Those who are serving God can be encouraged by how He enables His people to overcome challenges and accomplish His will. Those who are bound by sin can learn that God offers deliverance and will accept and restore those who seek Him in true repentance.

### QUESTIONS

1. The prophet Jeremiah had foretold that Babylon would be punished for their iniquity. He also prophesied that after the people of Judah spent seventy years of captivity in Babylon, God would bring them back to their homeland (see Jeremiah 25:12 and 29:10). Isaiah

foretold that a Gentile ruler named Cyrus would rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple (see Isaiah 44:28). In 539 B.C., just prior to the events in the Book of Ezra, the armies of King Cyrus of Persia overthrew Babylon. What events are described in Ezra 1:1-3, and what characteristic of God is demonstrated by these events?

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2. Verse 5 of chapter 1 indicates that “all them whose spirit God had raised” decided to return to Jerusalem after King Cyrus’ proclamation. What do you think is meant by that phrase, and why is it important?

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3. Chapter 2 lists the people who joined Zerubbabel for this journey. In so doing, the returnees indicated their faith in God’s promise to restore them to their land. How did some of the “chief of the fathers” further demonstrate their trust and commitment to God? Ezra 2:68-69

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4. The Jews had not been able to offer sacrifices to God during their exile, as this could only be done in the place God ordained (see Deuteronomy 12:11-14). Ezra 3:2 records that one of the first official acts of the returning exiles was to build the altar of God. Why do you think the people built the altar before rebuilding the Temple or the city wall?

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5. Ezra 4:1 mentions “the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin.” These adversaries were Samaritans—descendants of Assyrians who had intermarried with Jews when Israel fell to Assyria in 722 B.C. The Samaritans claimed to worship the true God, but they combined rituals from the Law with superstition and idolatrous practices. Any partnership with them would have been spiritually dangerous, so when they offered to help with the rebuilding, the leaders of Judah refused. Based on verses 4-5, how did the Samaritans then attempt to hinder the rebuilders?

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6. Ezra 4:24 records that the Jews abandoned the Temple rebuilding project, and this pause lasted for about ten years. However, in Ezra 5:1-2, we read that construction resumed due to the influence of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Think back to those who have encouraged you to serve God and fulfill His plan for your life. What are some specific ways they helped you spiritually?

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7. When building resumed, so did challenges. Chapter 5 records a letter sent by Tatnai to King Darius, suggesting that he research whether the previous king, Cyrus, had actually given permission for the house of God in Jerusalem to be built. A search was made, and a scroll that recorded Cyrus’ proclamation was found. What did King Darius command in his subsequent response to Tatnai’s letter? Ezra 6:7-10

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8. About fifty-eight years after the dedication of the Temple, Ezra and another group of exiles traveled to Jerusalem from Babylon. Details of their journey are given in Ezra 7:6-10, including that the “good hand of

his God” was upon Ezra in this undertaking. Verse 10 explains why this was so. What threefold purpose did Ezra express in that verse?

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9. The returning exiles led by Ezra assembled at “the river that runneth to Ahava” (Ezra 8:15). While encamped there, Ezra proclaimed a fast and led the people in prayer, seeking God’s protection as they traveled. Since the journey had been authorized by King Artaxerxes, Ezra could have asked for a military presence to accompany them. Why was Ezra reluctant to request this? Ezra 8:22

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10. Chapters 9-10 record that after Ezra’s arrival in Judah, he found that many of the Jewish people had intermarried with people of the region in violation of God’s commandment. In response, he fell before God in prayer. What can we learn about sin and God’s response to it from Ezra’s heartfelt petition, recorded in Ezra 9:6-9?

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## CONCLUSION

Ezra’s commitment, dedication, and spiritual leadership reveals how a godly man can help lead a nation toward God. Times may be dark in our culture today, but some are still willing to stand for God and the truth. We want to be among that number!

## NOTES

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# DISCOVERY

## The Book of Nehemiah



### SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Nehemiah 1:1 through 13:31

### KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.”  
(Nehemiah 6:15-16)

### BACKGROUND

When the Israelites returned to Jerusalem after their seventy-year captivity in Babylon, they found their city in ruins and its protective wall reduced to rubble, leaving the people vulnerable to attacks by their enemies. In 445 B.C., messengers carried distressing news about conditions in Jerusalem to Nehemiah, a cupbearer of the Persian King Artaxerxes. In response, Nehemiah fasted and prayed for some days, and then requested permission to go back to his homeland to rebuild the city wall.

