

***GOD'S VERDICT ON ISRAEL***  
**&**  
***JUDAH'S RESPONSE TO THAT VERDICT***

Brief quotes only of Scripture are given with the comment. This means you need to work from your own copy of the Word of God to read each verse in context, and to look up references given, or that come to mind. In this way you can look directly to the Lord to hear for yourself what He is saying.

E. Read.

SYRIA/Aram is KJV/niv. (Aram is the Hebrew spelling, and Aramaic the language. Syria is the Greek NT spelling with which I'm familiar, so I find the NIV use of Aram, annoying. It may be used to avoid Syria being confused with Assyria/ Asshur. Generally KJV is given only when it's significantly different. This is done to save space, and in NZ most readers are using NIV. LXX is Septuagint (Greek) OT. Cp = Compare with the Scriptures that follow. BAR 93/1 = Biblical Archaeology Review 1993, No 1. (Jan-Feb.)

Reference Books used:- EXPOSITORS BIBLE COM., Ed F.E. Gaebelin, 1 Kings-Job. WORD BIBLE COM., 2 Kings, T R Hobbs. A Synoptic Harmony of Samuel, Kings, & Chronicles etc J.D. Newsome. NEW AMERICAN COM., 1 & 2 Kings P.R. House. 1 & 2 Kings, R.D. Patterson & H.J. Austel. Gleanings from Elisha, Life & Miracles, A.W. Pink. NEW INT. BIBLICAL COM., 1 & 2 Kings, I. W. Provan. And, easily the most helpful, TYNDALE OT COM., 1 & 2 Kings, Donald Wiseman.

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## INTRODUCTION

( For those interested in such things - More Background material is in  
*Introductions Booklets 1, 2, and 3.*)

### Current Prophets and a Summary of their Message

Isaiah, (*Prophesied in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah*) *The Lord's Mercy and Judgment-chastising of Judah has been wasted on her, as she continues to anger Him by empty worship routines, and unrighteous living, 1:1-23. He promises future Salvation/ World Dominion 2:1-5, under the Virgin-Born Immanuel 7:13-14, who will reign on David's Throne forever, 9:1-7. The Lord has used Assyria to punish Judah, but they in turn will suffer the consequences of their attitude and acts, 10:1-19. A Remnant of God's people will enter blessing, 10:20-25; 32:1-2; 40:1-41:16. Cyrus will play a part in their return, 45:1-13. The Lord's Servant will restore Israel, 49:1-13. This will involve an Earthly Kingdom, 59:1-66:24.*

Jeremiah, (*Under Kings Josiah, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah*) *Israel is under the curse of the broken covenant, 11:1-5. The intercession of Moses or Samuel could do them no good.. death, sword, starvation, captivity are their only options 15:1-2. Those who trust in man are cursed, those who trust in the Lord are blessed. The heart of man is deceitful and wicked. The Lord tests hearts and rewards accordingly, 17:5-10. Zedekiah- should administer justice, 21:12. Jehoiakim-makes people build a new palace without payment, 22:1-23, Jehoiachin-useless and unwanted, as good as childless as no descendant will be King, 22:24-30. Righteous Branch yet to come, 23:1-8. Good and Bad figs, 70 years captivity, 24:1-25:14. Jeremiah says they must wear the yoke of Babylon, Hananiah denies this 27:1-28:17. Jeremiah writes telling the exiles to build, plant, marry, multiply and seek the peace of the land where they are exiled and God will bring their descendants back. Not listen to immoral lying prophets, 29:1-32. God WILL restore Israel 30:1-33:26. Jehoiakim burns Jeremiah's scroll, 36:1-32. Zedekiah has Jeremiah in and out of prison, 37:1-38:28. Fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah freed, 39:1-40:6.*

Hosea, (Uzziah-Jotham-Ahaz-Hezekiah) Israel was an adulterous wife prostituting herself to Baal/Assyria etc, & suffering the terrible consequences. They forget God's deliverance from Egypt, but God doesn't abandon His purposes, 1:1-11:11. They offer human sacrifices & kiss the calf-ids, 132. Still God says "Return O Israel to the Lord your God.. say Forgive all our sins. I will heal.. & love them freely," 14:1-9. Joel, Zion is desolated by an invading Army as if by locusts. God will restore to her the years the locusts have eaten.

Amos, (Under Kings Uzziah, Jeroboam II) The persistent sins of Judah, Israel, & surrounding nations to be punished. Israel's rulers are greedy oppressors God had disciplined the nation/ would destroy them as unrepentant. Restore them to blessing at some future date. Obadiah, Edom would suffer the consequences of her attacks on Judah. Jonah, God uses reluctant Jonah (Who had strengthened Israel, 14:25) to bless Nineveh. Micah, (Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah) The Day of the Lord's Judgment is coming. He will re-establish His Temple to which Nations will flock. The Deliverer will come from Bethlehem, 5:2. Not Sacrifices, but Just, merciful living/ humble walk with God required, but they prefer to walk in the ways of Ahab, 6:6-8. Everyone is unreliable, but God's Mercy will triumph, 7:1-20. Nahum, Nineveh to be wiped out. Habakkuk. The Rulers in Jerusalem are Greedy Exploiters, but will in turn be greedily exploited by the Babylonians. The Just will trust God and live by Faith. Zephaniah, (Josiah) The Day of the Lord's Judgment is coming. Judah will suffer for her sins, but be restored by the Lord in His Mercy.

Through His Prophets, and under Josiah, through His Written Word, God interacts with His people in mercy and judgment, blessing them as and when He can. He is Sovereign, 19:1-34. Obedience to God's revealed will/ rejection of idolatry brings blessing, 18:1-7, Deu 12:1-32 1 Ki 9:1-9. Ahaz refusing to deal with the Lord, Isa 7, is a turning point on the road to apostasy.

As men thought about the promised Messiah, Hezekiah and Josiah became relevant models, as well as David and Solomon. Hezekiah was the first King to reunite the land in association with Jerusalem and the Temple worship. Jesus cleansed the Temple as Hezekiah, and Josiah did, Mt 21:12-13 Jn 2:13-17. Jesus kept the Law fully, as Josiah set out to do, and promoted the true keeping of it Mt 5:17-20 & 4. But the city would fall once more, the Temple destroyed, and Israel sent into Exile again, Mt 23:37-24:21. The Messiah would die at the hands of a foreign power, Jn 19:1-37, and be raised from the dead as Hezekiah was restored to health after three days.

are strongly emphasised, but they are only briefly effective. Josiah did what he could, but Manasseh his son is a new Jeroboam, 17:21-23 and his reign makes Exile certain. Josiah's reforms die with the reformer and again the Temple is robbed, and faith in God as Deliverer abandoned. Only the poor of the land remain in Judah as in Israel, and the spark of inspiration and obedience is not in them.

That this book wasn't written until late in the period is seen from reference to grandchildren, and "to this day," 17:41, and like Hezekiah among the kings before and AFTER him, 18:5. Only when the history has run its course can it be recorded as HISTORY - a logical unity of progression. From the vantage point of Josiah's reform and the Exile, the writer can look back and spell out the tragedy of God's people - Redeemed from Slavery, planted by God in a fruitful land, constantly choosing to go after other gods with which as natural men they felt more comfortable.

Omri, Ahab, and the two Jeroboams demonstrate that material success is neither greatness nor happiness when blessings are forfeited. The writer of Kings takes up each event and situation and points to God and makes it obvious that trustful obedience honours God and enables His people to live in fellowship with Him, and be blessed. That the consequences of our choices for good or evil continue long after death, is shown clearly in the influence of David, Jeroboam, Ahab, Manasseh etc. The total failure of Israel in the land grinds to its end in the stupid action of murdering Gedaliah, and the flight of the last competent citizens to Egypt dragging Jeremiah with them. The record of KINGS was completed at the stage when Jehoiachin was being favourably treated, Jer 52:31-34 - a note of hopeful expectation - God hasn't abandoned the Exiles, therefore their spiritual restoration to God's favour and physical restoration to His Land is possible.

It's godless folly to treat the narrative as mere history, to be evaluated for historical accuracy etc. But it's also foolish to ignore the fact that it IS History, written against a specific background, and so treat it as a collection of theological/doctrinal statements. Those who do are likely to read into it issues that were foreign to the situations. It is HISTORY, and it is PROGRESSIVE REVELATION/SALUTARY EXAMPLES re walking with God and enjoying His blessings.

odds, fenced in by armies of troubles, 1817-207. Cp Mt 263646 Jn 1413-14; Acts 4:2331; 162534 Rom 153033 Eph 61019 Phil 4:6-7; Jas 5:13-16. That the people of God tend to drift, and need to repent, be revived, and restored to focus on God alone and conformity to his will, is a theme common to 181-8; 23:125 Mt 6:1-34 Lk 189-14; Rom 121-2; 1 Cor 10-14. Finally there is the need to focus on the written Word of God received from the past, and ever fully appreciated and honored, 2211-2325 Neh 81-18 Mt 5:17-20 2 Tim 3:14-17, and the necessity for obedience even when it goes against the grain of current culture, and offers no immediate reward.

Jeroboam had ignored mercy - Manasseh found mercy late. They affect those around them and their posterity. Man always falls short, and often sins deliberately. Repentance is always worthwhile - God's mercy is greater than man's rebellion and sin, Rom 5:20. Blessed be His Name. God gives promises, Jer 2512; 2910. Let's claim them as Daniel did, Dan 92-19.

## God's dealings with ISRAEL - An object lesson for JUDAH (Placed first so that the record of Judah's reaction follows.)

### 17:1-23 DEPOPULATION

(THE REASONS FOR THE EXILE OF ISRAEL are an object lesson and final warning to Judah and its Kings. These aren't NEW thoughts, a new revelation. They summarise the consistent and persistent message the Lord had given to Israel through His prophets. The political and economical factors involved in the rise and fall of Israel are referred to from time to time, but underlying them all was their relationship with the Lord God of Israel. All Kings and authorities are held in His hand. He over-rules everything in accordance with His own Nature, towards the fulfilment of His purposes of blessing.)

Israel ignored God's acts of power and grace on their behalf from the Exodus on, and failed to respond with loyal devotion/obedience. Instead they worshipped local deities, adopted corrupt ethical practices, and ignored the warnings of the prophets God sent to them. They followed worthless idols and became worthless people, 17:15. Jeroboam set the basis of their national life when he ignored God's offer of a David-style kingship, 1 Ki 11:37-39, and chose to worship the Lord in the way that suited him and his plans, 1 Ki 12:26-33. Once the form in which the true God is going to be worshipped is decided by what seems good to the worshipper everything is set free for apostasy. Cp Eve's decision based on how the fruit looked to her, Gen 3:6.)

The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD - Not that they didn't openly turn away from God, but that their hearts had already turned against the Lord before this was seen in their actions. God is always concerned with the reality of human desires and motives, rather than in the outward form of their actions. The latter are important as indications of heart attitudes, and as they mis-represent the Truth, and encourage men's hearts to further turn away from the Lord.

From watchtower to fortified city they built themselves high places- Bamah. That is from the smallest isolated settlements to the largest cities. The country as a whole was involved, not just the ignorant peasants, or the wealthy sophisticates. They set up IMAGES/sacred stones- Matsebah- These could be excused as being intended to represent the Lord, following Jacob, Gen 28:18, but easily lapsed into the Canaanite fertility cult worship of Baal and Asherah. The association with ritual prostitution, 1 Ki 14:23-24 made it morally and physically corrupting as well as spiritually. Some Bamah inscriptions seem to associate Yaweh with an Asherah. Bar 7:9, 8:46. This was even more blasphemous and insulting to the Lord God of Israel.

17:11-13 At every high place they burned incense, as the nations the LORD had driven out. They did wicked things that provoked the LORD to anger- Their actions were in themselves wicked, a corrupting of themselves and their society. This deprived them of fellowship with God - which hurt His love, and provoked Him to punish them so they might realize their need to repent and be restored to fellowship with Him if possible. See 1 Ki 14:9, 15:30, 16:2, 7, 13, 26, 33, 21:22, 22:53

They worshipped idols, though the LORD had said, You shall not. The Lord warned.. Turn from your evil ways. KEEP/Observe my commands- The Law banned all images, Ex 20:4; Deu 5:8. \*\*1 God promptly disowned the Golden calves, 1 Ki 13:1-9. Israel centring its relationship with God on Golden-Calf worship increasingly replaced God's Law with the convenient customs and life-style of the Heathen nations. Through His servants the prophets the Lord had pleaded with them to return to Him and to blessing Hosea 11:1-14:9, Joel 2:12-14, etc.

rejectors, Jer 6:30 HIS STATUTE S/decree and the covenant- 11:17; 13:23 and the warnings. They followed VANITY /worthless idols and themselves became VAIN /worthless To Fear the Lord and serve Him moves men to fellowship with Him, and they grow into His likeness with all the grace and glory which that involves. The follies of human religion and irreligion degrade men. Idols are worthless. Worshipping idols makes men personally worthless and useless to God and His blessed purposes. Disobeying God led to their disowning God, and then to His disowning them. They imitated the nations, and did things the LORD had forbidden- Ex 20:6; Lev 18:3-5; 20:2-23 Deu 5:6-10 18:9-12

17:16-18 They LEFT /forsook the commands of the LORD and made MOLTEN IMAGES /idols cast in the shape of calves, and a GROVE / Asherah pole- A reminder that Jeroboam had abused the privileges God has granted to him. Cp Lk 12:45 Heb 13:17. They bowed down to the starry HOSTS OF HEAVEN- Amos 5:26 Forbidden in Deu 4:19, 17:3. Along with all Creation the Stars etc are intended to move us to worship the Creator, not to view them as powers in their own right. they SERVED /worshipped Baal- Jeroboam had claimed to be worshipping the Lord, under the likeness of the Golden Calves. But, from Jezebel on, Baal worship became common. Self-directed worship of the Lord was replaced by openly defiant worship of false gods. This required God to treat the Israelites as He had treated the Canaanites. Cp 1Pet 1:17.

They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire- The ultimate despising of God and of man. USED /practised divination and sorcery- Forbidden in Deu 18:9-13 The association with starry hosts may be a link with Horoscopes - ancient and modern - used for guidance instead of relying on the Lord. sold themselves to do evil.. provoking Him to anger- The disgraceful record of their provocative actions - their sinning against the love/ loving care of God, is listed in Isa 2:6-8; 5:18-24 44:9-20 Hos 2:1-13 Micah 6:9-16 All this was covenant-breaking and called for God's Judgment to fall, Ex 20:6. The rich were irresponsible, immoral, greedy, self-indulgent, and oppressed the poor, Isa 1:17; 10:1-4; Hos 7:3-7; Amos 2:6-8; 4:1; 6:1-7. It's because Hezekiah's attitude is so different that so much is said of him in Isa 36:1-38:22

returned - and beyond that the Coming of Jesus the Messiah. Gods promises can be fulfilled only in a David/ Elijah/ Elisha/ Hezekiah/ Josiah type people. See Isa 6:11-13 Hos 11:8-11; Amos 9:11-15 This hope is held before the nation in 1739 etc.

