

OLD TESTAMENT EXPERT
The Historical Books, Pt. 2, II Kings – Esther
Lesson # 7

I. SEE IF YOU CAN FILL OUT THE CHAPTER SUMMARY CHART BELOW

Chapter	Chapter summary
II Samuel	
7	
11	
12	
I Kings	
8	
17-19	

II. SEE IF YOU CAN WRITE DOWN THE THEMES AND BASIC OUTLINES OF II SAMUEL AND I KINGS

A. Theme of II Samuel is:

- 1. Outline of II Samuel**
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

B. Theme of I Kings is:

- 1. Outline of I Kings**
 - a.
 - b.

III. SEE IF YOU CAN MATCH THE NAMES WITH THE NUMBERED DESCRIPTIONS

#	Person	#	Description of Person
	Ishbosheth	1	Wife of David, Saul's daughter, who despised David and died childless
	Abner	2	David's beautiful daughter who was raped by David's son, Amnon, her half brother
	Joab	3	Uriah's wife, committed adultery with David, became pregnant, taken by David as a wife after Uriah's murder, mother of Solomon, king of Israel
	Uzzah	4	David's official who became disloyal and helped Absalom revolt against David and attempt to usurp the throne
	Michal	5	David's and Bathsheba's son, who was chosen by David to succeed him, asked God for wisdom, wealthiest man who ever lived, exceedingly wise, built the first temple, wrote Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, most of the proverbs, had many wives who turned his heart from God, but repented later in life
	Uriah	6	Saul's relative who cursed David when David was fleeing from Absalom, was executed by Solomon after David's death
	Bathsheba	7	Commander of Saul's army, Saul's cousin, desired to be king, attempted to help Ishbosheth become king, murdered by Joab
	Amnon	8	First king of the northern tribes and divided kingdom of Israel, established a false system of worship
	Tamar	9	Fourth son of David, next in line to be king, was passed up by David for Solomon, executed by Solomon at the request of Bathsheba
	Absalom	10	Wicked King of Israel, husband of Jezebel, repeatedly confronted by Elijah the prophet
	Ahithophel	11	One of the greatest prophets of Israel, performed miracles, humiliated and defeated the prophets of Baal
	Solomon	12	Commander of David's army, David's nephew, killed Abner out of revenge, at end of life sided against David and Solomon, was slain at the altar by Benaiah
	Adonijah	13	Solomon's foolish son who refused wise counsel, divided the kingdom, and became king of the southern kingdom of Judah
	Shimei	14	One of David's mighty men, husband of Bathsheba, murdered by David
	Rehoboam	15	David's oldest son, who raped his half-sister Tamar, was murdered by David's son Absalom, Tamar's brother
	Jeroboam	16	Fought David to be King of Israel after Saul's death and was defeated by David
	Ahab	17	David's third eldest son, killed Amnon his half brother for raping his sister Tamar, tried to usurp David's throne, had his hair catch in a limb, was slain by Joab against David's command
	Elijah	18	Slain for touching the ark when it was being transported incorrectly by David

IV. THEMES AND STRUCTURES OF II KINGS – ESTHER

A. II Kings

1. Theme – Fall of the divided kingdoms

2. Outline
 - a. Chapters 1-17 Israel Falls
 - b. Chapters 18-25 Judah Falls

3. Key People to Know
 - a. Elisha – Elijah’s disciple and successor, prophet, miracle worker multiplied widow’s oil, raises Shunammite’s son from the dead, fixed deadly stew, multiplied loaves, healed Naaman, floated ax head, blinded army
 - b. Hezekiah – Godly king of Israel, exposed Judah’s wealth to Babylon which tempted them to conquer Jerusalem
 - c. Manasseh – Hezekiah’s son, most wicked king of Judah, repented at the end of his life after being taken prisoner to Babylon (II Chron. 33:10-13)
 - d. Josiah – 16th King of Judah, started his reign at 8 years of age, turned the people of Judah back to God
 - e. Naaman – Syrian military commander who had leprosy, healed by Elisha
 - f. Gehazi – Disciple of Elisha whose greed brought upon him the judgment of leprosy
 - g. Jehoiachin – Appointed King of Judah by Babylon, taken captive to Babylon and replaced by his younger uncle Zedekiah.
 - h. Zedekiah (also Mattaniah)– 21st and last King of Judah, third son of Josiah, placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar in place of Jehoiachin, did evil in the sight of the Lord, revolted against Babylon, was captured, sons murdered before him and then his eyes were put out.

4. **Summary of II Kings** – Without interruption Second Kings continues the narrative of First Kings. The twin kingdoms of Israel and Judah pursue a collision course with captivity as the glory of the once united kingdom becomes increasingly diminished. Division has led to decline and now ends in double deportation with Israel captured by Assyria and Judah by Babylonia. This book traces the history of the divided kingdom in chapters 1–17 and the history of the surviving kingdom in chapters 18–25.

