

## II CHRONICLES

The quote which I hear most frequently from II Chronicles comes to King Solomon as a response to his prayer of dedication for the new temple in Jerusalem. The Lord comes to him in the night saying, *“I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain or command the locust to devour the land or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”* (II Chronicles 7:12-14)

These verses are often applied to encourage participation in the National Day of Prayer or when a Christian leader is calling for repentance from a problem in our country. For the writer and original audience of II Chronicles, these are words of hope. This is the experience lived in the past, and this is the promise they can expect for their future.

The first hearers of Chronicles were the exiles who began to return to Jerusalem in 538 B.C. After 70 or more years in Babylon, they were convinced that their leaders and whole nation had previously turned away from God. Exile was the punishment for idolatry and simply ignoring God. Now they are returning, literally, to Jerusalem and spiritually to God.

The Chronicler tells them their story, emphasizing how God has restored them whenever God’s people turned to Him in genuine worship and obedience. Chronicles was originally one book, which was later divided. In I Chronicles, the focus is on their identity which is traced through family genealogies that begin with creation. King David establishes the nation and the center of their life: Jerusalem.

II Chronicles begins with wise King Solomon. The Jerusalem temple is built. The highpoint of his reign is the dedication of the temple. He asked the Lord to dwell there and that if God was angry and gave them to an enemy, that he would bring them home when they repented *“with all their heart and soul”* (6:36-40). The Lord’s response to King Solomon, quoted above, assured them God would indeed dwell with his people and that God would heal them when they repent from relying on other powers or rejecting God’s teaching.

The kings in II Chronicles are examples that God has indeed brought punishment for persistent sin and healing

after repentance. There were numerous sins in the past such as relying on another country during a time of crisis or allowing worship sites to other gods. Eight good kings brought reform and renewal, although all have failings. The trend was away from God. Rulers like Queen Athaliah (the only Queen in Judah), Ahaz and Manasseh quickly undid the good of their predecessors. The last chapter of Chronicles recounts the Babylonian invasion in 587 B.C. and eventual destruction of Jerusalem in 598 B.C. The Persian emperor Cyrus decreed in 538 B.C. that the Jews return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

I and II Chronicles were written sometime during the Persian rule (538-333 B.C.), probably around 400. Ezra and Nehemiah, which tell the story of the return and rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple, may have been written as the conclusion of the Chronicles.

Tips for reading II Chronicles:

- Pay attention to repeated behavior patterns and repeated phrases such as “walked in the way of...” or “did good/evil in the sight of the Lord.”
- Do not worry about keeping all the characters and names in your head. Focus on patterns.

### Important or exciting chapters

6-7	Dedication of temple under King Solomon
20	King Jehoshaphat calls for national prayer; attacking enemies destroy each other
22:1-12	Murderous Queen Athaliah seizes throne
23:8-21	Hidden King is crowned and Athaliah killed
30	King Hezekiah restores the Passover
32	Hezekiah prays; invading Assyrians leave
36:15-20	Fall of Jerusalem
36:22-23	Cyrus proclaims liberty to exiles

### **Challenge from I Chronicles: Can you find the prayer of Jabez?**

Answer: I Chronicles 4:9-10 includes his prayer in the genealogy and land assignments for Judah’s descendants. Jabez said, *“Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from hurt and harm.”* And the Lord granted what he asked.