The Book of Nehemiah records how God equipped and enabled this courageous leader to deal with monumental challenges and crisis after crisis as he proceeded with this endeavor. Nehemiah led by personal example. He prayed frequently, organized carefully, and successfully rallied the people to participate in the mammoth job of rebuilding. He persevered despite opposition and the threat of death, and under his leadership, the wall was completed in just fifty-two days.

Along with rebuilding walls of stone around the nation’s capital city, Nehemiah recognized the vital necessity of rebuilding the Law of God in the hearts of the people. After the completed wall was dedicated, he served as governor in Jerusalem two times and instituted many important religious reforms.

Over the centuries, Nehemiah’s resourceful leadership has been an inspiration to countless Christians who have been called to major tasks for the glory of God. The Book of Nehemiah teaches us that every assignment from God, whether large or small, should be undertaken with prayer and completed with faithfulness.

### QUESTIONS

**1.** The Book of Nehemiah opens with a description of when and how Nehemiah heard that the city walls and gates of Jerusalem were broken down and burned with

fire. What words in verse 4 of chapter 1 describe how he reacted? What can we learn about Nehemiah from his response?

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**2.** Verse 1 of chapter 2 indicates that Nehemiah spent months praying and seeking God before asking King Artaxerxes for permission to travel to Jerusalem to rebuild the city wall. The king willingly agreed to this plan and even provided letters of authorization for Nehemiah to acquire the supplies needed at the king’s expense. According to verses 12-16, what did Nehemiah do after arriving in Jerusalem?

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**3.** It appears from chapter 3 that all the citizens of Jerusalem were involved in the rebuilding project. While no expert carpenters were identified in Nehemiah’s list of builders, we read of priests and nobles, goldsmiths and perfume makers, and sons and daughters who engaged in the effort. The names of those who “repaired” on their assigned portion of the wall include Baruch, the son of Zabbai (Nehemiah 3:20). What is unique about Nehemiah’s description of Baruch that might serve as an example for us?

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**4.** Work for God will often meet with opposition. In chapter 4, Nehemiah described the antagonism directed toward himself and the builders of the wall, instigated by the Samaritan official Sanballat and an Ammonite officer named Tobiah. In what ways did these men attempt to hinder the rebuilders of Jerusalem’s wall? Nehemiah 4:1-3, 7-8, 11

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**5.** Nehemiah did not debate with his opponents, devise a counterattack, or even deal with his antagonists

directly other than with brief verbal replies. Instead, according to Nehemiah 4:4-5, he took the situation to God in prayer. Verse 9 indicates that he then prepared a defense by setting a watch. Verse 14 reveals that he spoke words of encouragement to the people. Based on these verses, what can we learn from Nehemiah about how to withstand opposition?

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**6.** Chapter 5 records that in addition to external opposition to the rebuilding of the wall, Nehemiah had to deal with internal contentions among the people. Verses 1-5 reveal that the people of Jerusalem were facing a dearth (food shortage) that was likely caused by crop failure or famine. To obtain food that was necessary for survival and to pay the required “king’s tribute” (taxes), the poor of the community had mortgaged their homes and property. In some cases, children had even been enslaved to pay off debts. What were the wealthy Jews doing that added to the problem? Why do you think Nehemiah responded so vehemently? Verses 6-13

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**7.** Having failed in their earlier attempts to halt the project, Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian devised another plot (see Nehemiah 6:1-4). They tried to persuade Nehemiah to join them for a conference in the plain of Ono, which was about twenty miles from Jerusalem. Their exact purpose is not revealed, but Nehemiah was aware that their intent was to do him mischief. Four times he rejected their proposals, refusing to give in to distractions that would sidetrack him from his purpose. What type of distractions might we face that could potentially hinder our efforts for God?

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**8.** In chapter 8, we read that the people gathered in front of the Water Gate to hear Ezra read the book of the Law of Moses. According to verses 9-12, the people wept openly at what they heard. Why do you think they responded in this manner?

