Synopsis of the Books of the Bible

# 2 Chronicles

*John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)*

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# Introduction

## The scope of the book

This Second Book of Chronicles unfolds the reign of the son of David and of the family of David. It does not commence with the faith of David at the ark, but with the tabernacle that Moses, the servant of Jehovah had set up, and the brazen altar, at which the king and the congregation worshipped. The kingly power is realised in connection with Israel, the people of God whom Moses brought out of Egypt.* It is the means by which the purposes of God with respect to them are accomplished; it is not yet assuredly a new covenant by a new power, but the object of blessing is Israel. If it is Boaz and Ruth who raise up the family, it is to Naomi that a son is born, that is, through sovereign grace, by a redeemer "in whom is strength"**: one who had no title (and Israel had no more any) is introduced into the enjoyment of the promises. Israel, long known as the "pleasant one"*** of God, is the people which receives into its bosom the son that is born. To us, they say, a son is born (Isaiah 9:7). At the altar which was before Jehovah in the tabernacle of the congregation Solomon recognises his position. He is to judge the people of God. Hereafter all this shall take place in power. {* But the connection is not with the ark in Zion He goes, historically, where the people are. ** Such is the meaning of the name of Boaz. *** Naomi means "my pleasant one."}

# Chapters 1 to 6

## The temple built: kingly power and government on earth — the Millennium

This book presents us also with kingly power in connection with the earth and the government of the people on the earth. Glory and riches are added to that which Solomon requests. Neither enemies nor the energy of faith is in question. The king's position is the result of the victory which that faith had obtained. He reigns, and is established in glory and in riches. He begins to build the house. Hiram acknowledges Jehovah as the Creator of heaven and earth, and the strangers who dwell in Israel are the king's servants to do his work. In the temple the cherubim have their faces towards the house, that is, outwards.* The attributes of God do not now look only at the covenant to maintain it in spite of everything, but they also look outwards in order to bless. It is the time of the millennium; but the veil is here found again in the temple. Whatever may be the blessing of the true Solomon's reign, Israel and the earth have not immediate and direct access to Him who is hidden in the heavens. That is our portion, even to enter boldly now through the veil, and to find no veil in heaven: blessed be God! There is no temple there. Jehovah God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. The stability of a divine government is granted to the earth,** and the blessing of a God whose face is turned towards it; but those who are blessed do not behold that face, do not draw nigh unto it. There is also an altar adapted for worship in a time of such blessing. The altar and the veil are not mentioned in the Book of Kings, where the structure of the temple is the figure of things not seen, and where, as a whole, it is presented to us as the dwelling-place and manifestation of God. We are told of a golden door, opening with two leaves, before the oracle, and nothing is said about the altar. {* In the Authorised Version it is inwards.

It is literally towards the house, which, generally, would mean inwards; but, as the cherubim were at the very bottom of the house, looking towards the house was really outwards. ** This stability consists, apparently, in two things — God shall establish it, and then in Him is strength. These are the two sources of the stability of Christ's kingdom. This is the meaning of the words Jachin and Boaz, the names of the pillars before the temple.

## The state of Christ's glorious kingdom

In Chronicles the order is arranged also according to the state of things which this book sets before us, that is to say, according to the state of Christ's glorious kingdom. There is a court for the priests, and the large outer court with doors. All was arranged (2 Chron. 4:9) for the relationship of which we speak.

## God's connection with Israel in the last days: mercy celebrated

So also, as to the manifestation of the glory, nothing is said in the Book of Kings of the public acceptance of the sacrifice; but it is simply stated that when the ark had been carried into the holy place, and the priests were gone out, and the staves of the ark had been drawn out, so that the dwelling of Jehovah was definitively established there, the glory of Jehovah filled the house. It is God's habitation, a figure of the heavenly dwelling-place which awaits us, our Father's house. On the other hand, that which is set before us in the Book of Chronicles is God's connection with His people Israel in the last days, prefigured by that which happened to Solomon. It was when the trumpeters and singers lifted up their voices with one accord to praise Jehovah, saying "His mercy endures for ever," that the house was filled with a cloud. As we have seen, when all shall be accomplished for Israel, these words will celebrate the untiring mercy of which Israel's blessing will be the proof in that day. It is the deliverance and blessing of that people which demonstrate the truth of those words.