Divided Kingdom (1–17): These chapters record the story of Israel's corruption in a relentless succession of bad kings from Ahaziah to Hoshea. The situation in Judah during this time (Jehoram to Ahaz) is somewhat better, but far from ideal. This dark period in the northern kingdom of Israel is interrupted only by the ministries of such godly prophets as Elijah and Elisha. At the end of Elijah's miraculous ministry, Elisha is installed and authenticated as his successor. He is a force for righteousness in a nation that never served the true God or worshiped at the temple in Jerusalem. Elisha's ministry is characterized by miraculous provisions of sustenance and life. Through him God demonstrates His gracious care for the nation and His concern for any person who desires to come to Him. However, like his forerunner Elijah, Elisha is basically rejected by Israel's leadership.

Elisha instructs one of his prophetic assistants to anoint Jehu king over Israel. Jehu fulfills the prophecies concerning Ahab's descendants by putting them to death. He kills Ahab's wife Jezebel, his sons, and also the priests of Baal. But he does not depart from the calf worship originally set up by Jeroboam. The loss of the house of Ahab means the alienation of Israel and Judah and the weakening of both. Israel's enemies begin to get the upper hand. Meanwhile, in Judah, Jezebel's daughter Athaliah kills all the descendants of David, except for Joash, and usurps the throne. However, Jehoiada the priest eventually removes her from the throne and places Joash in power. Joash restores the temple and serves God.

Syria gains virtual control over Israel, but there is no response to God's chastisement: the kings and people refuse to repent. Nevertheless, there is a period of restoration under Jeroboam II, but the continuing series of wicked kings in Israel leads to its overthrow by Assyria.

Surviving Kingdom (18–25): Of Israel's nineteen kings, not one is righteous in God's sight. All but one of its nine dynasties are created by murdering the previous king. In Judah, where there is only one dynasty, eight of its twenty rulers do what is right before God. Nevertheless, Judah's collapse finally comes, resulting in the Babylonian exile. Chapters 18–25 read more easily than chapters 1–17 because alternating the histories of the northern and southern kingdoms is no longer necessary. Only Judah remains.

Six years before the overthrow of Israel's capital of Samaria, Hezekiah becomes king of Judah. Because of his exemplary faith and reforms, God spares Jerusalem from Assyria and brings a measure of prosperity to Judah. However, Hezekiah's son Manasseh is so idolatrous that his long reign leads to the downfall of Judah. Even Josiah's later reforms cannot stem the tide of evil, and the four kings who succeed him are exceedingly wicked. Judgment comes with three deportations to Babylonia. The third occurs in 586 b.c. when Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem and the temple. Still, the book ends on a note of hope with God preserving a remnant for Himself.¹

¹ Wilkinson, Bruce, and Kenneth Boa. *Talk Thru the Bible*. Nashville: T. Nelson, 1983.

B. I Chronicles

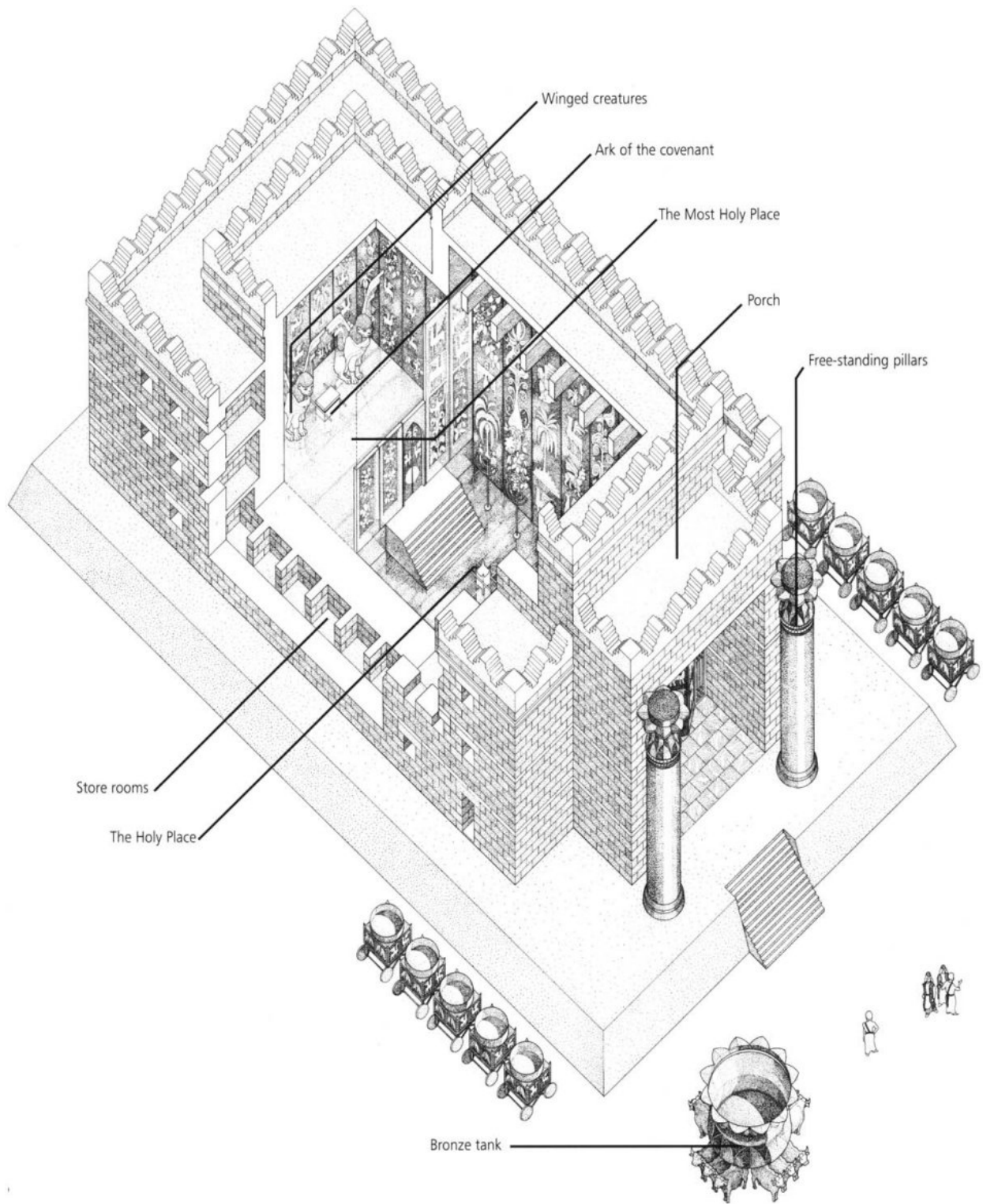
1. Theme – God’s View of David
2. Outline
 - a. Chapters 1-9 Royal Line of David
 - b. Chapters 10-29 Righteous Reign of David
3. Key People are the same as II Samuel as I Chronicles and II Samuel narrate the reign of David
4. Summary of I Chronicles – Chronicles retraces the whole story of Israel’s history up to the return from captivity in order to give the returned Remnant a divine perspective on the developments of their past. The whole book of First Chronicles, like Second Samuel, is dedicated to the life of David. It begins with the royal line of David (1–9) before surveying key events of the reign of David (10–29).