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**9.** After confessing their rebellion and disobedience, in chapter 10 the people of Judah signed a written covenant and recommitted themselves to God. From verses 30-39, choose one of the six commitments the people of Judah made, and explain it in your own words.

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**10.** Chapters 11 and 12 tell how Nehemiah once again focused on the logistical and civic aspects of restoring Jerusalem. The city had only been sparsely repopulated after King Cyrus granted permission for the Hebrew exiles to return to Judah. Jerusalem still needed more people, so Nehemiah cast lots to select one-tenth of the people from outlying areas to move within the city walls. Nehemiah 11:2 indicates that a few people “willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.” What can we learn from their example?

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**11.** The final chapter of the Book of Nehemiah describes three reforms that Nehemiah instituted during his second stay in Jerusalem. He restored support for the Levites, renewed the Sabbath observance, and denounced mixed marriages. In each of these situations, the people had failed to honor their previous commitments. What can we do to safeguard against going back on commitments that we have made to God?

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## **CONCLUSION**

The Book of Nehemiah shows us the kind of significant impact one individual can have on a nation. Nehemiah served in secular roles, but he used his positions to restore order, stability, and a right focus on God among the people of Judah.



### SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Haggai 1:1 through 2:23

### KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Then spake Haggai the LORD’s messenger in the LORD’s message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD. And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God” (Haggai 1:13-14).

### BACKGROUND

The Persian King Cyrus’ decree in 538 B.C. gave permission for the captive Jewish exiles in Babylon to return to Judah and restore their Temple. However, it appears that many of the Jews were so rooted in Babylon after seventy years of captivity that they did not want to relocate. Bible scholars estimate that the first group of returnees, led by Zerubbabel, numbered only about fifty thousand, including women and children—a fraction of the over one million who had been exiled.

When the returning exiles arrived in Jerusalem, they were confronted with the devastation left by the armies of King Nebuchadnezzar. The city was in ruins and the glorious structure that once was Solomon’s Temple had been demolished. The people began rebuilding the Temple soon after their arrival in 536 B.C., but when they faced opposition from hostile neighbors, they discontinued the work (see Ezra 4:4-5, 24). Because they neglected the rebuilding of God’s house, His blessing upon them was withdrawn and the people suffered.

While the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah give accounts of the Jewish nation after the restoration from the Babylonian exile, the Book of Haggai describes a series of four messages. These were delivered by Haggai to the returned exiles in 520 B.C., about ten years after they had stopped building. With simple and direct words, he rebuked the people for their failure to finish the Temple, challenged them regarding their priorities, and called for them to obey God by renewing their efforts and completing the task.

### QUESTIONS

1. Each of Haggai’s four brief but powerful messages from God was precisely dated, and all were delivered within a period of four months. A review of the two short chapters that make up this Old Testament book

reveal that the prophet used the phrases “the word of the LORD,” “thus saith the LORD,” and other similar statements more than twenty times. Why do you think Haggai repeated this so often? What might be the significance of this repetition for us?

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2. According to Haggai 1:2, what reason did the people give for not building the Lord’s house? Why do you think they offered this excuse?

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3. In verse 4, God addressed the fact that in the interval since work had ceased on the Temple, the people had taken time to build themselves “ceiled” houses (decoratively paneled homes that were costly), while His house lay waste. What did God want the people to recognize when He told them in verse 5 to “consider your ways”?

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4. The returned exiles had allowed the house of the Lord to be neglected for ten years while they focused on their personal lives and comfort. How had God responded to the people’s failure to build the Temple? Haggai 1:6, 9-11

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5. According to verse 12 of chapter 1, how did the people react to Haggai's message? What is the significance of the date given in verse 15 when compared with the first verse of this chapter?

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6. In Haggai 1:13, God gave the people an encouraging message through the prophet, promising, "I am with you, saith the LORD." When the people were failing to obey the Lord, He had withdrawn His blessing from them, and they experienced troubles. Their obedience brought the assurance of His presence. What a great comfort! They did not need to worry about their fields, their crops, and their animals. God would see to it that these were taken care of. In what ways has the Lord been with you?