17:19-23 Even Judah did not keep the commands of the LORD.. BUT WALKED IN THE STATUTES/ followed the practices Israel had introduced- See 16:2-4, etc. Therefore the LORD rejected all the SEED/people of Israel; he DELIVERED/gave them into the hands of SPOILERS/plunderers- During the time of the Judges Israel had suffered from the raids of the surrounding nations, as punishment for their sin and apostasy, until they cried out to the Lord and were delivered by a Judge whom He raised up David, under God, delivered them from being at the mercy of the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Midianites, Edomites etc and Israel became sufficiently powerful to rule over its neighbours. But the division of the Kingdom, and its drifting into apostasy meant that God allowed them to be plundered and humiliated until they ceased to repent, and only exile was appropriate. until he CAST/thrust them OUT OF HIS SIGHT/from his presence- The Lord took the action, but they brought it on themselves by defying His warnings, 1 Ki 11:11, 31.

FOR/When he RENT/tore Israel away from the house of David, they made Jeroboam their king.. caused them to SIN/commit a great sin- As recorded in 1 Ki 12:26-33 13:33-34 The Israelites WALKED/persisted in all the sins of Jeroboam.. until the LORD removed them OUT OF HIS SIGHT/from his presence. into exile.. and they are still there

### 17:24-41 REPOPULATION

17:24-27 The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon.. - The Assyrian records show that the exchange of populations began promptly after Samaria fell. settled them in the towns of Samaria- Detaching them from their homeland and traditional allies, and planting them in a new country made it easier to build loyalty to the Assyrian Empire. In their new situation their prosperity depended on their working in with the Assyrian system, Ezra 4:10 They were granted a good deal of freedom to encourage this.



not following the rituals needed to appease the local deities. The king of Assyria.. Have one of the priests.. from Samaria goback to teach- An inscription found in Khorasabad states that it was Assyrian policy to provide priests to teach colonists planted in new lands the correct form of respect and worship to local "gods." There was no acknowledgment that the Lord/Yaweh was a universal God. He was viewed as god of the land who must be humoured.

17:2833 So one of the priests.. came to Bethel and taught them how to worship the LORD - A priest of the Golden Calf shrine, so the knowledge he had of the Lord was tainted with idolatry. The writer sounds as if he could see the irony of a priest exiled for apostasy returning to teach the ways of the God who had rejected him! Nevertheless, each.. its own god.. set up shrines.. at high places. Succoth Benoth.. Nergal etc. It's not possible to be sure what gods are referred to. The scribes seem to have mis-spelled their names in obedience to the command not to make mention of the "Gods of the heathen" and generally the mis-spellings serve to discredit the idol-gods referred to. There is little profit in our knowing the details of their beliefs and worship. It was simply their traditional idolatry. They FEARED/worshipped the LORD, but also appointed THE LOWEST/all sorts of their own people to officiate for them as priests in the shrines at the high places - As had Jeroboam, 1 Ki 12:31. They FEARED/worshipped the LORD, but they also served their own gods.

17:3441 To this day.. They FEAR NOT /neither worship the LORD nor DO THEY AFTER/adhere to the decrees/ ordinances/ laws/ commands the LORD gave the CHILDREN/descendants of Jacob, whom he named Israel - The Samaritans both feared God, in general terms, as Ahab did, and equally truly didn't fear God - those who fear God in the Saving sense, are committed to Him exclusively. God doesn't share His Glory with other gods, or bestow His blessings on those who aren't bound to Him in loyal love.

When the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites.. the LORD, who brought you up out of Egypt.. is the one you must FEAR /worship.. They would not HEARKEN/listen however.. Even while these NATIONS/people FEARED/were worshipping the LORD.. they were serving their idols. To this day their.. grandchildren continue to- If

of the Lord- Jan and the Hebrew word for help. Sometimes spelled Uzziyah, Uzzah, etc. Similar variations of the name have been found stamped on a jug handles, seals, etc. who was sixteen years old, and made him king. He rebuilt Eilat- As a result of the Assyrians withdrawing AFTER they had thoroughly crushed Syria-Damascus, Israel under Jeroboam, and Judah under Azariah prospered politically and commercially, but not spiritually and socially. Apostasy and materialistic greed flourished in both countries, Amos 2:4-5, etc.

(Chapter 15 is very condensed, fitting in the reigns of 7 kings, which gives a feeling of tenseness- civil order is breaking down as the nation leads for the Judgment of exile.)

15:1-4 Azariah.. reigned fifty-two years.. did right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father Amaziah had done- Regrettably his pride in his successful wars led him into folly as Amaziah's had, 2 Chr 26:6-21. The high places.. not removed; people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there- Chronicles adds that as long as he sought the Lord he prospered. He defeated the Philistines, Arabs, and Ammonites, built fortresses throughout the land, and strengthened the army. He loved farming and encouraged it so the land prospered.

15:5-7 The LORD SMOTE /afflicted.. with leprosy- When in pride he tried to act as priest in the Temple of the Lord. Perhaps he saw himself as fit successor to Solomon who had offered incense? until he died- Further details of the King's pride and presumption in assuming the role of Priest is given in 2 Chr 26:16-21. he lived in a separate house- A house of freedom, or quarantine. The Hebrew word is linked with freedom from slavery, taxes, or public duties. Cp the use of the word in Job 31:9, Ps 88:5. Leprosy required isolation, Lev 13:45-46 /

Jotham the king's son had charge of the palace- He was "Over the house" as Abisha had been in 1 Ki 4:6, and Eliakim in 18:18 and governed the people- In other words he handled day-to-day public affairs, running of both the palace and the land as a whole. the other events.. written- We read of them in 2 Chr 26 The records of Tiglath Pileser say in his third year (743-744 BC) he collected tribute from "Azaryau of Iudah" which seems to be Azariah of Judah. Azariah's own campaigns were to the South and West, subduing the Philistines, and establishing forts in the

He did right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father Uzziah had done- Did what is RIGHT means he refrained from involvement in iddatry, although happy to continue in the traditional High Place worship which easily merged into iddatry.

15 35-39 The high places.. people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there. Jotham BUILT /rebuilt the Upper Gate of the temple of the LORD.. other events. written- According to 2Chr 27:1-9 these included rebuilding the Jerusalem wall in Ophel, conquering the Ammonites and collecting tribute from them. This becoming strong was because he ordered his ways before the Lord his God. Kings omits the mention of a number of developments towards the spiritual/ religious crisis - Prosperity and Apostasy as stated in Hosea and Joel.

the LORD began to send Rezin.. and Pekah against Judah- The Kingdoms of Syria and Israel had been attempting to conquer Judah. The culmination of this is dealt with in Isaiah 7:9. Law and Order, and loyalty to the Covenant between the Lord and the house of David had been breaking down in Judah - with assassinations, and Uzziah stricken with leprosy. Jotham.. buried.. Ahaz his son succeeded him as king.

#### 16 1-20 Ahaz King of Judah 2Chr 28:1-27

16 1-4 Ahaz- Shortened form of Jehoahaz. The Assyrians called him Yauhazi. There is no mention of his mother. began to reign.. twenty years.. reigned sixteen years- So Ahaz was 36 when he died. Hezekiah was 25 when he became King, which suggests he was born when his father was only 11. This is one of the many uncertainties in the chronology.

Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God- Condemned as - Solomon and Rehoboam were, 1 Ki 11:4; 15:3. He gave official approval to iddatry, and was personally involved in idd worship. Cp 1Ki 14:23-24

He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel- 8:18 sacrificed his son in the fire- Lev 18:21; 20:1-5; Jer 7:31; 19:5; 32:35 following the ABOMINATIONS/detestable ways of the nations the LORD had CAST/driven out before the Israelites- Ahab and Jezebel had pioneered the merging of the worship of the Lord with that of Baal and

Chronicles records that Israel took many Judeans captive, back to Israel. These were released on the Lord's orders given through Oded the prophet, and the kindly assistance of some Israelite elders. Isa 7 gives to the house of David a twofold promise - deliverance from their attackers who will soon disappear from the scene, and the birth of a boy who will be Immanuel - God with us - whose mother will be a virgin. Rezin recovered Elath.. THE SYRIANS/Edomites- ARAM/Edom then DWELT /moved into Elath and have lived there to this day- Edomite occupation of the southern areas of Judah in its later days are obvious when the remains of towns are excavated. Bar 966

16 7-9 Ahaz sent.. to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, I am your servant.. Come and save me.. took the silver and gold found in the temple of the LORD and.. the palace and sent it- Ahaz brushed off God's reassurance through Isaiah, Isa 7, and robbed the Temple of treasure given to God to bribe the King of Assyria to attack and destroy Syria and Israel. This was an apostate action - the ultimate insult to the Lord God of Israel, acting as if He couldn't or wouldn't protect His own people. God had forbidden the giving/taking of Bribes, Deu 16:19. Isaiah had warned against trusting in Assyria rather than in the Lord, Ex 23:22 Isa 7:10-16 The Assyrians were in the process of expanding west, and invading Syria, and the richest bribe of a small state like Judah was a minor item.

The king of Assyria.. attacking Damascus and TOOK /capturing it. He CARRIED AWAY CAPTIVE /deported its inhabitants to Kir- Returned them to their original home? as Kir in Elam is given as that in Isa 22:5-6 Amos 1:5; 9:7. and put Rezin to death.

16 10-11 Then King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser- The Assyrian records list Ahaz as coming to Damascus bringing tribute to Assyria along with men from Ammon, Moab, Ashkelon, Gaza and Edom, 734 BC. Inviting help from the King of Assyria results in religious changes. Cp State intervention in the affairs of the early church to put down heresies - Arian, schisms, etc. Ahaz coming to Damascus to give thanks to the "Saviour" he had chosen to place his trust in, made him open to learning how he could "improve" worship in Jerusalem.

He saw- In Hebrew to see, often means to see and respond to - seeing opens up possibilities to the mind, and the will may then choose to act on the

"gods" were powerful, and pleased with their worship. If Ahaz worshipped their gods in the way the Assyrians did he expected to be a successful King also. While we should be willing to learn from the experience of others, the Lord and His Word need to be central in all our thinking. There's something not God-honoring in God's people today rushing here and there to "How to be a successful church" seminars. So Uriah the priest built an altar in accordance with all the plans King Ahaz had sent.. and finished it before Ahaz returned- Uriah raises no objection, whether from sympathy with, or fear of, the King. Factual report with no comment. Leaving the matter for the reader to make his own judgment on the action lets the report speak for itself.

16 12-14 When the king came back.. and saw the altar- The impression is that of considered action by Ahaz. he approached it- Climbed up the steps to it. (Steps were forbidden, Ex 20:26 The priest, as a mere sinful human, was in a sense to distance himself from what happened on the altar.) and OFFERED/presented offerings on it- The offerings to be made on the altar were made to the Lord, and in the usual form except that Ahaz acted as the Priest in this first use of/dedication of the Altar, as Solomon had done, 1 Ki 8:22-63 He seems to have seen himself as initiating a new era in Temple worship. Chronicles mentions that he also sacrificed to the gods of Damascus because he said they had helped the Kings of Damascus to defeat him.

He offered his burnt offering.. sprinkled the blood of his PEACE/fellowship offerings on the altar- The form of the offerings and their avowed purposes seem to have been right, but the altar on which they were offered was his own idea. David, 2 Sam 6:12-19, 24:18-25 and Solomon, 1 Ki 3:3-4; 8:1-66 had, under God, functioned acceptably as sacrificing-King-Priests. But while Ahaz did so in Solomon's temple, he was, like Jeroboam, acting as a King-Priest to initiate a polytheistic "new form of worship," following his own ideas, and ignoring God's revealed will. From now on, as the example of Jeroboam's worship corrupted Israel, Ahaz-type worship would corrupt Judah, and become deeply engrained in the nation's thinking.

The BRAZEN/bronze altar that stood before the LORD - An expression of reverence and respect. Those who feared the Lord, spoke and acted BEFORE the Lord. he brought from the front of the temple.. and put it on the north side of the new altar- The altar that by the Lord's will

looking for a lost thing Ezek 34:11-12 So probably seeking guidance by prayer, or by examining the entrails of a sacrifice 17:17.

Uriah the priest did as Ahaz ordered- All that was done had the cooperation of the High Priest. Nothing is said about their co-operating with the Lord. But in Judah's apostate state that was viewed as unimportant. Cf the re-organisation of worship and witness today to be in step with the times, which MAY have the Lord's approval, but those making the changes often seem indifferent to this - Worship is judged by it meeting the FELT needs of the worshippers/ their approval. The approval of the One worshipped is taken for granted.

16:17-20 Ahaz CUT OFF THE BORDERS/took away the side panels and removed the LAVERS/basins from the movable stands. He removed the Sea from the BRAZEN/bronze bulls. set it on a stone base- The Lavers were now to be fixtures, not semi-portable. The reservoir was to have a stone base in keeping with the stone altar. This would have supplied him with valuable metal as a means of replenishing his Treasury, and possibly for further payments of tribute to Assyria. It was of course a taking back for one's own use of that which had been given to God and His service Lev 27:28

He took away the Sabbath COVERT/canopy that had been built at the temple. FOR/in deference to THE KING OF ASSYRIA - What this refers to is unclear. It may mean that the bronze was needed as a tribute to Assyria. What IS clear is that the King of Assyria and his wishes decide what is done. Neither the Lord God of Israel, nor the King rule in their own house. The fact that Syrian worship provides the Altar, and pleasing the Assyrian King dictates alterations to the buildings, means that the worship of the Lord is now dictated by human wisdom and expediency. Detached from the Written word of God, worship is free to adapt to the whims of man. Judah is following Israel towards the same fate as if unaware of the consequences of its actions. Before long Ahaz took the further steps of active apostasy, 2 Chr 28:21-25

18:1-20:21 Hezekiah 2 Chr 29:1-32:33

(Samaria has suffered the consequences of apostasy. Judah has been following Israel in apostasy and seems likely to be exiled. Against the trend, Hezekiah takes up the challenge to trust the Lord in their extremity, and a fair measure

Hezekiah for good Jer 26:18-19. More than anyone before him Hezekiah measures up to the standard of a Good-in-the-sight-of-God King like David.

18:4-8 He removed the high places, smashed sacred stones, cut down Asherah poles- 1 Ki 14:15, etc. These NEGATIVE actions stripped away the accumulation of aids to apostasy dating back to the time of Solomon's apostasy. This was an essential preparation for the POSITIVE commitment to Faith in the Lord and obedience to His Law. God had revealed Himself to Solomon at the Gibeon High Place 1 Ki 3:2-5. Even during the reigns of GOOD/approved Kings worship at the High Places continued, 1 Ki 22:43 2 Ki 12:2-4; 14:4; 15:3-4. Even the openly idolatrous shrines had been approved by Solomon, but at their best they were an encouragement to turn away from the temple, and the exclusive worship of the Lord. Hezekiah removed the temptation. See Appendix II.