We have seen that there was a second part of grace, the acceptance of Israel as worshippers after their sin — not only the ark on Mount Zion, but the sacrifice and pardon and consequent worship of Mount Moriah, the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

## Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple: God's public acceptance of the sacrifice

Thus Solomon having prayed, and entreated Jehovah that His eyes should be open, and His ears attent to the prayers that should be offered to Him in that place (quoting David's petition in Psalm 132, and using His mercies to David as a plea), the fire comes down and consumes the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of Jehovah fills the house. And now, it is not only that the priests cannot enter, but the children of Israel behold the glory which rests upon the house; they fall upon their faces and worship. It is the public acceptance of the sacrifice which sets the people in public connection with God, and makes them confess that "Jehovah is good, and that his mercy endureth for ever" (compare Lev. 9:24). Only in this last passage the acknowledgment of God's unwearied mercy was not the point.

# Chapter 7

## The feast of tabernacles

There is also another element in the scene we are considering, and that is the public and joyful assembly of the whole people, the feast of tabernacles, the great congregation (Psalm 22:25), and also the dedication of the altar.

These are the two things which mark Israel's participation in the blessing, namely, the altar, and the feast of tabernacles; worship subsequent to their fall and ruin, founded on the acceptance of the sacrifice, and the realised effect of the promises, the people being no longer in distress.* {* It does not appear however that they made booths with the branches of trees. Since Joshua, this had not been done until the days of Nehemiah. At the time which we are considering, joy and prosperity had made them a little neglectful of the word.}

## David's praise in the temple

We find again here the musical instruments of Jehovah, which David had made to praise Jehovah, "because his mercy endureth for ever"; when David himself "praised by their ministry" (2 Chron. 7:6); blessed thought! for who is this David? (compare Ps. 22:22). The people saw themselves blessed and happy in all the goodness of Jehovah.

## The conditions of enjoyment of blessing

After this the Lord sets before Solomon the conditions under which He places him, as well as the people, for the enjoyment, or for the recovery of these blessings. He had chosen this house of prayer. If there was chastening and the people humbled themselves, there was respite: the eyes and the heart of Jehovah should be there perpetually.

Then, with respect to Solomon and the seed of David generally, on their faithfulness the blessing of the whole people was to depend. If the house of David should turn away from God, Israel should be rooted out of the land; and the house, which had been sanctified by the worship of Jehovah, should become a by-word among all nations, and a witness to the just judgment of God.

# Chapter 8

## Solomon's rule prefiguring that of Christ on earth

2 Chronicles 8 gives us a few more details of the state of Israel — a state which prefigures that of the last days. Solomon brings everything into subjection that could have hindered the full enjoyment of the promised land in its whole extent, whether on the side of Tyre or of Syria. The strangers in the land continue to pay tribute, and the children of Israel are captains and men of war. Zion is entirely sanctified, and the worship of Jehovah maintained and honoured by the king. The service of the house

of God, the praises, and the whole order connected therewith, were appointed according to the ordinances of David. The king's commandment was the absolute rule for everything. Edom itself was his possession; and, as far as the Red Sea, all were the king's subjects. The king of Tyre, who represents the Gentile glory of the world, supplied all that he needed to accomplish his designs.

## Chapter 9

## Solomon's glory and wisdom: the tribute of the Queen of Sheba

But it is not only within the borders of the land that the power and glory of Solomon are known. His fame spreads among the heathen, even to distant lands; and the queen of Sheba comes to bring him her tribute of admiration, and the precious things of the Gentiles, who thus contribute to the splendour and glory of the place chosen by God, whose light had come, and upon which the glory of Jehovah had risen (in type doubtless for the moment, but according to the principle of grace, and by the power that will fully accomplish it, according to the counsels of God). It is a glory, the report of which attracts the nations, but which, when seen, surpasses all that could be said of it; and which one must be near to appreciate. It is a glory that excels all that the world has seen, a wisdom never equalled — a wisdom that attracted all the kings of the earth, who, each year, brought their offerings and their gifts to the king who sat upon the throne of Jehovah on earth.

Thus, ruling even to the farthest limits of the promised land, he causes all Israel to enjoy the abundance and the blessing, which God poured out upon His people.

## Chapters 10 to 12

## Rehoboam's folly and repentance

But soon the picture changes.