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7. In chapter 2, Haggai encouraged the people to continue the work despite the opposition and challenges they faced. In verse 3, he asked, "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory?" The older people in the community had memories of the original Temple built by Solomon, and they could clearly see that the rebuilt Temple, when completed, would not compare to it (see Ezra 3:12-13). However, this was not to be a cause for despair. In Haggai 2:4-5, what three things did Haggai exhort Zerubbabel (the civic leader of the people), Joshua (the high priest), and all the people to do?

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8. About two months after the second message, Haggai delivered his third exhortation from God. In verses 12-13 of chapter 2, the prophet instructed the people to go to the priests with two questions to

be answered from God's Law. The word "holy" is repeated in verse 12, and "unclean" is repeated in verse 13. Based on these two contrasting words and verse 14, what point do you think God was making through the questions that were to be asked of the priests?

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9. The Book of Haggai concludes with the prophet's fourth prophecy, recorded in verses 20-23 of chapter 2, which was delivered to Zerubbabel on the same day that the preceding message was given to the people. In this message, Haggai spoke of a coming upheaval, in which God would overthrow kingdoms and would shake the heavens and the earth. He promised that Zerubbabel's leadership would bear the mark of divine authority and confirmed to this leader that "I have chosen thee." Why do you think this affirmation would have been an encouragement to Zerubbabel?

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## CONCLUSION

Though Haggai is one of the shortest books in the Old Testament, the messages contained in it are profound even for today. As we obey God's commands and keep our priorities straight, we will reap the blessing of the Lord every day of our lives.

## NOTES

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# DISCOVERY

## The Book of Zechariah



### SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Zechariah 1:1 through 14:21

### KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Zechariah 1:3)

### BACKGROUND

The Book of Zechariah contains messages delivered by the prophet Zechariah to the people of Judah. Beginning in 520 B.C., Zechariah joined the prophet Haggai in urging the post-exilic Jerusalem community to continue their task of rebuilding the Temple. However, the prophet’s messages went far beyond the importance of physical rebuilding. He reminded the people of their previous spiritual failures and called them to repentance, and also affirmed God’s continued commitment to them.

Several Messianic prophecies are found in the Book of Zechariah. Zechariah’s inspired messages included that God would deliver and bless His people in a future kingdom in which the Messiah would reign throughout the world. Like many of his fellow prophets, Zechariah saw isolated glimpses of the future, so some events that were revealed to him in close succession (particularly those related to the Messiah) would actually occur thousands of years apart.

The book’s fourteen chapters divide naturally into two sections. Chapters 1-8 describe eight visions that came to the prophet by night, followed by messages about the crowning of Joshua the high priest and answers to various questions; this portion was written while the rebuilding of the Temple was taking place. The second section, chapters 9-14, are messages delivered much later, after the Temple rebuilding was complete. These chapters contain multiple references to events beyond Zechariah’s day, including the first and second comings of Christ and His Messianic reign.

The Book of Zechariah reminds us that while troubling circumstances exist in the world around us, God knows and controls the future. We cannot see even a moment ahead, but we can be sure that God keeps His promises, and He will never forsake His own.

### QUESTIONS

1. Zechariah delivered his first pronouncement to the apathetic and spiritually discouraged people of Jerusalem whose initial attempts to rebuild the Temple had been stalled for about ten years. What were the

main points that Zechariah first conveyed at God’s direction? Zechariah 1:1-6

2. In chapter 1, Zechariah described the first two of a series of eight visions. These were vivid, God-given allegories that symbolized divine truths that Zechariah was to impart to the people. What did Zechariah see in these first two visions? Zechariah 1:7-11, 18-21

3. Verses 16-17 of chapter 1 indicate that God had turned back to Israel with mercy. The scope of His commitment is seen in Zechariah’s description of future events: God’s house would be rebuilt, Jerusalem would be restored, the nation would be rebuilt and prosperous, and “the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.” The third vision, described in chapter 2, was of a man with a measuring line (verses 1-2) and towns without walls (verses 4-5). Seemingly, the future Jerusalem was measured to ensure that it would be large enough for the multitudes God would bring to it. What is the key message of both verse 5 and the final phrase of verse 8? How does that message apply to believers of our day?