He broke into pieces the bronze snake- Num 21:4-9. the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan- Or Hezekiah called it a mere lump of brass) Hezekiah trusted the LORD. There was no one like him among the kings of Judah- Since Judah became a separate kingdom. He was unique in his heart-commitment to the Lord like that of King David. No-one equalled Hezekiah in his trust in the Lord, and in his faithful obedience to God's Law. What is to the Glory of God is for the good of man - He prospered.

He CLAVE held fast to the LORD - As Solomon in old age HELD FAST to foreign wives and let go of the Lord in joining them in worship of Idols, 1 Ki 11:2 he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses. The LORD was with him- Cp Gen 21:22 28:15; Deu 20:1, etc.

he PROSPERED/was successful- Sakal- Acted wisely, did what wisdom required in the current situation. His adjustment of the water supply in Jerusalem was an example of this. Success/wisdom involved TRUST/Faith in the Lord, and active, energetic obedience, as it always does. Godly concern leads to Godly success- and yet this was also tested by the crisis of invasion. He rebelled against the king of Assyria.

He defeated the Philistines- Reversing the loss of territory by Ahaz, 2 Chr 28:18-19. The Assyrian records say he deposed their puppet king Padi

Footnote \*\*2 Excavations in Jerusalem uncovered what seems to be the remains of this wall. Recently-built houses had been demolished to build it, as described in Isa 22:10. Bar 9:23.

## 1813-37 Assyrian Attack 2 Chr 32:1-19, Isa 36:1-22

1813-17 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah Sennacherib.. attacked all the FENCED/fortified cities of Judah and TOOK /captured them- Sennacherib's records say he first defeated Merodach Baladan, who withdrew into Persia. He then attacked the King of Sidon who fled to Cyprus. Next He defeated an Egyptian army, took control over Philistia, and transferred the border towns of Joppa, Lachish, (Pictures in his palace at Nineveh show his successful siege of Lachish) Libnah and Azekah to Philistine control, as Assyrian vassals. Moab, Edom, and Ammon had paid tribute, leaving Hezekiah alone in rebellion. He then records that he shut up Hezekiah in his capital city having captured 46 of his walled towns and taken 200,500 persons.

So Hezekiah.. I have OFFENDED/done wrong.. I will pay whatever you demand. The king of Assyria APPOINTED/exacted from Hezekiah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold- 1 ton of Gold. Hezekiah gave him all the silver found in the temple of the LORD and.. royal palace- This looks like the collapse of Hezekiah's commitment to the Lord, as it had been when his Godly predecessors came under threat, 1 Ki 15:18. But as with Ahab in besieged Samaria, 1 Ki 20 the arrogant enemy, over-ruled by God, pushed him beyond acceptable limits. Sennacherib's records say 30 talents of gold and 800 talents silver, and that it took time to collect it. Perhaps Hezekiah managed to pay only the 300 talents recorded in the Bible, and this led to the Assyrian attack, or Sennacherib accepted the money without accepting Hezekiah, and continued to demand absolute surrender. Hezekiah was repairing walls, and securing the water supply in case of siege, 2 Chr 32:1-5, 30.

The king of Assyria sent TARTAN his supreme commander, RAB-SARIS/ chief officer and RAB-SHAKEH his field commander- Or, Provincial Governor. These are titles, not personal names. with a



Footnote \*\*3 Isa 10:28-32 describes an Assyrian army coming directly from the North to Jerusalem. It was perhaps another column, or a different campaign. Chronicles adds that Hezekiah strengthened the walls of Jerusalem, and built a second wall, organised the army and prepared and stored weapons and shields. He also set the people to block all access to water for an army camped outside Jerusalem, and urged the people to put their trust in the Lord.

18:18-21 They called for the king; and Eliakim son of Hilkiyah the palace administrator, Shebna the SCRIBE /secretary- He seems at one time to have held Eliakim's position and been replaced after Isaiah rebuked him, Isa 22:15-24 Shebna's name has been found on a clay seal. and Joah.. the recorder went out to them.

RA B-SHAK EH /The field commander said Tell Hezekiah: This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: On what are you basing this confidence of yours?- This statement is typical of the Assyrians' tactics. They made bullying threats to terrify cities, boasting of their past ruthlessness, etc to weaken the will to resist them. A picture found engraved on stone at Khorsabad shows an Assyrian official standing on a siege machine before a besieged city reading a proclamation to them from a scroll. There's a record of the proclamation made when they besieged Babylon, 731 BC. They were masters of propaganda and psychological warfare designed to discourage and divide the defenders - Their king is the GREAT King. Their army was so powerful no-one could resist them, etc.

You say you have COUNSEL /strategy and military strength but speak VAIN/empty words. depending on Egypt. that splintered reed pierces a man's hand if he leans on it- This was true enough, although Egypt was now growing stronger. To depend on an inadequate or unreliable ally would do them more harm than good. See the verdict on Egypt in Isa 30:1-5; 31:3; Ezek 29:6-7. Hoshea of Israel had trusted Egypt and been let down.

18:22-25 If you say We are depending on the LORD our God - isn't he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed \*\*4 saying.. You must worship before this altar in Jerusalem- Having discredited any POLITICAL basis for continued resistance, he now shrewdly discredits any RELIGIOUS basis. Having captured many towns of Judah he would have heard of Hezekiah's reforms and of people's

Jerusalem from attack, 2 Chr 32:1-8, but he's challenged to come out and fight. As wars were won with horses and chariots his army was hopelessly inadequate! How WILL YOU TURN AWAY /repulse one CAPTAIN/officer.. you are depending on Egypt for chariots.

Footnote \*\* 4 At Beersheba stores from a dismantled altar were found used in making a wall at this time. Bar 9:53. See Appendix III

The LORD himself told me to march against his country and destroy it- Cyrus claimed that Marduk, the god of Babylon had given the city into his hand. Here the Rab Shakeh says that Hezekiah had offended the Lord and so He had given Jerusalem into the hands of the Assyrians - plausible enough, and how tragic their trusting in the Lord would be if indeed He had handed them over into the Assyrians' hands. Doubt, confusion, horror and despair have always been powerful weapons in warfare, and the Assyrians used them all to their advantage. "Why trust the Lord - He told us to attack and defeat you."

18:26-27 Eliakim.. said.. Please speak in THE SYRIAN LANGUAGE / Aramaic, we understand it- Aramaic was widely used at the time. But the Assyrian insisted in talking in the local Jewish dialect to have maximum impact on the ordinary soldiers and citizens within reach of his voice, in the hope of scaring them out of willingness to resist. The Assyrian records mention the recruitment of officials who could speak local languages as this man could. But the commander replied.. my master sent me to say these things, to the men sitting on the wall - who, like you, will have to eat their own filth and drink their own urine- implying that soon they would have nothing else to eat or drink. In fact Hezekiah's having the tunnel from Gihon spring made, and the outflow blocked off, meant Jerusalem had plenty of drinking water, and it was the Assyrian army which had water-supply problems.

18:28-30 Then the commander stood and called out in Hebrew: Hear the word of the great king- A title used by the Assyrians of their kings, and later by the Babylonians and Persians. In Scripture it's usually reserved for the Lord Himself, Ps 47:2, Mal 1:14; Mt 5:35 the king of Assyria.. says: Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you from my hand.. Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the LORD.

20) so perhaps hinting that surrender would enable the men to stay with/protect their wives and families and so avoid the horrors of rape, and the breaking up of families common when besieged cities fell. It was most unlikely that surrender would assure this, but it was effective propaganda. "Hezekiah can't deliver you. The Lord can't deliver you. I and my army can!" until I come and take you to a land.. of CORN/grain.. honey- The experience of the exile of the men of Samaria, would be vivid in the minds of the hearers.

Hezekiah.. misleading you when he says, The LORD will deliver us. Has the god of any nation delivered his land from the king of Assyria- Why should they trust in their unseen God, when the Assyrian army was all too visible at their door. Deu 4:35 10:17, made it clear that the Lord God of Israel alone was real, and the gods of the nations figments of imagination. Rab-Shakeh has said the Lord had sent them against Jerusalem and given it into their hands. Now, with the glib assurance of the skilled propagandist, he assures them that Gods are powerless against the Assyrian armies anyway!

To create doubts is the easy task of any Atheist. This can be effective without the arguments being consistent. His proud boast of self-righteous self-sufficiency and his ridiculing the possibility that the Lord might control history is typical of the materialist who says "God is on the side of the big battalions." This is a direct challenge to God, and God takes up the challenge on behalf of Hezekiah and those who have put their trust in Him. Rab-Shakeh's arrogance challenges Hezekiah to abandon trust in the Lord, and this strengthens his expectation that the Lord will defend His reputation and His people.

Where are the gods of Hamath, Arpad..? Have they- The gods worshipped in Samaria - DELIVERED/rescued Samaria from my hand? Who of all the gods.. has DELIVERED/been able to save his land? How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand- This was less convincing to those who already realised that only the Lord God of Israel was in fact a GOD. And that He had, through His prophets, often warned Israel that they must face exile if they continued unrepentant in their rejection of loyal obedience to their God. All the Gods are the same as far as the Assyrians were concerned = none of them have stopped us/can stop us.

To the best of their ability they had honored the Lord in keeping the Passover, repairing the Temple, restoring its services, etc. And by encouraging the remaining members of the Northern tribes to join them in obedient Faith in the Lord God of Israel, 2 Chr 29:5-11; 30:21-27, 31:11-12, centred on Jerusalem - The THRONE of the House of David, and the TEMPLE of the Lord.

## 19:1-18 Hezekiah's Prayer to God 2 Chr 32:20 Isa 37:1-35

19:1-4 When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the LORD - As he wasn't a Priest perhaps means the Temple court, but desperate situations may require desperate action, and God deals with every man according to his heart motives. His heart's love for the Lord is seen in his instantly turning to the Lord and seeking Him in His house in contrast to the reactions of Ahaz, Zedekiah, and Jehoiakim. Hezekiah went to the temple to pour out his heart before the Lord - His great concern was for the NAME/Reputation of the Lord which was linked with the future of His people Israel, who were now threatened with disaster. He'd paid the tribute money and hoped the Assyrians would leave them alone, but the money is gone, and Sennacherib still demands that he surrender.

He sent Eliakim.. Shebna.. and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth- The Palace and Temple - the King's servants and the Lord's servants are both involved, and outwardly expressing repentance/humility. This contrasts with the refusal of Ahaz to trust the Lord. to the prophet Isaiah- Who was known to be opposed to Israel looking for salvation through political help, Isa 10:5-19, 30:1-7; 31:1-9. Only if they avoided political entanglements and reliance on godless Rulers would God be free to act on their behalf. Hezekiah counted on Isaiah, like Moses or Samuel, being a man of God able to intercede powerfully with God, and give God's advice as to what they should do in their desperate situation, Ex 32:31-32 Num 14:13-19, 1 Sam 7:8-9, Ps 99:6; Jer 15:1. Often when God had sent prophets to kings they, and their message, were rejected by those kings. Hezekiah actively seeks a message from the Lord.

may be God's opportunity. When it comes to souls at the point of new-birth, there is also a desperate need that concern for Salvation doesn't fade without bringing them to life, and we must put ourselves and the situation into God's hands with all earnestness

It may be the LORD will hear- A cry of hope and despair. the words of RAB-SHAKEH/the field commander.. sent to REPROACH/ridicule the living God, and he will REPROVE/rebuke him- A candid confession that the nation and the army are as feeble and helpless as the Rab-shakeh had said they were. The Lord and His intervention is their only hope. He acknowledged that he is powerless to match the Assyrian army at his door but hopes/ desires that God will demonstrate that Sennacherib was wrong in claiming the Lord was as powerless as the heathen idols. Therefore pray for the remnant- That a faithful remnant was to be preserved by the Lord to become the future blessed nation was revealed to Isaiah, whose son was to be called "Shear Jashub - a remnant will return" (from Exile) Isa 7:3. As Israelites had fled to Judah the surviving remnant in Jerusalem was a remnant of all Israel.

19.5-7 When King Hezekiah's officials came.. Isaiah said Tell your master the LORD says- The form of God's authoritative statements in all ages, Gen 15:1. Do not be afraid- Josh 1:6-9, 8:1; 11:6; 1 Ki 17:13; 2 Ki 6:16 of.. those words.. the SERVANTS/underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

I am going to SEND A BLAST /put such a spirit in him- Influence his thinking his interpretation of the news he hears, Josh 29:10 Judges 7:13-14; 1 Sam 16:14-16; 1 Ki 22:21-23; 2 Ki 7:6; Isa 19:14. that when he hears a RUMOUR /certain report he will return to his own country- And so give up the siege of Jerusalem. Not the news of Pharaoh Tirhakah, which he met by action/ driving him back, but disquieting news from the homeland, that, with the sudden death of so many in his army, would make him withdraw. and there I will CAUSE HIM TO FALL /have him cut down with the sword- It happened about 20 years after his return, not having come back to renew his attack on Jerusalem.

19.8-10 The field commander.. found the king fighting against Libnah-Lachish had fallen already, and capturing Libnah would make it hard for

Sennacherib claims to have defeated the Egyptian army already at Eltekeh, but makes no claim to have captured its leaders. They seem to have re-formed, and were preparing to attack him again.

he sent messengers. Say to Hezekiah: Do not let the god you depend on deceive you- He now accuses God of deceiving Hezekiah with false promises - assurances which He can't fulfil. He's claiming that the Lord is not only too weak to protect them, He is deliberately deceiving those who trust Him! Perhaps the Assyrians were aware that their previous threat had driven Hezekiah to seek reassurance from the Lord, and that he had received it. Their response is to say "Our assessment of the situation can't be wrong. If your God has reassured you that He will deliver you, don't trust Him. He's just deceiving you!"

The same arguments, but the tone is even more arrogant in an attempt to bluff a prompt surrender in case an Egyptian army did arrive and shift the balance against the Assyrians. The wear and tear on the health and morale of the soldiers, and on the equipment, may have also been obviously increasing as the campaign was prolonged by Hezekiah's stubborn resistance. Sennacherib's theology "I'm right, everyone else is wrong" determines his actions - as what they believe does with every man.

19.11-13 Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries- Masses of people were tortured, killed, deported, replaced etc. Did the gods of the nations that were destroyed by my forefathers deliver them- The cities captured in earlier Assyrian campaigns were still under their control in spite of anything the people in those cities may have hoped their "gods" would do for them in answer to their prayers.

19.14-16 Hezekiah received the letter- The sending of the letter would keep up the pressure on Hezekiah. Many such letters have been found went to the temple and spread it before the LORD - See Isa 37.14-20 He had passed on the oral message to Isaiah, and requested him to intercede for them. Hezekiah is now faced with a further threat in written form, and takes this to the Temple himself to acknowledge the Lord, and pray for Him to deliver them from what the letter threatened. The idea of spreading the letter out before the Lord reminds us of our need to go over before the Lord the situation exactly as it is, not to try to

present, powerful Deliverer. And the people responding by worshipping Him as such, and encouraging the next generation to take up the joyful responsibilities of God's covenant

Hezekiah- and Isaiah, 2 Chr 32:20 prayed: O LORD, God of Israel, WHICH DWELLET H/enthroned between the cherubim- Present among His people, as He had promised, Ex 25:8; 1 Sam 4:4; 1 Ki 8:1-11. Isaiah had witnessed this, Isa 6. you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth- Hezekiah prays to God as being near him in the Temple, in the Holy of Holies, and so able to hear his voice and prayer. He remembers and acknowledges that God is what He has revealed Himself as being, as recorded in His Word - Creator of Heaven and earth, and right now ruling over all the Kingdoms of the world, Deu 4:32-40 Isa 4:28; 4:31; 4:51; Acts 4:24-31, etc.