Solomon's faults are not related here for reasons which we have already pointed out; but the history of Rehoboam shews us the immediate fall of the kingly power which God had established. The king's folly occasioned it, but it was only the fulfilment of the Lord's word by Ahijah.

The war which Rehoboam began against the revolted tribes was prevented. Rehoboam submits to the man of God's prohibition. He is blessed and fortifies himself in Judah. The Levites repair to Jerusalem as well as a great number of the faithful, who would not forsake the true worship of Jehovah to bow down before golden calves, to which His name had been attached. Thus Judah was strengthened; for, during three years, the king walked in the ways of David and Solomon. But soon he forsook the law of Jehovah, and, secure against revolted Israel, he is chastised by unexpected enemies, and all the riches amassed by Solomon fall into their hands. Nevertheless he humbled himself, and the wrath of Jehovah was turned from him.

## Chapters 13 to 16

## The ways of God in grace towards David and in connection with His house

In the history which we are about to consider we shall find the ways of God more immediate and direct with those who were in direct and avowed relationship with Him, according to His grace towards David, and in connection with the house that had been dedicated to His name. When their kings were faithful, all went on well.

## Abijah blessed

In his wars with Jeroboam, Abijah stands entirely upon this ground, and he is blessed.

## Asa's faithfulness but failure

Asa follows his steps; and, whether at peace, or while at war with the Ethiopians, Israel prospers in his reign. He takes away the strange gods; for we continually find them again. Energy is required to cast them out and prevent their return. Even the king's mother is deprived of her royal position, on account of her idolatry. Nevertheless "the high places were not taken away."

But, although Asa's faithfulness continued, his trust in God failed afterwards. Jealous of the Israelites resorting to Judah, Baasha builds a city to prevent it; and Asa, instead of looking to the Lord, allies himself with Syria — an alliance which produced the desired effect, but which stirred up Gentiles against Israel. And this was not all; alliance with the world prevents our overcoming the world. Had he not done this, the Syrians would have fallen into the hands of Asa; for "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him." Solemn and precious word! Wounded in his self-love, and irritated at having thus missed so good an opportunity, Asa puts the seer who gave this testimony in prison; and he oppresses the people. He is chastened of God, and alas! he does not seek God in the chastening. Nevertheless, except in this instance, Asa continued faithful and was honoured.

## Chapters 17 to 18

## Jehoshaphat's piety and prosperity

Jehoshaphat, his son succeeds him, and begins his reign by walking faithfully with God. He strengthened his kingdom against Israel, an enemy more dangerous by their example than by their strength. When anything pretends to be in connection with God and to acknowledge Him, there is no safety except in judging it with a spiritual judgment — which can only be formed through a just sense of God's honour — making no terms with that which pretends to be connected with Him, and treating it as an enemy. This is what Jehoshaphat did at first; and, as he did not walk in the ways of Israel, Jehovah established the kingdom in his hand. Blessed of Jehovah, he takes away the high places and the groves,

and seeks with much faithfulness and zeal to instruct the people in the true knowledge of the Lord; Jehovah preserves him from war, and some of the nations even become tributary to him on account of his power.

## Prosperity Jehoshaphat's snare: affinity with Ahab

In many respects this is a more beautiful picture than anything we have yet read in the history of the kings. But this prosperity becomes a snare to him; and it bore most bitter fruits when his real piety was not present as a counterpoise.

The prosperity with which God had blessed him in consequence of his faithfulness made it worth while to seek alliance with him, and rendered it more difficult to attack him. Thus at ease, Jehoshaphat on his part joins affinity with Israel. His prosperity put him in a condition to do so in a manner which made the alliance honourable. The human heart, when it is not kept by God, can act generously with respect to the evil which it fears not; but this is not charity. Outwardly Jehoshaphat is faithful to Jehovah, but the wrath of Jehovah is upon him.