4. Beginning in chapter 3, Zechariah’s visions began to deal with Judah’s moral condition. In the fourth vision, Zechariah saw Joshua the high priest (representing all of Israel) standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan at his right hand to accuse him. What took place in this vision, as described in verses 1-7?

**5.** Zechariah's fifth vision, described in chapter 4, was of a seven-branched golden candlestick—a menorah. This symbolized the Divine Presence in Jerusalem. On either side of the candlestick were two olive trees, representing Joshua (the high priest and religious leader) and Zerubbabel (the civil leader of the Judean exiles). Encouragement was offered in verses 6-10 to Zerubbabel, who had been given the responsibility of rebuilding the Temple. How do God's words to Zerubbabel in verses 6-7 offer encouragement for us?

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**6.** Chapters 5 and 6 describe Zechariah's final three visions, which disclosed details of God's intent for Israel's future. After these visions, God directed Zechariah to crown Joshua the high priest in a foreshadowing of the triumphant Messiah, Priest, and King who will one day reign. God concluded His directions by giving Zechariah a conditional promise. What was required of the people in order to see its fulfillment? Zechariah 6:15

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**7.** Two years after Zechariah's night visions, while the Temple was yet incomplete, the prophet received another message from the Lord. In it, God explained what He required of His people and why it had been necessary to punish them with exile. The people had become discouraged because of their situation, but in chapter 8 God described future changes that would take place in Israel. What specific hope did God offer the people in Zechariah 8:11-15?

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**8.** Two groupings of prophecies (chapters 9-11 and 12-14) make up the remainder of the Book of Zechariah. Both are designated as "burdens"—messages that relate to a heavy judgment of God or a prophecy of a disastrous nature. These messages were given much later than those in the first section, and they include many references to the Messiah. What event does Zechariah 9:9 foretell? What does the fact that this prophecy was fulfilled tell us about prophecies of Christ's Second Coming?

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**9.** In Zechariah 11, Zechariah obeyed God's instruction and enacted the role of a shepherd, foreshadowing the Good Shepherd who was to come. In verses 12-14, Zechariah requested compensation for the care he had bestowed upon the flock, leaving it to the recipients of that care to determine his value. In response they offered just thirty pieces of silver, which was the minimum price of a slave, or the required payment for the injury or death of a slave. This meager sum indicated their contempt for the shepherd's favor and care. What did this enactment foreshadow?

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**10.** Chapter 12 describes a time still in the future when adversarial forces will gather around Jerusalem, expecting to overthrow the city and divide up its resources. However, God will protect Jerusalem. He will enable the Jewish people to overpower their enemies quickly and supernaturally, in an indisputably divine deliverance. According to verse 10, how will the Jewish people respond after this amazing victory?

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**11.** Chapter 14 completes the prophecies of the Book of Zechariah. Verses 8-11 and 16-21 focus on the establishment of the Messiah's Kingdom and the role Jerusalem will have during the Millennial Reign. As you review these verses, what aspects of Christ's reign as described here do you look forward to and why?

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## CONCLUSION

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Zechariah, Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the people of their day did not live to see the fulfillment of all the glorious events promised in Zechariah's prophecies. However, those prophecies teach the importance of faithfulness to God's instructions and offer a glimpse into the glorious future for Israel and all of God's children.

# DISCOVERY

## The Book of Malachi



### SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Malachi 1:1 through 4:6

### KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” (Malachi 3:16-17)

### BACKGROUND

Decades before the prophet Malachi came on the scene, the Jewish people had returned from their seventy-year captivity in Babylon. Initially, they were committed to rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple and restoring their system of worship. Many believed that their Messiah would soon come and that their nation would once again experience the prosperity and blessing it had enjoyed in the time of David.

However, as the years went by, the exiles who chose to return had become disillusioned. As their bright hopes failed to materialize, depression and discouragement settled upon the community. They wondered about God’s love for them as His chosen people. More and more of them drifted away from their covenant commitment to God. And year by year, the prosperity and blessing they hoped for failed to materialize. Instead, their crops were stunted and their harvests disappointing.