Give ear, O LORD.. open your eyes, O LORD - As we turn our head to hear more clearly, Ps 45:10 and direct our attention to see more clearly, Zech 1:24; Dan 9:17-19. Such expressions may sound quaint to us moderns, but they express the desire that God, who made eyes and ears, exercise His own ability to take notice of the situation and make appropriate response, as in Ps 17:6; 71:2; 86:1; 116:2

to the words Sennacherib has sent to REPROACH/insult the living God- Having acknowledged God's greatness and glory, as the One able to deal with the situation and deliver Jerusalem, Hezekiah asks God in His mercy to stoop down to them, pay attention to their great need and do something about it- As Solomon had asked that He would, in his dedication prayer. Sennacherib stands as opposed to, and mocker of, God's people, and their God, 1 Sam 17:10; 36:45

19:17-19 It is true LORD the Assyrian kings have DESTROYED/bid waste these nations- He recognises the truth of what Sennacherib has written, but also the LIMITS of that truth - the small part THAT truth plays in the total universe. They have thrown their gods into the fire.. for they were. only wood and stone, THE WORK OF/fashioned by men's hands- That men had made the images of all such gods, and had done so from ideas created in men's minds, makes it obvious to a thoughtful person that what men have created can do nothing to help

## 19.19-28 God's reply to Sennacherib Isa 37:21-35

(Sennacherib had spoken to Hezekiah about the Lord. Hezekiah had spoken to the Lord about Sennacherib. Now the Lord speaks to Hezekiah about Sennacherib, and the Lord has the last word!)

19.20-21 Isaiah.. sent a message.. This is what the LORD.. says: I have heard your prayer concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria- The whole message deals with Sennacherib's arrogance against God. It's written in the form of a Taunt Song the poetic pattern makes it sound well even today - and must have been much enjoyed when the inhabitants of Jerusalem boosted their morale and their faith in the Lord by singing it. Good hymns still have that effect. God assures them He will keep Sennacherib from conquering Jerusalem.

This is the word the LORD has spoken.. The Virgin Daughter of Zion- Sennacherib is right they are no match for his army - Jerusalem is only a little girl facing a well armed, battle hardened warrior. despises you and LAUGHS AT/mocks you- Used in Num 15:31 of wilfully breaking God's law and so holding God's word in contempt. Sennacherib taunted the Idol-gods with their powerlessness to protect their worshippers from the Assyrian armies. A living King is more powerful than a lifeless "god" But weak and despised as Jerusalem is she is confident in the LIVING God, and His promises. The Assyrian King has the mightiest army of the time, but are mere men insulting Jerusalem and her God. Her response is to laugh at them. God will respond by cutting Assyria down to size.

The Daughter of Jerusalem tosses her head- See Job 16:4; Ps 22:7; 109:25 Jer 18:16 as you flee- Runaway.

19.22-24 Who is it you have REPROACHED/insulted and blasphemed?.. in pride? Against the Holy One of Israel- See Ps 2:1-12; 71:22; 78:41; Isa 1:4; 5:18-24; 10:20; 12:6; Jer 50:29; 51:5, etc. God had been blasphemed and He wouldn't tolerate that sin by Israel or the nations.



Matsor. The word is similar to Mizraim - Egypt, and may hint at it but Sennacherib never seems to have conquered Egypt. Water is the greatest natural resource in those lands. Egypt was said to be watered with one's feet as the farmer directed water from one small channel to the next by treading on the earth bank to make a gap. Sennacherib boasts that no man or feature of Nature can stop him doing what he wants to do. He simply ignores the wishes of men or gods and takes and makes use of all resources at will. But God alone can rightly claim to ascend to the heights, chop down the cedars and dry up the streams at will, Ps 29:3, 65:9, 75:4-7; Isa 2:12-13, 19:1-15; Jer 2:13, 17:13, 51:36; Ezek 3:11-18; Hos 13:15; Amos 2:9; Zech 11:1-3.

Footnote \*\*5 Cp the Assyrian boast recorded in Isa 10:13-14. That what is written there is accurately quoted and recorded at the time was demonstrated when excavators found the identical words inscribed on stone in an Assyrian palace. The Assyrian towns were destroyed, and the sun-dried brick of their buildings became clay that covered such inscriptions within 100 years of Isaiah's death. So no one could have read that inscription, and written it in AFTER the exile. And certainly it's an odd statement that no-one could have faked.

19:25-28 Have you not heard? - By saying this Rab-Shakeh had sneered that Hezekiah was ignoring well-known facts. God reflects that sneer back at the Assyrians - Sennacherib's triumphs were foreordained, and so his efforts were irresistible to the limits of God's will. And would cease instantly when those limits were reached. Long ago I HAVE DONE/ordained it. now I have brought it to pass. Shallow thinking is puzzled that a God of Love with purposes of blessing for His people Israel should discipline them by using an even more sinful power, Hab 1:1-17. But perfect love requires that there be no bending of the rules, no injustice in the outworking of the purposes of that love. What men sow they must reap. Jacob the Cheat, must be cheated by Laban and be partly crippled before he learns to walk with God. His purposes of grace are carried out by God who knows men's thoughts, Ps 44:21; Dan 2:47; Heb 4:12.

you have turned FENCED/fortified cities into RUINOUS HEAPS/piles of stone - Often Assyrian armies left total destruction behind them as can be seen in Lachish now that it has been excavated. The Assyrians in general, and Sennacherib in particular, had won great victories, terrorised and looted many lands. Their mistake was that they imagined

cowards they are like.. grass prouting on the roof BLASTED/ scorched before it grows up- A common sight in those dry lands when what has flourished during the winter rains faces the long rainless summer. A vivid figure of empty promise soon discredited. As the Lord reminds them, all they have achieved and boast of was under HIS Sovereignty, and by HIS permission - including their chastisement of His people Israel and Judah. The axe has no power of its own so must not boast against the man who swings it, Isa 10:15 They will soon realise they are in fact helpless if/when they attempt to act against His will.

I know YOUR ABODE /where you stay- No-one hides from God when you come and go and how you rage against me- God is fully aware of Assyria's triumphs, and of the blasphemous insults, and would act accordingly. I will put my hook- Chaining in your nose and my BRIDLE /bit in your LIPS/mouth and I will TURN YOU BACK/ make you return by the way you came- It was Assyrian custom to lead captive princes with a hook or ring in their nose - as we would lead a bull to keep it under control. The Assyrians treated their captives as if they were animals, 2 Chr 33:11; Amos 4:1-3. Cp Job 4:11-2; Isa 30:28 37:29 A stone pillar excavated at Zinjiri pictures Esarhaddon leading Tirhaka of Egypt, and Ba'alub of Tyre behind him with hooks or rings in their noses.

19.29:31 This will be the sign.. This year you will eat what grows by itself- Without the farmer's cultivation and care. the second year what springs from that. But in the third year sow and reap.. and eat fruit- God isn't promising immediate relief for the city. Wars disrupt harvest, and armies live off the land. The invasion has hindered the harvesting of crops, but seed scattered from them will come up of itself and the Assyrians will be gone so they will be able to harvest what has grown in the neglected fields. In the third year they will be free to sow and reap in peace. After months of attack on the nation and threats to Jerusalem, it would be miracle news to be promised recovery in three years, and years of peace and prosperity to follow that. Hezekiah didn't reject God's sign as Ahaz had, Isa 7:1-14. God chastises backsliding but is able to/will preserve His people as He deals with their enemies in Judgment. Cp the future Day of Lord, when peace and prosperity for Israel follows God's intervention, Isa 26:20-21; Joel 3:9-18 Zech 1:23-9, 13:8-9, 14:1-15

establishment of His promised Kingdom.

19.3234 The LORD says concerning the king of Assyria: He will not enter this city.. I will defend and save it- God's promises are true, and all will be fulfilled, but it's salutary to remember that later on the proud apostate inhabitants of Jerusalem wrongly claimed that His promise to Hezekiah meant that no matter how they sinned against God He would never let them be punished by their city falling and their going into exile, Jer 7:1-15 for my sake and for the sake of David my servant- Cp 1 Ki 11:12-13, 32, 36, 15:4; 2 Ki 8:19, 20:6. Not that Hezekiah's attitude, prayer and actions were irrelevant. God acted on behalf of His people on the basis of His covenant with David, for David's sake. Yet it was also true that because Hezekiah walked in the ways of his father David it was possible for the Lord to bring deliverance to him and to Israel.

19.3537 The Angel of Death 2 Chr 32:21-23 Isa 37:36-38

19.3537 That night the angel of the LORD - The Lord's silent messenger, in contrast to Sennacherib's noisy boastful ones. See Ex 12:12-13, 29:23, 2 Sam 24:15-16; Rev 9:13-18. SMOTE /put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning - there were all the dead bodies- This is a huge loss of men, enough to cripple an army. The Assyrians make no mention of this - their records are positive propaganda only - They say they shut Hezekiah in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage, but give no reason for Sennacherib's sudden return home to Assyria. The nature of the angel of Death's action isn't odd. \*\*6 The fact that Hezekiah and Jerusalem remained unconquered is beyond dispute.

So Sennacherib.. returned to Nineveh and DWELT /stayed- Yashab- Settled down and lived there for some time. About 20 years, but, as God promised, he kept well away from Jerusalem. One day, while he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch- Possibly the god the Assyrians called Nusku, but it may refer to the main Assyrian god Assur, as LXX has Esdrach, or Asorach. Apart from the problems of translating the names of gods from one language to another the OT often

201-3 Hezekiah.. SICK /ill.. The prophet Isaiah.. said.. the LORD says: Put your house in order- As in 2Sam 17:23 For a king this included arranging for a successor. because you are going to die- Sometimes God made a statement of what would happen that's intended to produce a response that will enable Him to withdraw or postpone punishment, as stated in Jer 26:2-4, and is seen in Nineveh's repentance being accepted. Cp Amos 7:1-6. But there's no suggestion that Hezekiah's approaching death was a judgment on him. It's simply stated as a fact that he was sick, and dying. Prayer in sickness etc doesn't oppose God's will. The problem and the prayer about it are both included in God's will, 1 Ki 21:28-29 Ezek 33:13-16 Jas 5:15-16 God may make what is about to happen obvious so as to provoke prayer -Abraham/Sodom, Gen 18:16-33

Footnote \*\*6 Josephus quotes the Greek historian Herodotus Bk 2:141 as saying the God Vulcan delivered Egyptians from Sennacherib at Pelusium by sending mice through his camp to eat up the quivers, bowstrings and leather shield-straps so his soldiers were unable to fight, and fled. This seems to be an Egyptian distorted memory of the disaster. A modern suggestion is that it was rats carrying and dying of bubonic plague that were seen around the camp, and that the plague was responsible for the deaths. God can and does use natural means to carry out His will, as He used winds to shift the locust plague, and the water at the Red Sea Crossing, but it's more God-honouring to accept the Scripture record without trying to guess beyond it.

Hezekiah turned his face to the wall- This may suggest an unwillingness to face the realities of life, and prayed to the LORD - To turn from problems to the Lord is always good Remember O LORD, how I have walked before you IN TRUTH/faithfully.. Hezekiah wept bitterly- For the Lord's intervention in the case of illness see 4:22-23, 1 Ki 17:17-24 Hezekiah is stating the truth as he knew it, and he has grounds for his request as God has promised to answer the prayers of those who love Him with their hearts, and honour Him with their lips and lives, Deu 6:1-7; 2Sam 22:18-28 Ps 50:14-15 His prayer follows the normal pattern of OT prayers - He cites his own past character/behaviour, the Lord's Mercy and that in view of both suggests it would be appropriate for him to have a longer life as God had promised, Ex 20:12 Deu 5:29-30 16-18 As Manasseh was 12 when he became King (unless that

14:7, Baasha, 1 Ki 16:2 A less common word than Melek- King. It seems to refer to men being set by God over His people Israel, and therefore responsible to lead them in God's ways. The LORD.. says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal- God orders and over-rules in all that happens in the universe. So whether we have medical help to use, or not, it's the Lord who gives life, restores life, or takes it. Cp Ex 15:26 Isa 57:17-18, Jer 33:6; Acts 9:34 2 Tim 4:20

On the third day you will go to the temple of the LORD - Hezekiah would be well enough to go to the Temple and give thanks to God. In Jewish tradition healing, resurrection, etc are appropriate on the third day, Hos 6:2. Certainly giving thanks and praise to the Lord for His mercy in granting any blessing is appropriate, Ps 116:12-19. I will add fifteen years to your life- As Hezekiah died about 686BC his sickness and healing were not long after the siege. Lengthened days are a reward for honoring one's parents, Ex 20:12. In a sense Hezekiah could be said to have been honoring his parent David.

I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria- God would protect the city while Hezekiah lived. for the sake of my servant David- See 19:34 based on 2 Sam 7:15-16. See also 1 Ki 11:13; Acts 2:30. If even the leadership of a good King such as Hezekiah needed God's special patience based on the Davidic Covenant/promise, the general apostasy was such that it could hardly be tolerable under a bad king such as Manasseh. Even a good king who loved God with all his heart, as Hezekiah did, could continue only by the generous mercy of God in keeping His promises.

207-8 TAKE A LUMP/Prepare a poultice of figs- A rare word used in a text found in Ras Shamra which mentions a raisin poultice being used to cure a horse. A physical medicinal poultice is used to effect/symbolise the healing, but a miraculous sign confirms the full message. They.. applied it to the boil- The word suggests inflammation, See Ex 9:9-11; Lev 13:18-20 23 Deu 28:35 Job 27. he recovered.

Hezekiah asked What will be the sign the LORD will heal- It's right for the statements God makes to be accepted in simple faith. But it's not unusual for those given promises to ask a confirming sign - Abraham's covenant, Gideon's commissioning, etc. Ahaz in unbelief had refused

where a shadow gave an indication of the passage of time, or equipment on a roof top for studying the movement of the sun and stars built by Ahaz who was interested in star worship/fortune telling. Like the sun, as shown by the shadow, Hezekiah had been sinking towards the night of death. He wants this reversed so he can go UP to the temple of God's presence and blessing. Healing would be turning the clock of his life back, but the main point is that the forward movement of the shadow could be considered less of a miracle. \*\*7 Isaiah CRIED UNTO/called upon the LORD, and the LORD made the shadow go back.

## 2012-19 Babylonians visit Hezekiah 2 Chr 32:27-31, Isa 39:1-8

(Chronicles speaks of Hezekiah's great possessions of gold, silver, spices, grain etc, and his pride and repentance without mentioning the Babylonian envoys. Isaiah has the full story as here.)