Royal Line of David (1–9): These nine chapters are the most comprehensive genealogical tables in the Bible. They trace the family tree of David and Israel as a whole, but in a highly selective manner. The genealogies place a disproportionate emphasis on the tribes of Judah and Benjamin because Chronicles is not concerned with the northern kingdom but with the southern kingdom and the Davidic dynasty. They show God at work in selecting and preserving a people for Himself from the beginning of human history to the period after the Babylonian exile. The genealogies move from the patriarchal period (Adam to Jacob; 1:1–2:2) to the national period (Judah, Levi, and the other tribes of Israel; 2:3–9:44). They demonstrate God’s keeping of His covenant promises in maintaining the Davidic line through the centuries. The priestly perspective of Chronicles is evident in the special attention given to the tribe of Levi.

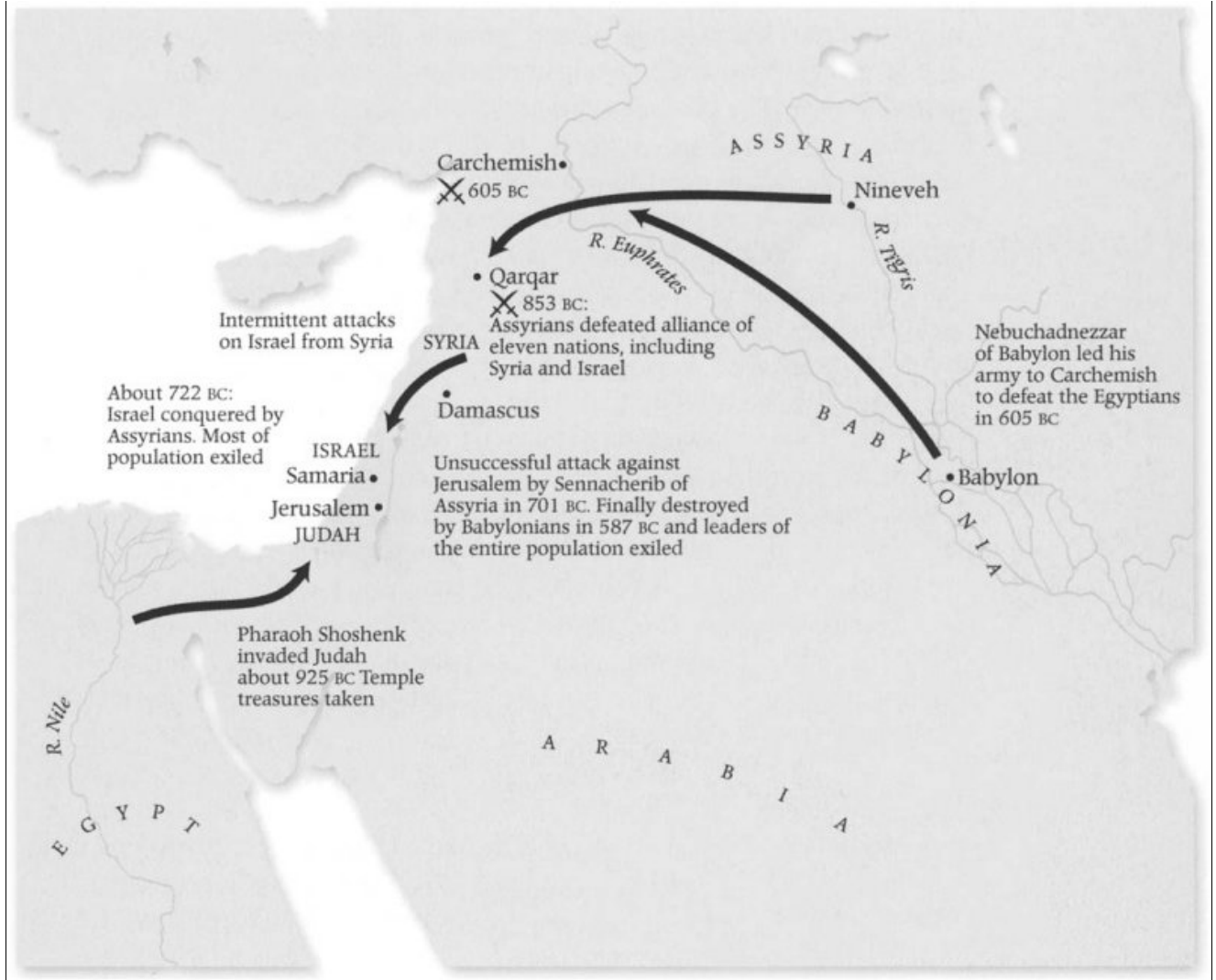
Reign of David (10–29): Compared with Second Samuel, David’s life in First Chronicles is seen in an entirely different light. This is clear from both the omissions and the additions. Chronicles completely omits David’s struggles with Saul, his seven-year reign in Hebron, his various wives, and Absalom’s rebellion. It also omits the event in Second Samuel that hurt the rest of his life—his sin with Bathsheba. Chronicles is written from a more positive perspective, emphasizing God’s grace and forgiveness, in order to encourage the Jews who have just returned from captivity. Chronicles adds events not found in Second Samuel, such as David’s preparations for the temple and its worship services.