The pure worship God had commanded was compromised as the priests became careless in the performance of their duties and neglected their responsibility to instruct the people, who openly questioned the authority and ways of God. Imperfect animals were offered as sacrifices and the people ceased paying their tithes and offerings. Social injustice became common, and the Sabbath was desecrated by greedy merchants. Intermarriage between Jewish men and heathen women became widespread, often preceded by divorcing their Jewish wives. The people were in dire peril of being absorbed by the ungodly cultures around them.

It was to this dark situation that Malachi was called by God. In bold and severe words of condemnation, he rebuked the people for their neglect of the Temple, their false and profane worship, and their willful disobedience of God’s commandments. However, his messages also conveyed the love of

God, who was willing to offer mercy and forgiveness to His disillusioned and discouraged people.

### QUESTIONS

1. The Book of Malachi is characterized as a “burden” in the first verse of chapter 1. In the original Hebrew, that word is *massa*, and it refers to a prophetic utterance describing a heavy judgment of great weight or importance against a nation or people. In Malachi 1:2, what was God’s first statement to His people? How do you think that statement fits together with the characterization of Malachi’s message as a burden?

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2. The people responded to God’s assertion of His love for them with a question: “Wherein hast thou loved us?” In essence, they were demanding proof. What two Bible characters did God inspire Malachi to use as an example of God’s love and care?

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3. In Malachi 1:6-8, Malachi stated that the priests had despised God by not giving Him the honor due to a father or master. The priests disputed that charge, asking, “Wherein have we despised thy name?” Malachi responded by pointing out that they had offered imperfect sacrifices to God—animals that were blind, lame, or sick—although the Law clearly prohibited offering blemished sacrifices. We do not offer animal sacrifices as part of worship now, so what might constitute an imperfect offering to God in our day?

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4. God chose the Jewish people to be a light to the nations and to communicate His message throughout the world. They had failed in this, and as a result, God declared, “Neither will I accept an offering at your hand” (Malachi 1:10). Despite the Jews’ failure,

God inspired Malachi to state a great Biblical truth in Malachi 1:11. How would you explain this promise in your own words?

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**5.** Chapter 2 continues God’s condemnation of the priests. Malachi warned that if the priests did not take God’s instructions to heart, they would bring punishment upon themselves. In verses 4-6, the prophet pointed to the covenant God had made with Levi and his descendants, who had been appointed to serve God in the Temple worship. (In this passage, Levi is a personification of the priestly order, rather than the son of Jacob and Leah.) Based on verses 5-6, what godly characteristics of the priests in the past made them a righteous example for the corrupted priests of Malachi’s day?

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**6.** In verses 10-17 of chapter 2, Malachi addressed the people of Judah. Although they were not openly declaring that they had rejected God, they were completely disregarding His instructions in a very important matter. This brought a stern rebuke by the prophet, recorded in verse 11: “Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem.” What sin had the people committed? Why do you think Malachi used such strong words to condemn their actions?

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**7.** In the final verse of chapter 2, Malachi asserted that the people had “wearied” God with their words. They had complained that the wicked prospered and had it better than the godly. They thought it was unjust of God to bless others and not them, and asked, “Where is the God of judgment?” God responded in chapter 3. Verse 1 indicates that one would be sent by God to “prepare the way” for another Messenger. Jesus said this was John the Baptist. The “messenger of the covenant” was Jesus Christ. According to Malachi 3:3, what would this second Messenger do?

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**8.** In verses 7-12 of chapter 3, the next question posed by the people was, “Wherein [how] shall we return [to God]?” Malachi responded by urging the people to stop neglecting to pay their tithes, comparing this to robbing God. What promise was associated with the instruction to “bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse” in verse 10? What significance does this promise have for us?

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**9.** Malachi 3:16-17 records that there were a few faithful ones in Judah who feared the Lord and “spake often one to another” despite the arrogant doubters around them. They received God’s commendation: a “book of remembrance” was written about them and those who “thought upon his name.” In verse 17, God promised that He would claim them for His own, “in that day when I make up my jewels.” In every generation, God has those who trust in Him— His “jewels.” What are some ways that Christians are like jewels?

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**9.** The final chapter of the Book of Malachi begins with the prophet’s warning of coming judgment upon “all that do wickedly.” However, a beautiful promise is given in verses 2-3. What is that promise?