2012- At that time Merodach-Baladan- Marduk-apla-Addinra to the Babylonians king of Babylon- He ruled in Babylon from 721-710 BC, and again for six months in 703/702 BC, but considered himself to be King of Babylon even when Sennacherib had driven him out into Elam/Persia. He continued to harass the Assyrians and work towards regaining the throne of Babylon. His envoys coming to Hezekiah fits well with his desire to gain allies and stir up opposition to Assyria.

Footnote \*\*7 Our modern minds tend to look for a scientific explanation as to how God may have made any miracle happen. Sitting in my office one afternoon I was startled to see the shadow of a tree cast on the wall move backwards and forwards about 20 degrees - as narrow wisps of cloud passed across the face of the sun!

sent Hezekiah letters and a gift- Normal diplomacy. because he heard of Hezekiah's illness. And of his successful resistance to Assyria, making him a potential ally. Josephus suggested this was the main reason for the contact. Their coming acknowledged that the Lord God of Israel had acted on their behalf successfully against Sennacherib, so Hezekiah wasn't just a petty king too far away to be useful.

Hezekiah received the messengers and showed them all- To have accumulated such treasure means some prosperous years must have passed since Hezekiah had stripped the Temple, Palace etc to buy off

honoring him. HIS palace HIS treasures HIS, has an ominous ring. The petty glorying in material wealth seems to have crowded out glorying in God and the great Mercy and deliverance God had granted to him. Hezekiah repented after being challenged by Isaiah, and the judgment was postponed, 2 Chr 32:25-26. We also need to repent when we've felt flattered and proudly displayed our successes.

2014-18 Isaiah.. to Hezekiah, Where did they come from?.. What did they see? They saw everything.. Hear the word of the LORD.. everything will be carried to Babylon- Hezekiah saw them as admirers of himself and his treasures. God through Isaiah drew back the curtain on the present and the future, revealing them as spying on the land, looking for help against Assyria, perhaps, but just as eager for imperial power and loot as the Assyrians had been. Isaiah as God's messenger was consistently against political alliances for God's people Israel, insisting they must trust in the Lord, and not earthly rulers.

Some of your descendants.. will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon- Hezekiah's pride is rebuked with a solemn warning of impending doom. He had risen to the challenge of the Assyrians, and of expected death, but he fails to meet THIS crisis with prayer and faith. Perhaps cutting short his life would have been an act of mercy as he had outlived his active faith in God. 100 years will run their course before the judgment will fall and the Babylonians take Judah into exile, but it's this no-longer-inspired-by-God-and-His-Word man who brings up Manasseh into Kingship. And Manasseh is at the end of a life that had been all disgrace and disaster before he comes to terms with God. All of God's servants are warned not to become weary in doing God's will, Gal 6:9.

2019-21 The word of the LORD is good.. peace and TRUTH/security in my lifetime- Self-centredness, content with its own welfare and indifferent to the future is a disgrace to those who've enjoyed a great deliverance from God, as Hezekiah had - and we have spiritually. It would seem from 2 Chr 32:27-33 that Hezekiah made good use of the remaining years of peace and plenty, but without any spiritual ambition to rescue his descendants from becoming the slaves of Babylon. God foretells the future with a view to His people using that knowledge to repent/intercede for God to deliver those we love from the evil that may be the logical consequence of the way we have lived.

deliverance that had seen Hezekiah through it. his son succeeded him as king- From his response to the Babylonian Embassy onwards, he has ceased to be the spiritually alert, humble petitioner and obeyer of the Lord God of Israel. His life has run out and a son who knew nothing of his father as he had been in his spiritually-minded younger days took the throne, and as Rehoboam followed nothing of Solomon's early life, so it will be with Manasseh.

### 21:1-26 Manasseh 2 Chr 33:1-20

(The book of Kings began with a GOOD King, who went BAD, Solomon. Under Rehoboam the Northern tribes broke away, and increasingly provoked God by going further and further into apostasy. This in spite of all God, through His servants such as Elijah and Elisha, could do in the way of appeal, punishment, 1 Ki 18, or mercy, 1 Ki 14-23 1 Ki 20, until God finally rid His land of them.

The kings of Judah varied, but the Lord stayed with them out of faithfulness to His promises to David even after Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab brought Baal worship into Judah. But from the time of Ahaz, who refused to deal with the Lord, Isa 7:10-12, it's obvious that the promised Seed of David will not be one of the ordinary succession of Kings in Jerusalem. Their time is running out towards exile as they increasingly turn from God. The Lord will intervene afresh with a child born of a virgin, of David's seed, who is also a Son of God, and whose reign of total Righteousness and unassailable Peace will last forever, Isa 7 & 9.

Hezekiah under agonising pressure from Sennacherib opened by Faith a door of Deliverance for Israel, but had accepted that after his death apostasy and exile were inevitable. Sickened by the spiritual, moral and social disaster that resulted from Manasseh's apostasy, the godly and Josiah made a last attempt to apply and live within God's Law. This entrenched in the heart and mind of the Remnant, in Exile and Return, the conviction that God alone was God, that obedience to His Law/ revealed will alone was acceptable behaviour. And above all else that the Holiness and blessedness of Life that was God's purpose for Israel, would come only from His Mercy to Israel, according to His Covenants and promises, through the Person of His Messiah, when He came. Hezekiah shows how godliness under pressure can bless a country - Manasseh how a long and prosperous reign can bring disaster.)

21:1-3 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king.. reigned fifty-five years- We're not told how it was that so young a son, born



thing was that he did evil in the sight of the Lord. The Assyrian kings list him as paying tribute to them, and contributing troops to Ashurbanipal's army which subdued an Egyptian revolt by Tirhaka in 661BC. Assyria was at its greatest - it ruled all the land as far West as Upper Egypt. As they didn't make vassal states change their religion, Manasseh must have chosen to reverse the good his father had done, 18:3-5. Many things must have happened during Manasseh's long reign, but the book of Kings continues to concentrate on the matters of spiritual/ long-term importance for Israel's welfare - whether or not any king co-operated with God in furthering His plans for the blessing of His people. He chose to worship and live as the Canaanites had done, or worse, because he had known better, Amos 2:9-10. Exile for Israel had become inevitable. See also 16:1-4; 17:7-23.

He rebuilt- Literally he returned and built. Meaning not merely a reversal to the evil ways of Ahaz, but also a persistent action in doing so. The high places Hezekiah had destroyed- He may have excused this because earlier kings had worshipped the Lord at them, but it soon becomes obvious that it was opposition to the worship of the LORD, in any shape or form that was moving his actions. He erected altars to Baal and A GROVE/ an Asherah pole, as Ahab.. had done- Deu 16:21; 1 Ki 16:30-34. The only king of Judah condemned in this way. He WORSHIPPED/ bowed down to the starry hosts- Jer 8:2; Zeph 15. Cp Deu 17:3.

21:4-6 He built altars in the temple. of which the LORD had said, In Jerusalem I will put my Name- His Name, what the Lord chose to name Himself in relation to Israel, the name that revealed His character to them, Ex 20:24 Deu 12:5-6; 1 Ki 8:16-19, 11:36 14:21.

In both courts- There was ONE Temple court, but this may mean that the "middle court," 20:4, linking the palace and the Temple had altars placed in it. of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to the starry hosts- worshipped by the Canaanites and surrounding nations along with the Queen of Heaven, Jer 7:17-18 etc. The worship of the stars was popular in Assyria and Babylon also. He defiantly insulted the Lord in the very Temple which had been set apart as holy to His Name, and which the Lord had honored with His presence, 1 Ki 8:10. Manasseh wasn't content merely to follow Jeroboam, Ahab, or Ahaz. He was an original and creative enthusiast in the art and practice of Apostasy. He

revealed Himself to His people Israel, and promised to guide those who wished to walk in obedient fellowship with Him. Manasseh, and many others rejected this privilege as it has moral requirements - the guidance is guidance in HIS WAY S, which give no comfort to those who wish to be greedy, self-indulgent, cruel, or self-righteous. Today men have no excuse for looking for guidance other than to God, as the promised Redeemer has come, Lev 18:21; Deu 18:9-18 He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

21:7-9 He took the GRAVEN IMAGE OF THE GROVE /carved Asherah pole- An unusual expression. It suggests Manasseh went to considerable expense/trouble to obtain an impressive image that would be seen as taking over the place of the Lord in His temple. and put it in the temple of which the LORD had said.. In this temple.. I will put my Name forever- This promise, and the peace security wealth and happiness that went with it required Israel on her part to honour the Lord with loving respect and obedience, Deu 6:1-25 God has promised to live in peace among His people forever, if they would serve Him in righteousness, 21:8; 2 Sam 7:10-13; 1 Ki 8:16; 9:1-5.

I will not again make the feet of the Israelites MOVE /wander.. if only they will OBSERVE/be careful to do everything I commanded them.. But the people did not HEAR KEN/listen- Manasseh led them in their apostasy, but they actively supported and encouraged him in it. Leaders and followers alike share credit/blame for whatever is done in a nation, church, community or family. Manasseh SEDUCED/led them astray so they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites- The Canaanites left some knowledge of their evil ways, Deu 12:29-31; 1 Ki 14:22-24 Those Israelites with rebellious, self-indulgent hearts defied their Redeemer and Lord, and looked for ways to learn about and imitate those religions and practices. As warned in Lev 18:28-29 they became so corrupted that the land would vomit them out also. Manasseh's rejection of the Hezekiah-David style of leadership dsovned God's covenant with David, 2 Sam 7:7-17; Jer 2:9-13; Amos 9:7-11. Defiling with iddatry the Sanctuary chosen by the Lord, Deu 12:1-32; 1 Ki 9:1-9, was a rejection of the Covenant, and meant the promised land was forfeited, Deu 28:49-63

21:10-12 The LORD said through prophets- They aren't named, it's what they SAID was important. They had warned that under God's covenant

palace and temple.

21:13-15 I will stretch out over Jerusalem the measuring line used against Samaria and the plumb line used against the house of Ahab- 1 Ki 14:10 21:21-22 2 Ki 9:8-10 The house of David having identified itself with the House of Ahab, will share the fate of the house of Ahab, 1:1-4; 8:25-27. This had almost happened in 111-3. Note also the statement made later that Jechoniah was to be regarded as the end of David's line - None of his seed would prosper reigning on the throne of Judah, Jer 22:30 Ezek 21:27. And when Messiah/ the Christ came, He was of the seed of David, but not of the family line that had ruled on the throne of Judah since the time of Solomon, as Mary His mother was descended through Nathan son of David, Lk 3:31. Usually measuring and plumb lines are used in the careful construction of buildings, Zech 1:16 Here they indicate that God will make a planned and thorough job of destroying Jerusalem, Isa 28:17; 34:11; Lam 2:8; Amos 7:7-9. Like a building shown to be dangerously out of line, it will be emptied, as Samaria had been, 17:5-18

I will wipe out Jerusalem as a dish.. turning it upside down- Like a dish with vile contents God will turn Jerusalem upside down so that the rottenness can be drained away to the last drop, Isa 34:11; Jer 51:34 Amos 7:7-9. I will forsake the remnant- 19:4; 30:31. of my inheritance and hand them over to their enemies- Cp Judges 3:2-9.

They will be A PREY/boted and plundered- 13:3; 17:20 Deu 1:27, because they have done evil.. from.. Egypt until this day- It's possible to focus attention on the BEST/more Godly times in Israel's history and see Israel as only recently relapsing into sin and apostasy, Jer 2:1-3. But it was truer to say the Bible records that God had constantly to discipline and punish His wilfully disobedient people. And only His great mercy, and His determination to accomplish His purposes, enabled Him to continue to work with them. See Ps 106 and Stephen's sermon in Acts 7. \*\*8

21:16-18 Manasseh shed much innocent blood- That is he killed many people who didn't deserve to die. God-honouring and good living people who may have criticised his worshipping idols etc. God's Law gave protection to the defenceless poor, widows and children. Religious apostasy removes this protection from the poor and from the good

besides the sin that he had caused Judah to commit, so that they did evil in the eyes of the LORD - Their being under the rule of Assyria could be seen as discrediting the Lord - so reverting to Canaanite religion may have made sense to them - Apostates think that way. Those who reject/ignore God and His revealed will, which reflects His righteousness, truth and mercy, naturally fall into wickedness, lies, and cruelty, 9:7, 26

other events of Manasseh's reign.. written- Among those not mentioned in Kings is his being suspected of disloyalty and dragged off to Babylon where he repented, and asked the Lord to be set free. His prayer was granted. On returning to Jerusalem he strengthened its defences, took away idols from the Temple, etc, and re-established its worship. Any attempts he made to direct Judah back into obedient faith in the Lord were of little effect, it seems, 2 Chr 33:11-20. Many in old age regret their godless and anti-god actions only to find that their family and associates who had been so willing to follow them as they went away from God and His will, refuse to follow them in repentance, and the witness of their life's work continues to be evil.

Footnote \*\*8 It's also easy for us to view the early church through rose-tinted glasses, but the NT records at best only partial obedience to the Lord, great variations from church to church, and everywhere an unending struggle to wean the saints away from self-righteous Jewish legalism, and Pagan careless self-indulgence. The Ephesian church was honoured with an Epistle which spread before them the glories of their position in the eternal purposes of God. Yet before long Paul records they have turned away from him and presumably the teaching of his epistle to them, 2 Tim 1:15. And for all their outward show of zeal for doctrinal purity, and energetic self-sacrificing labours for God, the Lord gives a similar verdict on them, Rev 2:1-7.

Manasseh.. buried in.. garden of Uzza- It may have been Uzziah's garden but in Hebrew thinking it's likely the name is spelled Uzza to associate it with the Uzza who irreverently touched the Ark of God, and was struck dead, 2 Sam 6:1-8. Amon his son succeeded him as king.

21:19-26 Amon 2 Chr 33:21-25

With Solomon and Hezekiah we can see the human follies of self-centred Pride. But with Manasseh we just see him doing what he wanted to do

He walked in all the ways of his father.. He forsook- Azab- Divorced the LORD, the God of his fathers- Chronicles adds that he copied his Father's defiant sins, but not his repentance and restoration

21:23-26 Amon's officials. assassinated the king- Possibly murdered by a Pro-Assyria, or Pro-Egypt faction. Ashur-banipal led an army to Phoenicia at this time, and seems to have added to the foreigners sent to Samaria, Ezra 4:10. Or it may have been provoked by his blatant iddady. Whatever the motive behind the murder of Amon, the fact is that he hadn't earned any right to long life by seeking the Lord and faithfully serving Him. His early death gave a longer reign to Josiah and spared the lad the influence of an evil father - part of God's mercy to Judah at this time that provided a good example, and encouragement for all time.

The people- Kings and privileged classes rise and fall, but the bulk of the people change less rapidly as their limited wealth and freedom makes them less easily corrupted by the fads of the nation's elite. killed all who plotted against King Amon.. made Josiah king- As in 1114, 18, 20 a popular movement among the people put the boy on his rightful throne, and once more the house of David and the God-appointed Priest of the Lord are used of God to show what He can do for His people. In him a last attempt is made to live by God's Law. In fact it seems to have taken until Josiah for the attempt to be made to make the Law in its written and detailed form well-known, and central to the life of the nation. It fails, as in hindsight we know from Rom 8:3 it must fail, but at least a gallant attempt was made.