Only one chapter is given to Saul’s reign (10), because his heart was not right with God. David’s story begins with his coronation over all Israel after he had already reigned for seven years as king over Judah. Chronicles stresses his deep spiritual commitment, courage, and integrity. It emphasizes his concern for the things of the Lord, including his return of the ark and his desire to build a temple for God. God establishes His crucial covenant with David (17), and the kingdom is strengthened and expanded under his reign (18–20). His sin in numbering the people is recorded to teach the consequences of disobeying God’s law. Most of the rest of the book (22–29) is concerned with David’s preparations for the building of the temple and the worship appreciated with it. The priestly perspective of Chronicles can be seen in the disproportionate space given to the temple and the priests. David is not allowed to build the temple (28:3), but he designs the plans, gathers the materials, prepares the site, and arranges for the Levites, priests, choirs,

porters, soldiers, and stewards. The book closes with his beautiful public prayer of praise and the accession of Solomon.²



² Wilkinson, Bruce, and Kenneth Boa. Talk Thru the Bible. Nashville: T. Nelson, 1983.



C. II Chronicles

1. Theme – Godly Kings of Judah
2. Outline
 - a. Chapters 1-9 Reign of Solomon
 - b. Chapters 10-36 Reigns of Judah's Godly Kings
3. Key People to Know are found in I & II Kings