# Chapters 19 and 20

## War: Jehoshaphat's appeal to God and the answer

Nevertheless, when he had returned to his house, the king sets himself to bring back the people to the fear of Jehovah, and to cause judgment and righteousness to be executed in Israel. But war begins. He could no longer have the unmingled blessing of having to do with God alone without trial. The intervention of the enemy was now needful for his good, according to God's government, although in the trial through which he passes he may have full blessing. His piety was genuine; the trial proves it. He appeals to the relationship of God with Abraham and to His promises to Solomon, when the latter had built the house. Jehoshaphat understood also the relation in which the enemy stood to Israel, looked at in connection with God's dealings (2 Chron. 20:10-11). God answers him, and the king encourages the people by acknowledging the voice of the prophets, and by singing the praises of God before the blessing came — singing in faith that His mercy endureth for ever. God abundantly granted his prayer. Israel, whose enemies had slain each other, had only to carry away the spoil; and God gave rest to the king, and his realm was quiet.

Still, if Jehoshaphat no longer united himself with the king of Israel to make war, he joined him in a matter of commerce. But God put a stop to his undertakings.

# Chapter 21

## Sorrowful fruits of the league with Ahab: Jehoram's judgment from Elijah

In spite of some faults the character of Jehoshaphat is a fine one, and refreshes the heart. But soon the sorrowful fruits of his league with Ahab ripen and bring Judah into distress. Jehoram, his son, Ahab's son-in-law, walks in the ways of the kings of Israel. The Edomites revolt, and Libnah, a city of Judah, does the same. The king makes high places, and compels Judah to worship at them. The judgment of God is soon manifested. He whom God has raised up as a witness against the sins of the house of Ahab has foreseen their fruits in Judah; and a writing of Elijah's is brought to the king,* threatening him with the terrible judgments of God. Judah also is attacked by their enemies, who pillage the land, laying waste even the king's house, and slaying all his sons excepting one. This was of Jehovah. It is His government which we see here; for He rules over those who are in covenant with Him, those who are His house. {* Elijah had been taken up to heaven some time before the writing reached its destination. Being a prophecy, there is nothing which makes any difficulty in believing that this writing, like any other prophecy, was left by Elijah to be used at the suitable time. It was a function which, according to the ways of God, naturally belonged to him as a witness against the iniquity of Ahab.

## Chapter 22

### Disaster resultant from connection with Ahab's house

Finally, the king perishes, according to Elijah's prediction. Disaster upon disaster falls upon Judah in consequence of this connection with the house of Ahab. To connect oneself with that which claims to be of God, according to His religion, but which is not so, is intolerable to God. The only son that remained to Jehoram is slain by Jehu, as participating in the iniquity of Ahab's family; and Athaliah, who belonged to this family, takes possession of the throne, destroying all the seed royal, except one child that God in His grace took care of, who would not have the lamp of David put out at Jerusalem, although He chastened his family. The sister of Ahaziah, wife to the high priest, preserves the child, who is concealed in the house of God for six years.

## Chapter 23

### The faithfulness of God and the faith of Jehoida

Everything was in a very low state; and, to outward appearance, all was over with the house of David; but the faithfulness of God did not fail. And, although the power of the throne is absolutely destroyed, and the family of David set aside, God raises up a man of faith, in the person of the high priest, to restore the whole. The chastisement of God was complete. The entire order of the throne was subverted by His judgment. Nothing was left but the faithfulness of God. Man was judged. He had no longer any means of recovery. But all things are at God's disposal, the heart of Jehoshaphat and the faith of Jehoiada. The latter takes the needful steps, and the king is set upon his throne; and, after all, the same thing which we have seen before again takes place: the king appoints everything concerning the re-establishment of the order in the house of God.

## Chapter 24

### Joash's failure in ordinary duty: idolatry

How often the energy of faith may, so to say, establish a kingdom, yet fail at the same time in maintaining the ordinary duty of those who have to do with the service of God! Faithful at the commencement of his reign, Joash walks nevertheless more by Jehoiada's faith than by his own; and, after the death of the high priest, he leans on the princes of Judah, and serves idols, and even puts to death the son of Jehoiada, by whom the Holy Ghost had testified against him. Joash, forsaken of God, is defeated by the Syrians. He falls into many diseases, and is at length slain by his own servants.

In this whole history we must observe that the immediate government of a God of judgment is in exercise, because those whom He judges were in close connection with Himself.