## 221-2330 Josiah 2 Chr 34:1-3, 8-28

(Jeremiah spoke well of Josiah, Jer 22:15-16. Zephaniah was also working at this time, Zeph 1:1. It was an important stage of Israel's history. Their time as an independent Nation was running out as apostasy was making Exile inevitable. But God was working to prepare a remnant who understood and loved His Law, who would be willing to abandon iddady, and return to the land, not as

against the current of apostasy.

Politically Josiah had considerable freedom of action as Assyria, under attack from Babylon and the Medes, held its Western provinces loosely, and Egypt wasn't yet strong enough to push Northwards. So he was free to rule as a real king, and, by faith, dared to exert at least moral/spiritual authority over the Northern tribes as well.)

221-2 Josiah = Found of Jah or Yaweh has given. eight years old became king.. reigned thirty-one years. His mother's name was Jedidah- Beloved of the Lord, as Solomon was, 2 Sam 12:25 He did right in the eyes of the LORD.. walked in all the ways of his father David- As the ideal King, and as promised in 1 Ki 13:2 Unqualified commendation, as with Hezekiah, 18:3. not turning aside- Wholly and fully walking the path of God's revealed will, Deu 5:31-33 17:11-20 28:14

When he was sixteen (8th year of reign) he began to seek the Lord, 2 Chr 34:3. The ten years are critical for the work of God in anyone's life. Teenagers are often unsure of themselves/ the direction in life they'll take Pray that they will, like Josiah, hear and follow the Lord. When he was 20 Josiah began to destroy idols/ old altars, 2 Chr 34:4-7. That he was able to do this suggests there was widespread revival among the people. Josiah "MADE everyone in Jerusalem pledge themselves to it," 2 Chr 34:32. But with many the revival was shallow- it was easy to join in the Passover Feast heartily when that involved eating a great provision of fatted meat, 2 Chr 35:7-13.

2 Ki 22:3-7 18th Year- When he was 26 years old. Josiah sent the SCRIBE /secretary Shaphan- See the influence of his sons Ahikam, Jer 26:24 Gemariah, Jer 36:10-25 and Grandson Gedaliah, Jer 39:14 to the temple of the LORD. Go to Hilkiah= Yaweh is my portion the high priest- Earlier called simply THE Priest It's unlikely that this Hilkiah, who came from Jerusalem, was Hilkiah the father of Jeremiah the prophet who came from Anathoth, Jer 1:1-2

have him SUM/get ready the SILVER/money.. the doorkeepers have GATHERED/collected from the people- A public collection, with Palace supervision, as set up by Joash, which had worked well, 12:4-16 Have them DELIVER/entrust it to the workers. purchase timber and HEWN/dressed stone to repair the temple. THERE WAS NO

not keeping it, 10:31. Amaziah commended for keeping it, 14:6. Israel condemned for ignoring the Law, 17:13-14, 34:37, 18:12. Hezekiah commended for keeping it, 18:6, after reforms based on Deu 12:1-7.

The book was to be kept beside the Ark, Deu 31:26, where it was safe, but inaccessible - except to the High Priest once a year on Atonement Day. No proper Day of Atonement could have been kept during the later years of Manasseh's reign, so presumably no High Priest was free to enter the Holy of Holies. To have drawn Manasseh's attention to the book, as Hilkiah had done now, would have invited its destruction. Every seventh year that copy of the Law was to be read publicly to the Nation's Leaders, and people, Deu 31:9-13. Manasseh would have forbidden that, and probably had any other copies of the Law destroyed.

The point made here is that this book made available a precise and accurate knowledge of God's Law freed from the vagueness typical of knowledge passed on orally. Here we have the sharp impact of re-discovered Law, in a society in which reading, writing and following written instructions had become normal. The relation of God and His people, under the Covenants of Abraham, Moses, and David, was a developing, and ongoing thing, but much of the contents and language of the Pentateuch aren't such that they could be derived from the national and religious life of Israel in the days of the Monarchy but would have grown naturally out of the nomadic life in the wilderness.

in the temple of the LORD - Apparently the book was easily identified. The Priests in the temple would have memorised the Law that directed their functions, including the innovations made by David and Solomon, 1 Ki 10:12, 1 Chr 15:16, 2 Chr 35:15, etc. (I've met a Yemenite Rabbi who seemed to be able to quote the whole OT from memory.)

Footnote \*\*9 "JOSHUA WROTE THESE WORDS/recorded these things IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW," Josh 24:26, need not mean that he added Laws to those written by Moses - merely that he noted on a copy of the book the fact of their re-affirming of the Covenant.

The book may have been found in with the silver when the temple repair collection chest was emptied. It may have been hidden there during the reign of Manasseh, and the chest may not have been opened for many years as giving for and repairing the Temple had ceased. \*\*10

When the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his CLOTHES/ robes- Cp 1837. His spiritual understanding and his submission to the revealed will of God is clear in this response. Contrast this with the action of Jehoiakim who cut up page after page of the warning God gave him personally through Jeremiah, Jer 36:24. The greatness of the failure, sin, and defiant folly of the nation stood out clearly when faced by the standard of the written Law of God. The extent of their sin, and the inevitability of Judgment was clear. Note the reactions of Hilkiah - Rejoicing at the recovery of a Temple treasure; Shaphan - Reading a book capably; Josiah - earnestly repenting on hearing what God had to say. All three play their part, but Josiah's is vital.

He COMMANDED/gave these orders to Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achor, Shaphan.. and Asaiah the king's attendant- Ebed Melech- Servant of the King, a title often found stamped on jar handles, seals etc, from the time. Go inquire of the LORD for me and for.. Judah about what is written in this book. Great is the Lord's WRATH/anger.. against us- The national and royal sins are largely in the past, but God's anger remains in the present, so there is an urgent need to know what must be done to lessen that anger, and postpone/avoid Judgment. And to find anything further the Lord might want to say to them.

Footnote \*\*10 Liberal Theologians say Hilkiah etc wrote this book/scroll themselves, but that they pretended it was written by Moses, so as to further their own ideas about God and religion. Theologians become wealthy and famous by speculating about the Bible in such ways, but their attitude to Scripture means that God and His Word never becomes real to them. Cp Mt 22:23-29. Their own ignorance of God, and lack of respect for the truth, move them to suspect Hilkiah of fraud. There ARE problems, and any fool can ask questions that no wise man can answer, but any alternatives to believing the statements of God's Word as they stand are equally vulnerable to questions and doubts. As critics are careful not to obey God's Word, and so don't experience its power to transform and bless, they do not seem to realise how ridiculous it is to claim that something which has been such a blessing to mankind in all ages, was produced by selfish deceivers and liars, Mt 7:16-20.

our fathers have not HEARKENED TO/obeyed the words of this book- Hearing Deu 28:15-26 29:25-28 would give a clear impression that this was so, and move him to take urgent action. Cp the warnings given Solomon in 1 Ki 2:1-4; 9:1-9. Until now warnings had come orally,



2214-17 Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam- A priest who helped Jeremiah, Jer 26:24 and was Gedaliah's father, 25:24 Jer 39:14. Achbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophetess Nebaiah. Female prophets were rare. \*\*11 Josiah looks to a prophet for confirmation of the way the Law applied to the then state of the nation of Israel. This action accords with Ex 23:20-23 as well as current experience with prophets.

Huldah.. wife of Shallum.. son of Harhas- Possibly Jeremiah's uncle, Jer 32:6. keeper of the wardrobe- Royal wardrobe? Temple wardrobe? Cp 1Q22 We're not told why the Lord's message was expected through her rather than Jeremiah, whose ministry as a prophet had begun 5 years earlier, Jer 1:2, or Zephaniah, Zeph 1:1. Nabi- male prophets are mentioned in 2:32. Perhaps she spoke for God in the centre of national life, rather as Elisha had done. Jeremiah was an outsider, from Anathoth, denouncing the evils of the government bureaucracy, rather as Elijah and Amos had done. But beyond wondering why People, and God, acted the way they did a surer lesson is that God is Sovereign, and we all should in our hearts own Christ as Lord, and be ready to speak for Him, wherever we are, right where we live, 1 Pet 3:15 as Huldah did.

She lived in Jerusalem, in the COLLEGE/Second District- Mishneh- Repetition. \*\*12 The new suburb West of the city of David and the Temple quarter, Zeph 1:10. See Mishneh in Neh 3:9, 12:11:9, 17. Being a housewife in a suburb doesn't make boredom, and "Suburban Neurosis" inevitable. Jerusalem had expanded to accommodate the increase of population associated with the success of King Hezekiah's efforts to attach to Jerusalem the Godly survivors from Israel, 2 Chr 30:1. It's estimated that 25000 people lived within Jerusalem's extended walls. See 2 Ki 24:14. (M Broshi "The Expansion of Jerusalem" published in 1974)

Footnote \*\*11 Nebaiah is used & - of Miriam, Deborah, Isaiah's wife, and Noadiah. Nabi= Male Prophet is used 31x. The other word for prophet/see is used only of men, 3x.

Footnote \*\*12 That the Mishneh was the name of a Jerusalem suburb was unknown to the KJV translators, so they translated "Who dwelt in the COLLEGE." They did this

against His will, to divorce God, so He no longer has any control over them, or responsibility to provide for them. Cp 2:22 1 Ki 9:1-9, 11:33 etc. burned incense to other gods- 16:4. provoked me to anger- 21:6, 15 by idols. my WRATH/anger.. will not be quenched- Cp Jer 7:20 The warnings given to the Kings and people of Israel, and their fulfillment in the fall and exile of Samaria, would make it easy for Josiah and Judah to understand that God had passed the same verdict on them - and that unless they changed dramatically Judgment must soon fall on them, 17:7-41. Deu 28:15-68 will be fulfilled.

22:18-20 Tell the king.. Because your heart was TENDER/responsive and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I have spoken.. that they would become accursed- Qelalah- mocked, treated as worthless because you.. wept in my presence- Cp 20:3. Therefore I will gather you to your fathers- His body/bones visibly added to those of his ancestors in the family tomb. When the expression is used in Scripture there is also, at least at times, a hint of life with them after Death.

You will be buried in peace- Peace with God, even if he died in battle. Your eyes will not see the EVIL/disaster I am going to bring on this place- Although going into battle might not have been God's preference for him, but a wilful human action such as all of us are prone to, an early death may be God's grace in preserving someone from being in a much worse tragedy, 1 Ki 14:12-13 Cp the delay in judgment on Ahab because of his repentance, 1 Ki 21:27-28 Josiah's reaction makes a difference, but only to his personal fate. As with Hezekiah Josiah will be spared the agony expressed in the book Lamentations.

Footnote \*\*12 (Continued) because Mishneh- Repetition can mean school as a place where lessons are repeated, as well as a suburb - the repetition of the city. As King Manasseh (previous chapter) after 55 years effort had almost totally suppressed the knowledge and worship of the Lord, to the extent that a copy of the Scriptures being found was a dramatic surprise, the idea of such a "Bible College," makes no sense. That did not prevent someone recently writing a delightful fantasy about Huldah's life as "President of the Theological College of Jerusalem," which pictured her as dealing with important religious delegations from Egypt, Babylonia, etc! Enthusiasts for a public role for women in the church have to struggle to "find" such in Scripture.

will act according to the principles He declared in the Law, Deu 42:9-31, 30:1-3, and taken up by Solomon in his dedication of the temple prayer, 2 Chr 6:24-39. Sincere repentance is accepted, defers punishment/brings blessing. She brings God's righteous verdict up to date as it applies to the specific situation under King Josiah. His genuine repentance and regret at the apostasy is recognised as a factor in the situation, and God will righteously postpone the enforcement of His Judgment until after his death. Even though this King the bulk of the people will continue to act godless, and their punishment is inevitable, no matter who intercedes for them. Cp Jer 15:4; Ezek 14:14-23

### 231-20 Josiah Obeys the Law 2 Chr 34:4-7, 29:33

(Josiah's desire to serve the Lord moved him to repair the temple, which uncovered the Book of the Law which enabled him to serve the Lord more effectively. Life is like that, Mt 25:28-29)

231-3 The king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem- Enlisting the support of the people as a whole in energetic spiritual obedience/faith. Hezekiah had been content with the assurance that God's Judgment would be postponed until after his death. Josiah takes up the promise that God hears the prayer of those who repent, and is eager to show mercy, and forgive. Like Joshua, Josh 24:1-27, Josiah was determined to take positive action to bring the nation to repentance and renewal of Covenant Obedience so that God wouldn't need to deal with them in Judgment. Cp Solomon, 1 Ki 8:10-61.

He went to the temple of the LORD with.. all the people.. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant- In obedience to Deu 31:9-13 Deuteronomy was "The Book of the Covenant," as well as "The Book of the Law." In it God's revelation of Himself and His dealings with Israel were summarised and set before them by Moses at the end of his long life, Deu 52:3; 29:1-28. In ignorance, and with little more than a selfish desire for God's blessings with minimal contact with Him, their parents had sworn to be God's people, Ex 19:7-8; 20:18-19. At the close of Deuteronomy, Moses, having given home to them the lessons which 40 years in the wilderness had taught them, demanded that they choose to be God's people with all the curses and blessing that involved, and enter the promised land on that basis, or not. And they had chosen to renew the covenant with God, for themselves, and on behalf of their descendants.

TO PERFORM/confirming the words of the covenant written in this book- Moses had made clear that honoring and pleasing God was a matter of the total commitment of one's inner being, not a matter of formal outward actions, Deu 4:29, 6:5; 10:12, 11:13-14; 13:3; 26:16, 30:2-10. Josiah made that personal confession/commitment.

Then all the people STOOD TO/pledged themselves to the covenant- Literally, and symbolically, saying their "Amen," Deu 27:11-26, Jer 34:17-21. As Moses, Deu 29:12, and Joshua had done, Josiah stood as the mediator for the renewing of the Covenant. He and the people publicly committed themselves to be God's obedient people, 11:17; Deu 6:17; 1 Ki 2:3. This was appropriate after their open apostasy. After their national experience of 800 years they could understand what it meant to be God's people in a way impossible in the time of Moses. And they pledged themselves to that covenant. The use of all three words Mitsvah= Commandment; Eduth= Testimonies, or witnesses; and Chuqqah= Statutes, makes it clear that the commitment was to the totality of God's revealed will/ the Law.

Israel was once more nationally "On track" and in fellowship with the Lord God of Israel, in the path of His will/ the fulfillment of His purposes. The nation, under the kings that followed, would again turn aside from God, but those who returned from Exile treasured the ideal of Israel living in obedience to the "Book of the Law." This produced a nation ready for the coming of Messiah, as recorded in the Gospels. For the record of other renewals of the Covenant see Deu 29:29, Josh 24:1-27, 2 Ki 11:17.