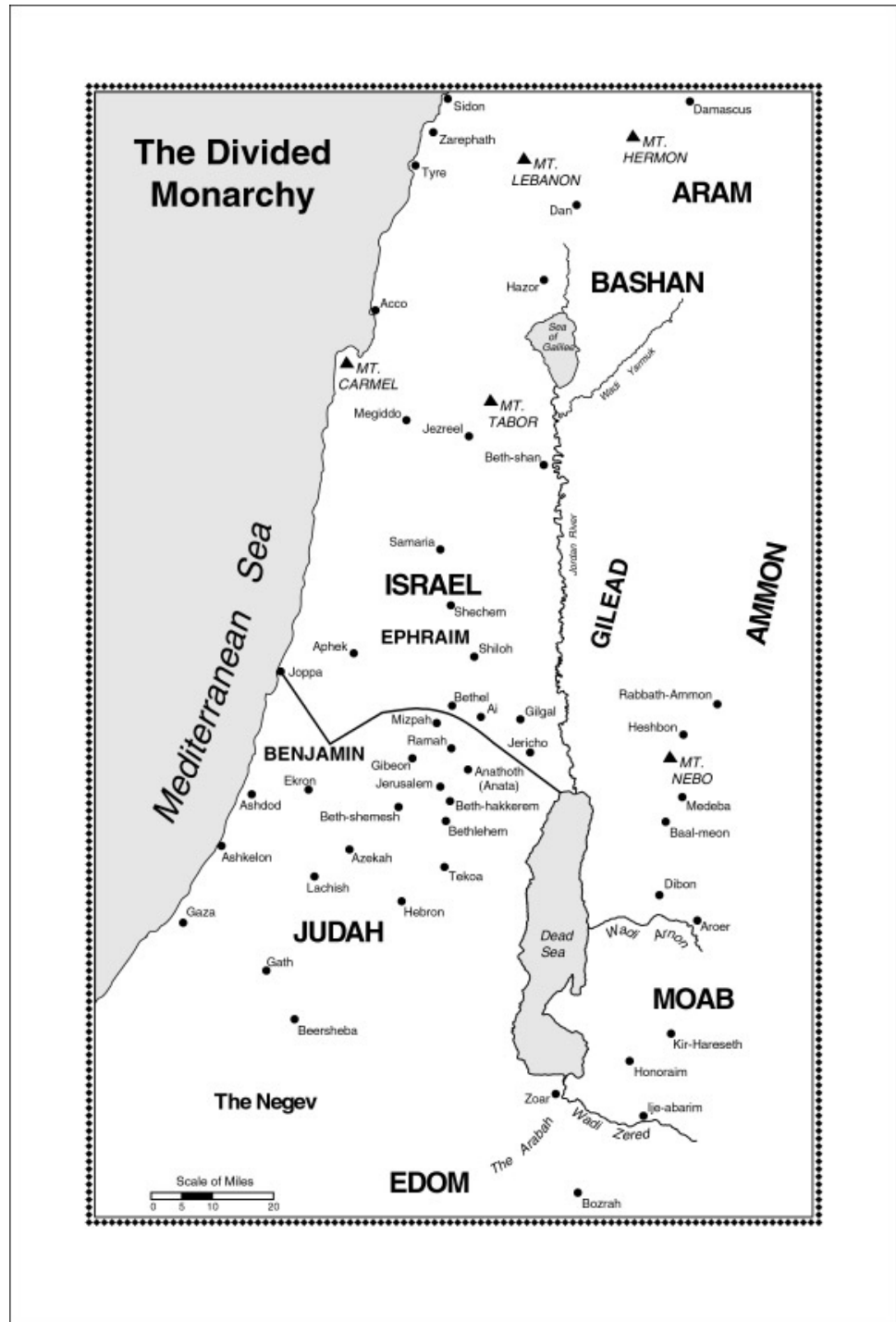
4. **Summary of II Chronicles** – Second Chronicles continues First Chronicles’ spiritual commentary on Israel’s kingdom period. It parallels First and Second Kings but virtually ignores the northern kingdom because of its false worship and refusal to acknowledge the temple in Jerusalem. Second Chronicles focuses on Judah’s fortunes and, in particular, on those kings who do what is right in the sight of the Lord. It devotes considerable space to the spiritual reformations under Asa (14–15), Jehoshaphat (17–20), Joash (23:16–24:16), Hezekiah (29–32), and Josiah (34–35). This book repeatedly teaches that whenever God’s people forsake Him, He withdraws His blessings, but trust in and obedience to the Lord bring victory. Since everything in Chronicles is related to the temple, it is not surprising that this concludes with Cyrus’s edict to rebuild it. Solomon’s glory is seen in chapters 1–9, and Judah’s decline and deportation in chapters 10–36.

Solomon’s Reign (1–9): The reign of Solomon brings in Israel’s golden age of peace, prosperity, and temple worship. The kingdom is united and its boundaries extend to their greatest point. Solomon’s wealth, wisdom, palace, and temple become legendary. His mighty spiritual, political, and architectural feats raise Israel to her zenith. However, it is in keeping with the purpose of Chronicles that six of these nine chapters concern the construction and dedication of the temple.

The Reign of Judah’s Kings (10–36): Unfortunately, Israel’s glory is short-lived. Soon after Solomon’s death the nation is divided, and both kingdoms begin a downward spiral that can only be delayed by the religious reforms. The nation generally forsakes the temple and the worship of Yahweh, and is soon torn by warfare and unrest. The reformation efforts on the part of some of Judah’s kings are valiant, but never last beyond one generation. Nevertheless, about 70 percent of chapters 10–36 deals with the eight good kings, leaving only 30 percent to cover the twelve evil rulers. Each king is seen with respect to his relationship to the temple as the center of worship and spiritual strength. When the king serves Yahweh, Judah is blessed with political and economic prosperity.