## Chapter 25

### Amaziah and the two prophets: his presentation and fall

Amaziah, up to a certain point, walks with God, but in weakness and with an unsteady step. He leans upon an arm of flesh: but he hearkens to the prophet, and this saves him from being defeated. The cities of Judah, however, suffer the consequences of his false step, and are plundered by the army of Israel, which Amaziah had sent back. Lifted up by the victory that he had obtained over Edom, he takes the gods of Seir which could not deliver their own people, and bows himself down before them. He then turns a deaf ear to the prophet who rebukes him. But pride goes before confusion, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Amaziah, making war against Israel, is ignominiously defeated and made prisoner, and Jerusalem itself is laid waste.

We should remark in this part of the history the goodness of the Lord, who continually interposes by means of prophets.

## Chapter 26

### Uzziah's successful reign: its sorrowful end

Uzziah, the son of Amaziah, walks for a long time with Jehovah and prospers. The strength of Judah is increased, and all the king's undertakings are successful. "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up"; he takes upon himself the priestly function, and is smitten with leprosy by the hand of God.

We enter now on a period in which Isaiah throws much light on the state of the people. This state was partly exhibited before, in the reign of Joash, who, as soon as he hearkens to the princes, falls into idolatry. But in reading the first two chapters of Isaiah, or the prophecy of Hosea, we shall see the terrible condition of the people, the greatness of God's patience, and the manner in which iniquity and idolatry multiplied on every side, when the king was not faithful and energetic.* {* We find

consequently, that Isaiah, after exposing the evil and the consequent judgment, immediately introduces the promises of latter-day blessing and of the Messiah. In the first chapters he sets forth the state of the people, as well as the blessing of the last days. The house of David is not judged till Isaiah 7, and it is there that the Messiah, the Son of the virgin, is brought in as the resource, and the means of deliverance and grace according to the counsels of God. The rest of this prophet's writings gives us the whole history of the people, according to the thoughts of God, and that of the nations, in connection with Israel, until the accomplishment, at the end of the age, of full blessing in Christ, with the judgment of Israel's sin in respect of Jehovah (Isa. 40-48), and in respect of Christ (Isa. 49-57).

## Chapter 27

### Jotham's uprightness and its reward

Jotham, the son of Uzziah, walks uprightly; and he avoids his father's fault; but the people are still corrupt. Nevertheless the faithfulness of Jotham procures him blessing and prosperity. For it is always the state of the king which is the object of God's judgment. As we have seen, the people as such had failed long before.

## Chapter 28

### The wickedness of Ahaz

The reign of Ahaz forms an epoch. Entirely forsaking Jehovah, he gives himself up wholly to idolatry; and, the more he is smitten of God, the more he sins against Him. He is delivered into the hands of the Syrians, and into the hand of Pekah, the king of Israel. In the latter case, however, God interposes for the rescue at least of the captives. The Edomites, and afterwards the Philistines, invade Judah. All this distress induces Ahaz to seek help from the king of Assyria, who only brought him into still greater trouble (compare Isa. 7:17; see also Hosea 5:13-15).

## Chapters 29 and 30

### The energy of faith in Hezekiah not inherited

If piety is not transmitted from father to son, grace can work in the heart and direct the steps of one who had the most wicked father. This was the case with the son of Ahaz. The way in which Hezekiah sought the glory of his God shews remarkable faith and energy. In the better days of the kingdom, true piety and the work of righteousness were manifested in Jehoshaphat; great energy of faith is now displayed in Hezekiah; and we shall find in Josiah profound reverence for the scriptures, for the book of the law.

### God's government in reference to the king's conduct

I recall here the great principle, the effects of which the reader has to remark in the book which occupies us, namely, the government of God, which visited every act with its immediate consequences, a government which always had reference to the king's conduct. But, in spite of some awakenings and some restorations wrought by grace, the people having entirely corrupted themselves, the kingly power which alone recalled them to their duties came short of the glory of God; and at length, the oath made in Jehovah's name being broken, the measure of sin was filled up, and the judgment of Israel, and the times of the Gentiles commenced.

## Acknowledgment of sin leads to pardon and true worship

Hezekiah acknowledges the sinful state of Israel, and he invites the people to cleanse themselves. A true worship, affecting in its character, is re-established (2 Chron. 29:25-29), and the service of Jehovah's house is set in order.

But Hezekiah's zeal embraces all Israel, and he sends letters which, although the greater part laughed them to scorn, brought up many serious souls to the worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem. If everything is not re-established as a whole, yet, wherever faith is in action and a sincere heart seeks to glorify God, there is always cause for the faithful to rejoice in the dealings of God. God pardoned their failure in the purification necessary for participation in the service of the sanctuary; the prayer for blessing came up to His holy dwelling-place and was granted.