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## CONCLUSION

The Book of Malachi is the final prophecy of the Old Testament. The two concluding verses foretell the coming of John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of Jesus Christ. After it was written, a period of about four hundred years passed before the advent of Christ and the ushering in of the New Covenant.

# Key Locations in 1 & 2 Chronicles

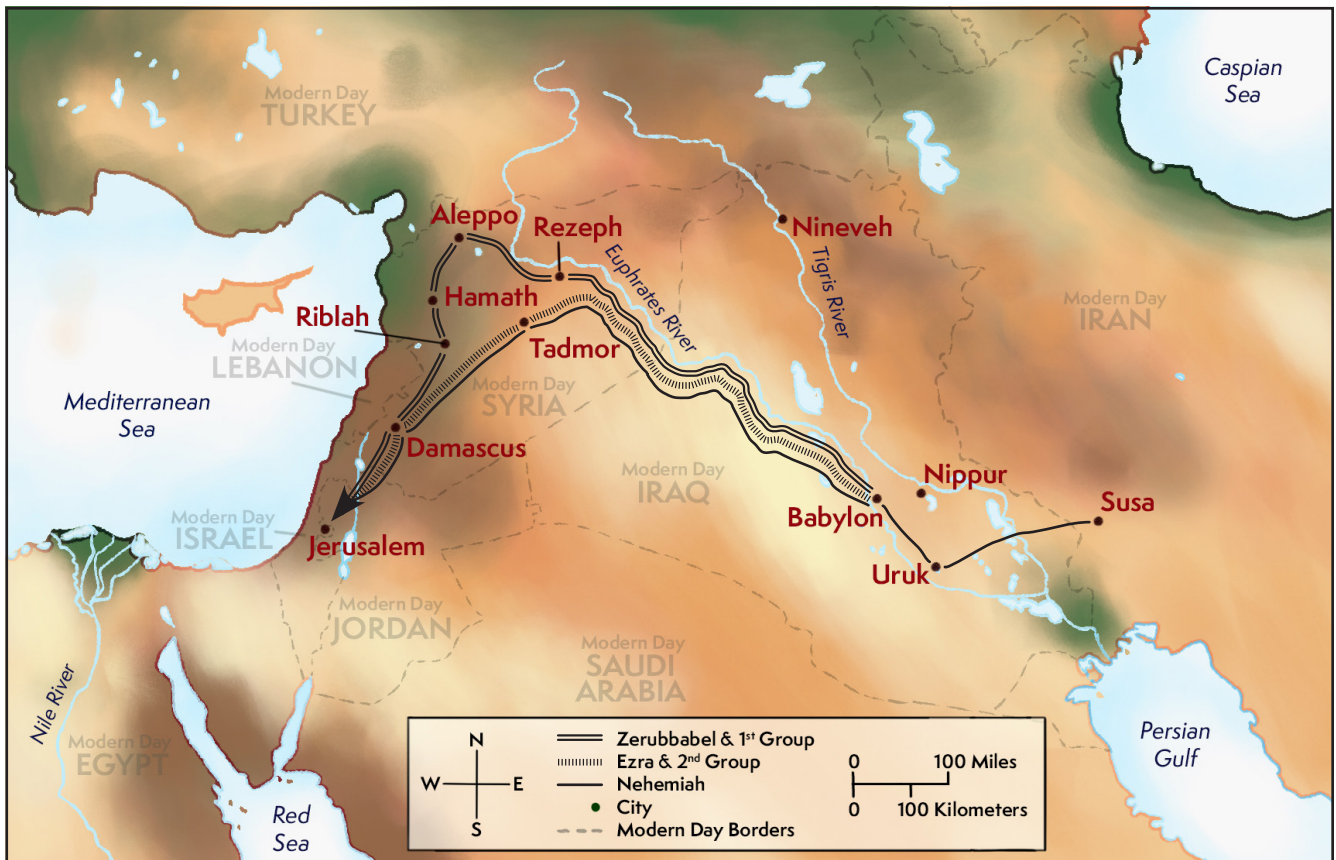


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# The Exiles' Journey to Babylon



# The Exiles' Journey Home



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