Here is a brief survey of Judah’s twenty rulers: (1) Rehoboam—Although he is not righteous, he humbles himself before God and averts His wrath (12:12). (2) Abijah—He enjoys a short and evil reign, but he conquers Israel because “the children of Judah...relied on the Lord God” (13:18). (3) Asa—Although he destroys foreign altars and idols, conquers Ethiopia against great odds through his trust in God, and restores the altar of the Lord, yet he fails to trust God when threatened by Israel. (4) Jehoshaphat—He brings in a great revival; “his heart took delight in the ways of the Lord” (17:6). Jehoshaphat overthrows idols, teaches God’s Word to the people, and trusts in God before battle. (5) Jehoram—A wicked king, he follows the ways of Ahab and marries his daughter. He leads Judah into idolatry and when he dies in pain, departs “to no one’s sorrow” (21:20). (6–7) Ahaziah and Athaliah—Ahaziah is as wicked as his father, as is his mother Athaliah. Both are murdered. (8) Joash—Although he repairs the temple and restores the worship of God, when Jehoiada the priest dies, Joash allows the people to abandon the temple and return to idolatry. (9) Amaziah—Mixed in his relationship to God, he later forsakes the Lord for the gods of Edom. He is defeated by Israel and later murdered. (10) Uzziah—He begins well with the Lord and is blessed with military victories. However, when he becomes strong, he proudly and presumptuously plays the role of a priest by offering incense in the temple and therefore is struck with leprosy. (11) Jotham—Because he rebuilds the gate of the temple and reveres God, the Lord blesses him with prosperity and victory. (12) Ahaz—A wicked king and an idolator, he is oppressed by his enemies and forced to give tribute to the Assyrians from the temple treasures. (13) Hezekiah—He repairs and reopens the temple and puts away the altars and idols set up by his father Ahaz. Judah is spared destruction by Assyria because of his righteousness. His reforms are given only a few verses in Kings but three chapters in Chronicles. (14–15) Manasseh and Amon—Manasseh is Judah’s most wicked king. He sets up idols and altars all over the land. However, he repents when he is carried away by Assyria. God brings him back to Judah and he makes a halfway reform, but it comes too late. Amon follows in his father’s wickedness. Both kings are murdered. (16) Josiah—A leader in reforms and spiritual revival, he centers worship around the temple, finds the

Law and obeys it, and reinstates the Passover. (17–19) Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin—Their relentless evil finally brings the downfall of Judah. The temple is ravaged in each of their reigns. (20) Zedekiah—Judah’s last king is also wicked. Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed, and the Captivity begins. Second Chronicles nevertheless ends on a note of hope at the end of the Captivity, when Cyrus issues the decree for the restoration of Judah: “Who is there among you of all His people? May the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up!” (36:23).³



³ Wilkinson, Bruce, and Kenneth Boa. Talk Thru the Bible. Nashville: T. Nelson, 1983.

D. Ezra

1. Theme – Rebuilding the Temple and Spiritual Lives of the People
2. Outline
 - a. Chapters 1-6 Return and Reconstruction under Zerubbabel (or Work)
 - b. Chapters 7-10 Return and Reform under Ezra (or Worship)
3. Key People to Know
 - a. Cyrus – Medo-Persian King who conquered the Babylonians and allowed and financed the rebuilding of the temple and Jerusalem.
 - b. Ezra – Priest and scribe, skilled in the law of Moses, used by God to rebuild the temple and start a revival among those who returned from the Babylonian captivity through expository preaching.
 - c. Joshua – The high priest at the time of Ezra, worked with Zerubbabel to help rebuild the temple.
 - d. Zerubbabel – Leader among the returned exiles who worked with Joshua the high priest and Ezra to rebuild the temple.
4. Summary of Ezra – Ezra continues the story exactly where Second Chronicles ends and shows how God’s promise to bring His people back to their land is fulfilled (Jer. 29:10–14). God is with these people; and although their days of glory seem over, their spiritual heritage still remains and God’s rich promises will be fulfilled. Ezra relates the story of the first two returns from Babylonia, the first led by Zerubbabel and the second led decades later by Ezra. Its two divisions are the restoration of the temple (1–6) and the reformation of the people (7–10), and they are separated by a fifty-eight year gap during which the story of Esther takes place.

The Restoration of the Temple (1–6): King Cyrus of Persia overthrows Babylonia in 539 b.c. and issues a decree in 538 b.c. that allows the exiled Jews to return to their homeland. Isaiah prophesied two centuries before that the temple would be rebuilt and actually named Cyrus as the one who would bring it about (Is. 44:28–45:4). Cyrus may have read and responded to this passage.

Out of a total Jewish population of perhaps two or three million, only 49,897 choose to take advantage of this offer. Only the most committed are willing to leave a life of relative comfort in Babylonia, endure a trek of nine hundred miles, and face further hardship by rebuilding a destroyed temple and city. Zerubbabel, a “prince” of Judah (a direct descendant of King David), leads the faithful Remnant back to Jerusalem. Those who return are from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi; but it is evident that representatives from the other ten tribes eventually return as well. The ten “lost tribes” are not entirely lost.

Zerubbabel's priorities are in the right place: he first restores the altar and the religious feasts before beginning work on the temple itself. The foundation of the temple is laid in 536 b.c., but opposition arises and the work ceases from 534 to 520 b.c. While Ezra 4:1–5, 24 concerns Zerubbabel, 4:6–23 concerns opposition to the building of the wall of Jerusalem some time between 464 and 444 b.c. These verses may have been placed here to illustrate the antagonism to the work of rebuilding. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah exhort the people to get back to building the temple (5:1–2), and the work begins again under Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest. Tattenai, a Persian governor, protests to King Darius I about the temple building and challenges their authority to continue. King Darius finds the decree of Cyrus and confirms it, even forcing Tattenai to provide whatever is needed to complete the work. It is finished in 515 b.c.