Footnote \*\*13 The Law was to be read to everyone: - Men and women, as husbands and wives needed to rule their home by God's Law. Children, whose God-given curiosity needs to be satisfied by God's answers not by parental whims. Thank God for our "Samuels" who at times challenge our learned deafness and inconsistency in doing what we know of God's will. Strangers were to be made welcome, and taught the basis of the life of God's people and God's loving concern for their welfare, Lev 23:22, etc, Jn 10:16. The hearers were to learn= adjust their thinking to God's truth, fear= respect, and observe= Follow carefully. If we don't observe traffic laws we may end in court, or in hospital. The slightest hints of God's Word are rewarding to those who trust and obey, Jn 13:17; Jas 1:25.

He burned them- Limestone, commonly used in Jerusalem, crumbles into powder when heated. Other types of stone shatter outside Jerusalem in the fields- Shedemah. Terraces, level places of the Kidron Valley- Anything thrown out from the temple would roll down the steep slopes.

took the ashes to Bethel- About 12 miles/ 19 Km north of Jerusalem, to defile the shrine there. Bethel was under the Governor of the Assyrian province of Samaria, but the Assyrian Empire was unsettled.

He PUT DOWN/did away with the IDOLATROUS/pagan priests ORDAINED/appointed by the kings of Judah to burn incense on the high places of the towns of Judah- Apart from being conveniently close such local worship of God was free to adjust to suit the felt needs and tastes of all shades of religious belief. But by sharing in such worship they automatically drifted away from God, and His Word. As in Christendom where churches adapted to human religious ideas become useful to people/ the State, and useless for God

who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and moon, to the PLANETS/constellations- Mazallah- Station or mansion? This word was later associated with the signs of the Zodiac. The Revival was destructive of Idolatry, superstition, and worship at "High Places." These had been used originally for worshipping Baal and Asherah, the Male and Female "Sex-gods" of Canaanite Religion

He BROUGHT OUT THE GROVE/Asherah pole from the temple of the LORD to the Kidron Valley.. STAMPED IT SMALL /ground it to powder- This reduced it from the form used in false worship, into formlessness symbolising total rejection of the worship in which it had been used. scattered the dust over the graves of the common people- Archaeology has shown that the Kidron valley was already in use as a cemetery at this stage. A suitable place for the symbols of idolatry to die!

He BRAKE /tore down the HOUSES/quarters of the SODOMITE S/male shrine prostitutes- Qadesh-. Masculine form. Set apart ones- Set apart from normal life to serve Baal and Asherah, to take part in the foul rituals of that fertility cult. See Gen 38:21-22 Deu 23:17. While these are strongly condemned, no details of the religion and its practices are given. which were in the temple of the LORD and where women

at the gates- These provided worship opportunities for Traders/ Travellers.

Although the priests of the high places did not serve at- Hebrew Come up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, they ate unleavened bread with their fellow priests- ALL priests were provided for under the Law, Deu 18:6-8, including those disqualified as a result of having physical defects, Lev 21:16-23 The shrine priests brought to Jerusalem may have been viewed as having spiritual defects. Josiah confirmed their right to live off the Lord's Service but not to participate in it. (See notes at the end showing evidence of this dug up by Archaeologists at Arad where the shrine priests belonged to families which served in the Temple.)

2310-11 He DEFILED/desecrated Topheth.. so no one could use it to sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire to Molech- 17:31; Deu 12:31; Jer 7:31; 19:5. It's puzzling that some commentators say there's no non biblical evidence for people burning their children. On the contrary, excavation of the Tophet at Carthage produced thousands of jars containing the burned bones of infants, along with the names of those who had offered them and statements that this "Molech" (Offering) was made to Baal and His Asherah (Locally called Tanit) using at times the same terms used in Jeremiah, etc. Bar 8:42, 8:43.

He TOOK AWAY /removed from the entrance to the temple of the LORD the horses.. dedicated to the sun- Ezek 8:16 A number of clay horses, with sun-disks on their foreheads have been excavated in the Ophel area of Jerusalem, and also at Hazor, etc. Bar 7:82. Archaeology has confirmed that horses were regularly associated with the worship of the Sun, Stars etc in Ancient Babylonia and Assyria. Josiah then burned the chariots dedicated to the sun.

2312-14 He pulled down the altars the kings of Judah- For Josiah all traditions that broke God's Law were rejected. had erected on the roof- These were used in worshipping star gods, 21:3-5; Jer 19:13 Zeph 15. and the altars Manasseh had built in the two courts of the temple of the LORD - 21:4-5. BREAK THEM DOWN/smashed them to pieces and threw the DUST /rubble into the Kidron.

desirable, needs to be matched by the removal of idols from the hearts of men. Cp Puritan revival in England, etc.

2315-18 Even the altar at Bethel- Used in Golden Calf worship, 1 Ki 12:25-13:5. Josiah took advantage of the weak state of the Assyrian Empire to cleanse the worship in the High Places used by the surviving Israelites - Those who 60 years before had been invited by Hezekiah to come and celebrate a Passover at Jerusalem. Nothing is said about interfering with the worship of the Heathen who had replaced the Israelites in Samaria and its surrounding countryside which would be the main concern of the Assyrian Governor of Samaria. In 2Chr 34:6-7 the claim is made that Josiah extended his influence as far north as Naphtali. Nothing is said of battles, setting up administration, etc. Josiah provided spiritual leadership for the descendants of those tribes having some spiritual ties with Jerusalem. Jerusalem held a similar leadership over the dispersed Jews in NT times. Josiah treated Israel as ONE undivided nation - in a sense restored it to that state.

He burned.. ground it to powder- Some commentators say confidently that it's impossible to burn a High Place As noted earlier, limestone was commonly used in building and fire quickly makes it crumble. He destroyed all worship sites in Israel. His zeal for cleansing the land from idolatry is shown by the fact that often words like "Destroyed," "broke down," etc. are written double to intensify their meaning and burned the GROVE/Asherah pole- Worship associated with pillars and Asherim were forbidden in Deu 7:5; 12:3; 16:21-22

Josiah.. had bones.. burned on the altar to defile it- Contact with dead bodies being defiling Num 19:16-19. Josiah defiled, as well as destroyed places of false worship. in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by the man of God- 1 Kings 13:1-5. The king asked, What is that TITLE /tombstone- A monument or grave marker. Cp Jer 31:21. It marks the tomb of the man of God who.. pronounced.. the very things you have done and of the prophet who had come from Samaria- That is from Israel, which after Omri built Samaria as his capital became known as Samaria.

2319-20 As he had done at Bethel, Josiah removed and defiled all the HOUSES/shrines.. the kings of Israel had built.. SLEW/slaughtered the priests of those high places on the altars- Josiah obeys Deu 13:6-

territory once more qualified for the keeping of the Covenant, and he is now free to take positive action to obey it.

## 2321-27 Josiah's Passover 2Chr 35:1-19

2321-23 The king gave this order: KEE P/Celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant- The destruction of false religion was essential. We can't obey the Lord in the positive things without cutting off the sinful things and associations which would disqualify us from the positive obedience. Not only did he energetically stir the Priests and Levites to obey both the spirit and the letter of the Law, he made sure that even the poorest residents and visitors would have a memorable feast by donating thousands of animals to be killed and eaten as Peace Offerings, in addition to the Passover Lambs. Chronicles adds that as the Levites no longer had to carry the Ark they were to take responsibility to kill the Passover Lambs for the people in general, and for the Priests, Singers, and Gate-keepers who were busy doing their own work. This was seen as being appropriate to the Law of Moses, although different from the original.

Not since the days of the judges- Josh 5:10-12 is the last record of the Passover being kept before that kept by Hezekiah. nor throughout the days of the kings. had any such Passover been observed- A similar claim is made for the Passover kept under Hezekiah, 2 Chr 30:1-27. But Hezekiah found it impossible to keep the Passover in correct form, 2 Chr 30:2-3; 17-20 Here, as we would expect of those who were paying attention to the written Law, all details were followed, and this made the occasion unique. Also the feast of unleavened bread was correctly associated with Josiah's Passover, Deu 16:1-8; 2 Chr 35:17. Originally the Passover was a family festival with the father killing the animal and teaching the meaning of the feast, Ex 12:1-13:16 Under Josiah it became closely associated with the Temple, priests and levites, 2 Chr 35:10-19. This centralising of the celebration of the Passover may well have been a step forward towards the Coming day when Christ the Lamb of God, would be THE Passover Lamb, sacrificed at Jerusalem.

Footnote \*\*14 Some will see Josiah as too narrow-minded, but once alternative religions are seen as acceptable the validity of false religion become automatic. And self is left



opportunity it springs up again from the roots which lie buried in the sinful, rebel hearts of the community. the IMAGES/household gods- Teraphim. These household gods had been in use in Jacob's household, before he buried them, Gen 35:1-4, so the tradition was an old one. They were at times used in divining etc, Judges 17:5; 1 Sam 19:13-16 the idols- 21:21. and other detestable things- 23:13; 1 Ki 11:5-7.

This he did to fulfil the requirements of the law written in the book of the LORD. Hilkiah.. had discovered in the temple of the LORD - Spiritism was totally condemned for God's people, Lev 19:31; 20:27; Deu 18:11. Josiah showed that God's word could be fully obeyed, in spite of all the compromise and apostasy accumulated under the Kings since David. This didn't make blessing inevitable. It did make apostasy culpable.

Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD - with all his heart.. soul.. strength- Hezekiah is praised in the same way, 18:5. Josiah stood with Hezekiah and David in his whole-hearted love for the Lord, but there were unique features in the life of each. Unlike the others, Josiah's love for the Lord was directed by his knowledge of the Law into detailed obedience in accordance with all the Law of Moses- The precise words of God's Law written out by Moses, rather than loyalty to vague memories! The whole Law, moral, ceremonial, etc is at times called the Law of Moses, and at other times the Law of God. In fellowship with the Lord, he cleansed Jerusalem and Judah from all outward idolatry etc. But although this was done as thoroughly as possible it did not remove the consequences of previous apostasy - presumably because the HEARTS of the people were not with Josiah in the OUTWARD reforms.

23:26-27 Nevertheless the LORD did not turn away from.. his fierce anger.. because of all Manasseh had done to provoke him- The writer of Kings, as Paul did later, made a habit of saying all the good things he could about God's servants, the Kings. In this they reflect the attitude of the Lord Himself, as seen in Rev 2 and 3. But negative facts are also given. Having praised a good king, the negative But. is added. Here it seems that Josiah has done all that was possible for a King to do in heart-love for the Lord, and in outward obedience to the Law. But the grim fact remains that no Godly man - Prophet, Priest or King - can change the hearts of other men. He has no right to over-rule their wills in the things of God. Josiah has done all he should, and could do. The

21:4, 7; 1 Ki 8:16 9:6-9. The very symbol of God's presence among His people must be destroyed, as they have despised and rejected the reality of His presence among them - turned their backs on the Lord even when worshipping in His Temple courts, Ezek 8:16

## 232830 Death of Josiah 2 Chr 35:20-27

232830 ~~the~~ events. written- Attention is concentrated on the spiritual side of Josiah's life and action. If he did extend his political control over the whole area of the 12 tribes, that was far less important than that he set his heart to love and obey his Lord, according to all he could learn of the revealed will of the Lord. The effect of his example in THAT, in his own generation, and down until today in the record of Scripture, is the thing that made his life valuable to us, and to the glory of God. 12 years aren't commented on. It's easy for 30 year olds to settle down into comfortable selfishness. Solomon drifted into apostasy, as did Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, and Uzziah. The only King who grew spiritually in old age seems to have been Manasseh, and he did so only when he could sink no lower, 2 Chr 33. Mature Christians also risk complacency. In Nature maturity easily slides into decay. Being filled with the Holy Spirit/ setting God's Word dwell in us richly, walking humbly with God, and joyfully with our fellow-believers is our safeguard, Eph 5:18-21; Col 3:15-17.

While Josiah was king- 31st Year/ 39yrs old. Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the Euphrates AGAINST to help.. Assyria-Nineveh had fallen, and the Assyrian King Ashur-uballit with his army retreated westward. Neco attempted to extend his own empire north, taking over the western Assyrian empire with or without the cooperation of the Assyrians. King Josiah marched out AGAINST HIM to meet him in battle- Perhaps believing he owed loyalty to Assyria. OR wished to prevent the Assyrians receiving help from Egypt, OR resented the presence of foreign armies in God's land, OR assumed that, as he had obeyed the Law, God must use him to drive out the ungodly. But, his action was unrealistic. No army he could raise could hope to defeat the Egyptian army. Chronicles adds that Neco assured him he wasn't attacking Judah, and that to oppose his action was to oppose God. Josiah ignored this warning, and led his army against Neco. Perhaps aiming at POLITICAL greatness in addition to the spiritual greatness God had given him. God may speak to us through the

23302530 The Last Days of the Kingdom of Judah  
(The Revival ended with Josiah's death. Like David who he chose to follow, he'd served his generation in God's will, Acts 13:36. In the rest of the book the tragic events unfold in a state of dull, resigned inevitability.)

### 233034 Jehoahaz of Judah Chr 36:1-4 Jer 22:11-12

2331-33 the people took Jehoahaz = Jah has seized, His personal name was Shallum, Jer 22:11. son of Josiah and anointed him king.. king.. three months. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah from Libnah - As distinct from Jeremiah of Anathoth, the prophet. He did evil - Three months was long enough to show that he was sinking back into the old ways of Manasseh, etc.. Neco put him in chains at Riblah - Neco had gone on North after the battle with Josiah and may have ordered Jehoahaz to report to him there. Obviously he wasn't acceptable to Egypt, although they may have merely wanted to show that THEY were in charge. he imposed on Judah a TRIBUTE /levy of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.

### 2334247 Jehoiakim of Judah 2Chr 36:4-8

233435 Neco made Eliakim = God has established, king.. and changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim = Jah has established. To change someone's name proclaims one's power over him - as with Mattaniah. Perhaps preferring this form as they may have claimed the LORD was on their side. He took Jehoahaz off to Egypt, and he died - Cp Jer 22:10-12 Jehoiakim paid Neco the silver and gold he demanded.. exacted - The Hebrew gives the impression of harshly enforced taxation.

233637 Jehoiakim twenty-five.. became king.. reigned eleven years. did evil.. as his fathers - We learn from Jeremiah that he oppressed the people to build himself a new palace threatened and killed God's prophets, Jer 22:13-19, 26:1-24 When challenged by God's message dictated by Jeremiah he burned the scroll, Jer 36:20-26 Josiah's reform is dead. Jehoiakim will die as he lived - in disgrace Jer 22:19. See also Jer 8:4-12, 10:1-10, 11:1-17; 12:10-12, 13:1-17; 18:1-20, 23:1-2, 9-40, 25:1-7; 26:20-23

24:1-5 Nebuchadnezzar - Nabu-kudduri-usur - May the god Nabu protect my boundary stone. So more correctly spelled Nebuchadrezzar, as in

raiders.. to destroy Judah- Jer 35:11. The Babylonians encouraged other states to raid and loot Judah. It cost Babylonia nothing, and weakened Judah for the invasion which would come when Babylonia was ready. Judah was on the frontier with Egypt, but would get little help from the Egyptians against such raids, if ever. While rebuilding his army Nebuchadnezzar strengthened his hold on Arabia, and so could stir up the Trans-Jordan Kingdoms to attack Judah - as part of God's promised response to Manasseh's defiant sinning, Jer 15:1-9, Hab 1:2-6; Zeph 1:4-13 3:1-7.

in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by his servants the prophets- The events are described in the terms of God's promised judgment, 21:12-15 They were also the natural result of Jehoiakim's breaking his oath of allegiance. What MAN does, is part of what GOD is doing and there are both moral and spiritual factors in the sowing and reaping involved. The prophets had warned Judah that continuing apostasy would lead to its destruction according to the Lord's command.. because of the sins of Manasseh.. including the shedding of innocent blood- Both a cruel act of tyranny against men, Jer 22:17, and a defiant breaking of God's law. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to PARDON/forgive- Egypt was unable to help Judah - still a broken reed. The Lord was unable to help Judah, as their sins had separated them from their God.