# Chapter 31

## Idols destroyed: freewill offerings brought by grateful hearts

Strengthened by this communion with Jehovah, all Israel that had been present went out and destroyed the groves and the images, not only in Judah, but also in Ephraim and Manasseh. The state of disorder in Israel gave an opportunity on God's part for the exercise of faithfulness and the manifestation of devotedness in His people. Abundance and blessing are found in Judah, and Jehovah's house is filled with proofs of His goodness brought in by grateful hearts according to the ordinances of the law; and even in the cities of the priests all is set in order according to the law, and everything prospers.* {* Observe here that, when God blesses and there is faithfulness, the instruments whom He employs in His service partake of the glory that is connected with the blessing. Their names are inscribed in the record of God's dealings.}

# Chapter 32

## The Assyrian: Hezekiah's faith and failure

God fully answered the king's faith; but the iniquity of the people's heart was little changed, and the ways of God in judgment began to be manifested; and in such a manner as to make it evident that, in the midst of His judgments, and at the height of the enemy's power, the faithful seed of David should be the

infallible resource of His people. This is the lesson of 2 Chronicles 32. This man is the peace of the people when the Assyrian enters the land. See, in Isaiah 8, the Assyrian's entrance into the land already called the land of Immanuel through the prophetic revelation of the birth of the virgin's Son — a revelation addressed to the unfaithful king, to Ahaz; see also, in the same chapter, the revelation of the terrible distress of the people, the law being sealed and entrusted to the remnant who would follow Christ as a prophet, until the people confess that a Son was born unto them. See also, in Isaiah 22, the Spirit's judgment as to the moral condition of the people, on the occasion of those events which are recorded in 2 Chronicles 32. Hezekiah himself did not render again to Jehovah according to the benefit done unto him; but his heart was lifted up. Nevertheless, as he humbled himself, he was allowed to see the peace of Jerusalem all the days of his life.

## Chapter 33

### The lessons of Manasseh and Amon

Manasseh, his son, who gave himself up to iniquity in spite of the warnings of the prophets, brought desolation and ruin upon himself and afterwards upon Israel. Guilty of sins which God could not forget, his personal repentance in his captivity procured him personal restoration and peace through the mercy of God; and after his return to Jerusalem he acted faithfully and was jealous for the glory of God; for the time of Judah's judgment was not yet come. His son Amon followed him in his iniquity, but not in his repentance, and he dies by the hand of his own servants.

## Chapters 34 and 35

### Josiah as a seeker after God

We find in Josiah a tender heart, subject to the word, and a conscience that respected the mind and will of God: only at last he had too much confidence in the effect of this to secure blessing from God, without the possession of that faith which gives intelligence in His ways to understand the position of God's people. God however makes use of this confidence to take Josiah away from the evil He was preparing in the judgments which were to fall upon Judah, the knowledge of which should have made Josiah walk more humbly. At the age of sixteen he began by the grace of God to seek Jehovah; and at twenty he had acquired the moral strength necessary for acting with energy against idolatry, which he destroyed even unto Naphtali. We see here how sovereign grace came in; for both Hezekiah and Josiah were the sons of extremely wicked fathers.

### The book of the law found: the secret of Josiah's success and failure

Having cleansed the land from idolatry, Josiah begins to repair the temple; and there the book of the law was found. The king's conscience, and his heart also, are bowed under the authority of the word of his God. He seeks for the prophetic testimony of God with respect to the state in which he sees Israel to

be, and God makes known to him by Huldah the judgment about to fall upon Israel; but tells him at the same time that his eyes shall not see the evil. It was this communication which should have made him act with less precipitation, and with a more exercised heart than he manifested when he went up against the king of Egypt. The knowledge that their well-deserved judgment was soon to overwhelm Israel, and that there was no remedy for their sins (although Josiah himself was spared), ought to have prevented his going up against Pharaoh, when the latter did not attack him, and even warned him to forbear; but he would not hearken, and was lost through a hardihood which was not of God.