The Reformation of the People (7–10): A smaller return under Ezra takes place in 457 b.c., eighty-one years after the first return under Zerubbabel. Ezra the priest is given authority by King Artaxerxes I to bring people and contributions for the temple in Jerusalem. God protects this band of less than two thousand men and they safely reach Jerusalem with their valuable gifts from Persia. Many priests but few Levites return with Zerubbabel and Ezra (see 2:36–42; 8:15–19). God uses Ezra to rebuild the people spiritually and morally. When Ezra discovers that the people and the priests have intermarried with foreign women, he identifies with the sin of his people and offers a great intercessory prayer on their behalf. During the gap of fifty-eight years between Ezra 6 and 7, the people fall into a confused spiritual state and Ezra is alarmed. They quickly respond to Ezra's confession and weeping by making a covenant to put away their foreign wives and to live in accordance with God's law. This confession and response to the Word of God brings about a great revival and changes lives.⁴

E. Nehemiah

1. Theme – Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem
2. Outline
 - a. Chapters 1-7 Rebuilding the walls under Nehemiah
 - b. Chapters 8-10 Revival of the people under Ezra
 - c. Chapters 11-13 Reinforcement of the work under Nehemiah
3. Key People to Know
 - a. Artaxerxes – Persian King who was the son of Xerxes I and step son of Esther who allowed Jews to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem under the leadership of Nehemiah
 - b. Nehemiah – The cupbearer of Artaxerxes, governor of Judea, oversaw construction and rebuilding of Jerusalem

⁴ Wilkinson, Bruce, and Kenneth Boa. Talk Thru the Bible. Nashville: T. Nelson, 1983

- c. Sanballat – Samaritan who tried to assassinate Nehemiah and keep him from rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.
4. Summary of Nehemiah – Nehemiah is closely associated with the ministry of his contemporary, Ezra. Ezra is a priest who brings spiritual revival; Nehemiah is a governor who brings physical and political reconstruction and leads the people in moral reform. They combine to make an effective team in rebuilding the postexilic Remnant. Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet, also ministers during this time to provide additional moral and spiritual direction. The Book of Nehemiah takes us to the end of the historical account in the Old Testament, about four hundred years before the birth of the promised Messiah. Its two divisions are: the reconstruction of the wall (1–7), and the restoration of the people (8–13).

The Reconstruction of the Wall (1–7): Nehemiah’s great concern for his people and the welfare of Jerusalem leads him to take bold action. The walls of Jerusalem, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 b.c., evidently have been almost rebuilt after 464 b.c. when Artaxerxes I took the throne of Persia (Ezra 3:6–23). When he hears that opposition led to their second destruction, Nehemiah prays on behalf of his people and then secures Artaxerxes’ permission, provision, and protection for the massive project of rebuilding the walls.

The return under Nehemiah in 444 b.c. takes place thirteen years after the return led by Ezra, and ninety-four years after the return led by Zerubbabel. Nehemiah inspects the walls and challenges the people to “rise up and build” (2:18). Work begins immediately on the wall and its gates, with people building portions corresponding to where they are living.

However, opposition quickly arises, first in the form of mockery, then in the form of conspiracy when the work is progressing at an alarming rate. Nehemiah overcomes threats of force by setting half of the people on military watch and half on construction. While the external opposition continues to mount, internal opposition also surfaces. The wealthier Jews are abusing and oppressing the people, forcing them to mortgage their property and sell their children into slavery. Nehemiah again deals with the problem by the twin means of prayer and action. He also leads by example when he sacrifices his governor’s salary. In spite of deceit, slander, and treachery, Nehemiah continues to trust in God and to press on with singleness of mind until the work is completed. The task is accomplished in an incredible fifty-two days, and even the enemies recognize that it can only have been accomplished with the help of God (6:16).

The Restoration of the People (8–13): The construction of the walls is followed by consecration and consolidation of the people. Ezra the priest

is the leader of the spiritual revival (8–10), reminiscent of the reforms he led thirteen years earlier (Ezra 9–10). Ezra stands on a special wooden podium after the completion of the walls and gives the people a marathon reading of the Law, translating from the Hebrew into Aramaic so they can understand. They respond with weeping, confession, obedience, and rejoicing. The Levites and priests lead them in a great prayer that surveys God's past work of deliverance and loyalty on behalf of His people, and magnifies God's attributes of holiness, justice, mercy, and love. The covenant is then renewed with God as the people commit themselves to separate from the Gentiles in marriage and to obey God's commandments. Lots are drawn to determine who will remain in Jerusalem and who will return to the cities of their inheritance. One-tenth are required to stay in Jerusalem, and the rest of the land is resettled by the people and priests. The walls of Jerusalem are dedicated to the Lord in a joyful ceremony accompanied by instrumental and vocal music.

Unfortunately, Ezra's revival is short-lived; and Nehemiah, who returned to Persia in 432 b.c. (13:6), makes a second trip to Jerusalem about 425 b.c. to reform the people. He cleanses the temple, enforces the Sabbath, and requires the people to put away all foreign wives.⁵

F. **Esther**

1. Theme – Preservation Through Providence
2. Outline
 - a. Chapters 1-4 The threat to the Jews
 - b. Chapters 5-10 The triumph of the Jews
3. Key People to Know
 - a. Esther – Jewish maiden of great beauty who did not return to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity, who became queen of Persia, and put her life on the line to save the Jews.
 - b. Mordecai – Esther's uncle, foiled a plot to assassinate the king, hated by Haman, used by God to deliver the Jews in Persia.
 - c. Haman – An Amalekite and official of the king's court who hated Mordecai and plotted to destroy all the Jews in Persia.
4. Summary of Esther – The clearly emerging message of Esther is that God uses ordinary men and women to overcome impossible circumstances to accomplish His

⁵ Wilkinson, Bruce, and Kenneth Boa. Talk Thru the Bible. Nashville: T. Nelson, 1983

gracious purposes. Chapters 1–4 describe the threat to the Jews, and chapters 5–10 describe the triumph of the Jews.

The Threat to the Jews (1–4): The story begins in Ahasuerus' winter palace at Susa. The king provides a lavish banquet and display of royal glory for the people of Susa, and proudly seeks to make Queen Vashti's beauty a part of the program. When she refuses to appear, the king is counseled to depose her and seek another queen, because it is feared that the other women will become insolent if Vashti goes unpunished. Esther later finds favor in the eyes of Ahasuerus and wins the royal "beauty pageant." At her uncle Mordecai's instruction, she does not reveal that she is Jewish. With her help, Mordecai is able to warn the king of an assassination plot, and his deed is recorded in the palace records. Meanwhile, Haman becomes captain of the princes, but Mordecai refuses to bow to him. When he learns that Mordecai is Jewish, Haman plots for a year to eliminate all Jews, as his rage and hatred grow. He casts lots (purim) daily during this period until he determines the best day to have them massacred. Through bribery and lies he convinces Ahasuerus to issue an edict that all Jews in the empire will be slain eleven months hence in a single day. Haman conceives his plot in envy and a vengeful spirit, and he executes it with malicious craft. The decree creates a state of confusion, and Mordecai asks Esther to appeal to the king to spare the Jews. At the peril of her life, Esther decides to see the king and reveal her nationality in a desperate attempt to dissuade Ahasuerus. Mordecai convinces her that she has been called to her high position for this purpose.

The Triumph of the Jews (5–10): After fasting, Esther appears before the king and wisely invites him to a banquet along with Haman. At the banquet she requests that they attend a second banquet, as she seeks the right moment to divulge her request. Haman is flattered but later enraged when he sees Mordecai. He takes his wife's suggestion to build a large gallows for Mordecai (he cannot wait the eleven months for Mordecai to be slain). That night Ahasuerus decides to treat his insomnia by reading the palace records. Reading about Mordecai's deed, he wants him to be honored. Haman, mistakenly thinking the king wants to honor him, tells the king how the honor should be bestowed, only to find out that the reward is for Mordecai. He is humbled and infuriated by being forced to honor the man he loathes. At Esther's second banquet Ahasuerus offers her as much as half of his kingdom for the third time. She then makes her plea for her people and accuses Haman of his treachery. The infuriated king has Haman hanged on the gallows that Haman intended for Mordecai. The gallows, seventy-five feet high, was designed to make Mordecai's downfall a city-wide spectacle, but it ironically provides Haman with unexpected public attention—posthumously.

Persian law sealed with the king's ring (3:12) cannot be revoked, but at Esther's request the king issues a new decree to all the provinces that the Jews may assemble and defend themselves on the day when they are attacked by their enemies. This decree changes the outcome intended by the first order and produces great joy. Mordecai is also elevated and set over the house of Haman. When the fateful day of the two decrees arrives, the Jews defeat their enemies in their cities throughout the Persian provinces, but do not take the plunder. The next day becomes a day of celebration and an annual Jewish holiday called the Feast of Purim. The word is derived from the Assyrian *puru*, meaning "lot," referring to the lots cast by Haman to determine the day decreed for the Jewish annihilation. The narrative closes with the advancement of Mordecai to a position second only to the king.⁶

V. HOMEWORK

- A. Go through your flash cards for all of the books examined so far and make sure you have the themes, outlines, and key people from Genesis through Esther memorized.

⁶ Wilkinson, Bruce, and Kenneth Boa. *Talk Thru the Bible*. Nashville: T. Nelson, 1983.

- B. Read through the summary information on II Kings through Esther as you memorize the theme, outline and people.
- C. Read the assigned chapters below and write down a one sentence summary of each.
 - 1. II Kings
 - a. Chapter 2
 - b. Chapter 17
 - c. Chapter 22
 - d. Chapters 24-25
 - 2. I Chronicles
 - a. Chapters 11-12
 - b. Chapter 13
 - c. Chapter 15
 - d. Chapter 17
 - e. Chapter 28
 - 3. II Chronicles
 - a. Chapter 1
 - b. Chapters 3-4
 - c. Chapters 5-7
 - d. Chapter 29-31
 - 4. Ezra
 - a. Chapter 1
 - b. Chapter 6
 - c. Chapters 7-9
 - 5. Nehemiah
 - a. Chapter 6
 - b. Chapters 8-9
 - c. Chapter 13
 - 6. Esther
 - a. Read the entire book--it is really fun!