## The consequences of Josiah's death

His death opened the sluices to the affliction of Judah and Jerusalem, which had been blessed through his means; for they had followed Jehovah all the days of Josiah, and had therefore been blessed; they had also mourned for his death. Jeremiah (that is to say, the Spirit of God by the prophet), in lamenting over the last king who would maintain the relations of God with His people, wept for the ruin and desolation which sin would bring upon the flock which Jehovah loved — the vineyard that He had planted with the choicest vine.

However faithful Josiah had been, this had not changed the heart of the people (compare Jer. 3:10). Josiah's faith was in action, and overruled this state of things; and, as we have constantly seen, blessing depended on the conduct of the king, although the undercurrent was always tending to the ruin and rejection of the people.

## The keeping of the Passover

It remains for us to notice the passover. Everything is set in order according to the ordinances of Moses and David, and that in a remarkable manner. It appears that even the ark had been removed from its place (2 Chron. 35:3); but now, the ark being restored to its rest, the Levites occupy themselves diligently with their service, and even make ready for the priests, that they might keep the feast. They were all in their places according to the blessing of Israel in the rest they enjoyed under Solomon. Those who taught all Israel no longer bore the ark, but they ministered to God and to His people. The singers were there also, according to their order, so that there had not been such a passover since the days of Samuel. It was like the last glimmering of the lamp which God had lighted among His people in the house of David. It was soon extinguished in the darkness of the nation which knew not God, and those who had been His people came under the judgment expressed by the word Lo-ammi (Not-my-people); but this was only to give occasion afterwards to the manifestation of His infinite grace towards the one, and His unchangeable faithfulness to the others. Ezekiel dates his prophecy from the year of this passover, when he says "the thirtieth year." Why so, I cannot tell. Was it the year of the jubilee? or did the passover itself form an epoch?

# Chapter 36

## Delivered into the hands of the kings of Egypt and Babylon

Little need be said of the succeeding reigns. The king of Egypt took possession of the land, and the iniquity of Jehoiakim, whom he made king in Jerusalem, was far from leading to restoration on God's part. One more powerful than the king of Egypt, a king by whom God would commence the dominion of the Gentiles, comes up against Jerusalem, and binds Jehoiakim in fetters, yet leaves him after all to end his reign and his life at Jerusalem. Three years after he carried away his son to Babylon.

## Nebuchadnezzar's conquest: the city and sanctuary destroyed by God's just judgment

Zedekiah, whom this king had made to swear by Jehovah — thus acknowledging the authority of that Name over his conscience, — more sinful in this respect than Nebuchadnezzar, despises his oath and the name of Jehovah; and, after an interval of fruitless resistance, in which he perseveres in spite of Jeremiah's testimony, he falls into the hands of the king of Babylon, who utterly destroys the city and the sanctuary. For both people and priests were thoroughly corrupted; they dishonoured Jehovah, and despised His prophets, till there was no remedy, and the land enjoyed her sabbaths.

## In judgment God remembers mercy: Cyrus prepared and proclaimed as God's instrument

Sad and solemn lesson of the sin and iniquity of man, and of the just judgment of God!

"You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." But in His judgments God remembers mercy; and in the counsels of His grace He had already prepared, and even proclaimed by His prophets (and that by name), an instrument to give His people some respite.

## The length of the captivity defined: Cyrus' proclamation

After the seventy years which Jeremiah had announced as the period of Judah's captivity, Jehovah put it into the heart of Cyrus to proclaim publicly that it was Jehovah the God of heaven, who had given him all the kingdoms of the earth, and that He had charged him to build Him a house at Jerusalem. He invites the people of God to go thither, assuring them that Jehovah their God will be with them.

## Government and power entrusted to the Gentiles

Thus it is by mercy — but by a mercy which recognises that power has passed into the hands of the Gentiles — that the history of Israel's downfall concludes; the downfall of a people placed in the most favourable circumstances, so that God could say to them, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" — of a people that had already been pardoned once; and who, after having allowed the ark of Jehovah to fall into the enemy's hands, and after God had forsaken Shiloh, habitation, had been re-established in blessing, but re-established in vain. The long-suffering of God, the restoration He had granted them, the establishment of the house of David in grace, all was fruitless.

The vineyard (for they were men) brought forth wild grapes. Its walls were broken down; it had been laid waste. Jerusalem had ceased for the present to be the throne of Jehovah, and government and power in the earth have been entrusted to the Gentiles.