24:6-7 Jehoiakim rested with his fathers- His burial isn't mentioned here. Jer 22:19, 36:30 say he was thrown out of Jerusalem and given the unmourned burial of an ass, presumably by a Pro-Babylonian faction. 2 Chr 36:5-7 implies he was taken to Babylon. How these fit together is left unclear in the brief summary given here. Jehoiachin= Jehovah/Yaweh is firm. Yaukin, in the Babylonian records. Also called Jehorah, abbreviated to Coniah in KJV Jer 22:24 his son succeeded him as king. The king of Egypt did not march out from his own country again.

24:8-17 Jehoiachin of Judah 2 Chr 36:9-10 Jer 29:1-3

24:8-13 Jehoiachin eighteen years old- 2 Chr 36:9 has 8, reigned three months. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD - See 23:37, Jer 22:24-30 Ezek 17:12-24 The officers of Nebuchadnezzar.. advanced on Jerusalem and THE CITY WAS BESIEGED/had siege to it.

2414-17 He carried into exile the officers, fighting men, craftsmen - a total of ten thousand. Only the poorest of the land were left. Those without status or skills to be useful in rebelling took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon.. the king's mother, wives, officials- This had been prophesied, Jer 22:27. Babylonian clay tablets have been dug up recording supplies of barley, and olive oil to Jehoiachin (As Yaukin king of Judah) and his five sons. Daniel and his friends were taken as hostages to Babylon, Dan 1:1-2; Ezek 1:1-3, to add to his bureaucracy. Judah was left leaderless, except for Jeremiah, and some princes loyal to Babylon

seven thousand fighting men- to serve in Babylon's army.. a thousand craftsmen and artisans- See also Jer 5:28 As with the deportations from Samaria this removed from Judah all the best, and most useful of the people, leaving behind only those likely to be content to drudge along as vassals of Babilonia. It was the end of the Kingdom, the beginning of Exile, although a token kingdom remained. This is pictured vividly in Jer 24:1-10 He made Mattaniah= Gift of Yaweh. Jehoiachin's uncle, king.. changed his name to Zedekiah= Jehovah/Yahweh is righteous. This may have been intended as a declaration that Nebuchadnezzar's action had been a demonstration of the Lord's righteousness in keeping His promise.

2418-2521 Zedekiah of Judah/Fall of Jerusalem 2 Chr 36:11-21; Jer 39:1-10 52:1-30

(And with it the total destruction of the Temple and city, and the end of the Kingdom and rule of David's natural descendants. This is a factual account with little spiritual comment as that has already been covered in 23:27, 24:2-4, 20 etc, echoing Deu 28:36 Lev 26:33.)

2418-20 Zedekiah twenty-one.. became king, reigned eleven years- Judah had lost the Negev to Edom, Jer 13:18-19, and almost all men with experience in leadership, defence, or useful work. The situation was restless with pro-Egyptian agitators, and false prophets stirring up the people. Jeremiah continued to oppose all such, Jer 27. The writer of

when resistance was obviously hopeless. The over-all effect ensured that Jerusalem was totally destroyed, and a thorough emptying of the land in exile resulted, as God had promised.

because of the Lord's anger all this happened- See 1 Chr 36:12-14. Zedekiah wouldn't obey God's word through Jeremiah. He broke his oath to Nebuchadnezzar, and allowed idolatrous worship to be introduced to the temple. He thrust them from his presence. Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon- In spite of Jeremiah's frequent warnings, Jer 21:1-10; 27:1-11; 34:1-3; 37:6-10; 38:14-28 not that Babylon was invincible, but that God had ordained them to the role of executing His judgment on apostate Judah. False prophets assured the people God wouldn't allow His Temple and city to be destroyed, Jer 5:12; 14:13, and the exiles would soon return, Jer 28:1-20. Zedekiah and Judah continued in stupid, stubborn spiritual apostasy, and political rebellion, \*\*15 having learned nothing under the chastening hand of God to this date. Cp Ezek chapters 1-24; 33-34.

25:1-3 In the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month- Instead of the vague "In those/his days," 24:1, etc of earlier chapters the record is now stated carefully as year, month, day. This is the pattern in Ezekiel and Haggai. At the human level it reflects the fact that the writer is operating in a more sophisticated culture where accurate records are important. God's time-schedule for the out-working of His purposes remains as always perfect - things happen in the fulness of time, the right time, no matter how delayed they may seem to His people. The Lachish letters give some details of the fall of fortress cities and the sending of officials to Egypt.

Nebuchadnezzar marched against Jerusalem- This doesn't deny that he may have stayed at his headquarters at Riblah. It was his will, his army even though he was acting through his generals. The third and last siege of Jerusalem began Jan 588BC, Jer 39:1-2; 52:4-6; Ezek 24:1-2, and lasted one and a half years.

He **PITCHED**/encamped outside the city and built **FORTS**/siege works- Siege Towers higher than the walls so that the defenders had no protection from the arrows of the attackers all around it keeping all movement under observation. At least at first they allowed deserters to leave the city, 25:11; Jer 38:19, 39:9, but no food or people in, Jer 38:2-

the letters discovered at Lachish mentions that in 589 the then Pharaoh Apries/Hophra was co-operating with Koriah the Commander in chief of Judah. Tyre rebelled also and was besieged for 13 years. Ammon also rebelled.

254-7 The city wall was broken through- The Hebrew is brief and disjointed but it seems the Babylonians broke INTO the city at the easily-attacked north side and the King and his mobile units broke OUT on the South side, away from the main battle. the army fled at night through the gate between the two walls- See Isa 22:11. toward the Arabah- Down the Kidron valley - perhaps hoping to join forces with Bedi's King of Ammon who had also rebelled against Babylonia, See Jer 27:1-7.

the Babylonian army overtook him in the plains of Jericho- The place of Israel's first victory on entering the land is the place of their last defeat before exile from it. his soldiers were SCATTERED- To avoid capture. The Edomites may have also attacked them at this stage, Obadiah, 1:2-14. He was taken to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where THEY GAVE JUDGMENT/sentence was pronounced on him- The normal way of describing a lawful trial and sentence. The Babylonians weren't as ruthless and brutal as the Assyrians. As Jeremiah had assured him, early surrender would have saved both himself and Jerusalem, Jer 38:14-28 They killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. Then they put out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon- As a condemned oath-breaker, and rebel. So he was taken to Babylon, but didn't see Babylon, Ezek 12:13 Tyrants often fall victim to stronger tyrants, and are treated with brutal justice

258-10 Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard.. came to Jerusalem- A month after the city fell. No doubt he dealt out justice with the future peace of the Babylonian Empire in mind. God used him for the justice and future blessing of His Empire. He BURNED/set fire to the temple of the LORD - Mentioned first as the Lord's abandonment of His temple was central to His allowing the city to be destroyed, Ezek 8:1-11:23 the royal palace. every GREAT MAN'S HOUSE/important building burned down- There are few remains from pre-Exile Jerusalem. The Babylonian army.. broke down the walls around Jerusalem- See Neh 2:13-18 The fall of Jerusalem/exile of Judah, predicted in 1Ki 9:6-9; Isa 39:1-8; Jer 7:1-16; Ezek 20:1-49; Amos 2:4-5; 6:1-7; Mic 3:12; Zeph 14:1-3, had come at last God's

towns and villages were abandoned at his time. When the exiles returned Ezra and Nehemiah say nothing of those sufficiently Jewish to join in with them. The Babylonians broke up the BRASS/bronze pillars. the BRASS/bronze Sea. carried the BRASS/bronze to Babylon. A haz had already removed the bronze bulls, 1617.

2515-17 The commander.. took away the censers, sprinkling bowls of gold or silver- Listed as returning with Zerubbabel, Ezra 1:7-11. The detailed information seems to have come from records. The bronze.. was more than could be weighed- See 1 Ki 7:15-45 Jer 52:17-23 (There are differences in Jeremiah, perhaps because of different ways of counting what was the crown, and what the pillar, or different-sized cubits.)

2518-21 The commander of the guard took as prisoners Seraiah- His son Jehozadak was taken to Babylon, Ezra 7:1-5, and became the Grandfather of Ezra. the chief priest- Rosh Kohen. The first time this title is used. (The HIGH, literally GREAT- Gadd Priest, in 1210 224, 8; 234, a title used from Lev 21:10 onwards.) The Chief Priest is used in 1Chr 27:5; 2Chr 19:11; 26:20 31:10 Ezra 7:5; Neh 12:7; Jer 52:24

Zephaniah the priest next in rank- Zedekiah's agent against Jeremiah, Jer 21:1; 29:25 etc. .. five royal advisers- Those who saw the King's face officer in charge of conscripting- The official responsible for raising the army which had fought the Babylonians. sixty of his men found in city.. brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah.. SLEW THEM/had them executed. So Judah went into captivity- That is, as in 1723 the removal of the elite who give the land its special character means that the nation has ceased to exist as a distinctive unit. The poor (Spiritually/ Culturally/ Financially) of the land, are much the same in any country. But unlike the Assyrians, the Babylonians didn't repopulate Judah with outsiders. Some would move in from surrounding lands, but the land would remain largely empty/ under-used awaiting the return of Exiles.

2522-26 Gedaliah, Governor under Babylon Jer 40:5-41:3

2522-24 Nebuchadnezzar.. appointed Gedaliah- Son of Jeremiah's defender, Jer 26:24 and seems to have been an honorable man, Jer 40:7-16 son of Shaphan- Who had shared in Josiah's reform 22:12



the time it fell.

Footnote \*\*16 Seal stamps on wine jar handles show that the surrounding area supplied wine to the Babylonian court and forces. Bar 97/5 A seal stamped "Gedaliah who is over the house," has been found at Lachish, and he is mentioned on an inscribed potsherd found at the fortress of Arad. A seal with a rooster, and the name Jazaniah, servant of the King has been found at Mizpah. The name is inscribed on potsherds at Arad, as is that of Seraiah son of Tachumeth. BAR 932.

Gedaliah SWARE took an oath to reassure them.. Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you- Don't continue as guerilla fighters, preying on the peasants. Settle down as productive workers loyal to the Government which God has permitted to be set up. Cp Jeremiah's message to the exiles, with God's Word that the Exile would last 70 years, Jer 29:4-10 He went to Mizpah to support Gedaliah, Jer 40:1-10 Jeremiah adds that refugees who had fled to Moab, Ammon, and Edom, returned to their land. Also that Johanan asked permission to kill Ishmael because Bedai of Ammon (still in rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar) had paid him to stir up further rebellion by murdering Gedaliah. Gedaliah refused to believe this, Jer 40:11-16

2525 In the seventh month.. Ishmael.. who was of royal blood, came with ten men- The smallest army unit in Israel. and assassinated Gedaliah and the men of Judah and Babylonians who were with him at Mizpah- At the same time he slaughtered men from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria, Jer 41:1-15. Ishmael may have been claiming the throne.

All the people.. with the army officers, fled to Egypt for fear of the Babylonians- Pharaoh Hophra was anti-Babylonian, and would welcome them. \*\*17 Jerusalem had fallen as he had foretold, but they refused to believe Jeremiah when he assured them in God's name the innocent wouldn't be punished. They dragged him off to Egypt with them, Jer 41:16-43:13. Contrary to the wishes of the King of Babylon, the continuing apostasy of the nation and their murdering of an innocent goodman was over-ruled by God so that there was no continuity with the State as set up by those who returned. In 582BC The Babylonians took away a further 745 Judeans, and made Judea part of the province of

were of Lev.) God had promised a descendant of David would reign forever, and Moses had promised/Solomon had prayed for a repentance and a return from Exile, 1 Ki 8:46-53. So David's family must survive, and be known to survive, so that God's purposes can be seen to have been fulfilled, as per Mt 1 Genealogy. God's original covenant with Abraham was unconditional, and there were unconditional aspects in the promise made to David, 2 Sam 7:15-16. Isa 7 and takes these up in the face of Ahaz disowning the Lord and the Covenant.

Footnote \*\*17 The Elephantine Papyri show that there were Jewish settlements in Egypt in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Bar 9:53

Jehoiachin may have continued to be recognised in Judah as the last legitimate King as jar handles stamped "Eliakim servant of Yehoiachin," have been found. By God's Mercy the Godly returned from exile detached from iddlatry, and robbed of false self-confidence, as recorded in Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. As they struggled against the tendency to apostasy, and looked ahead to God's intervention in Judgment and mercy, Josiah set out for them the SPIRITUAL pattern of Messiah the King, as Cyrus hints at the POLITICAL pattern, Isa 44:28-45:5. But Messiah's reforms will be real, and permanent, because He deals with hidden sin, and the transformation of men's hearts, Jer 3:6-18; Hab 12:4; Zeph 12:2-3. Only by God's sending His Servant-Messiah, can a new basis/a new covenant be established, Jer 31:31-34. And the nation refusing to accept their Messiah, reject and crucify Him to make that new basis possible.

2527-30 In the thirty-seventh year of the CAPTIVITY/exile of Jehoiachin.. Evil-Merodach- Nebuchadnezzar's son and successor Awel-Marduk became king of Babylon- He reigned for about 2 years, 562-560 BC. A change of rulers often brings a change of policy, and in this case what Solomon had prayed for, 1 Ki 8:50 happened. He released Jehoiachin from prison.. gave him a seat of honour higher than the other kings.. in Babylon- Under Babylonian policy they were still regarded as kings of their country, and perhaps in a sense as legitimatising Babylonian rule over their countries as if Babylon was acting on their behalf. A hierarchy of such kings is assumed.

So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes and.. ate at the king's table- Not necessarily in the presence of the King of Babylon, although there may have been occasions when captive kings were present at a royal

resistance to idolatry. Presumably Jehochin was still alive when this was written. The parallel passage in Jer 52:34 mentions his death, so may have been written later.

Appendix I The Samaritans The centre of resistance to Assyria had been Samaria, and it was the centre for deportation, and re-population by foreigners. The Samaritan religion was syncretistic (mixed) from the first. The writers of Kings and Ezra-Nehemiah concentrated on pointing out what was WRONG with Samaritan religion, and make it clear that Judah could expect to get no good from the Samaritans, except to regard them as warning examples. There were good reasons for Ezra and Nehemiah to insist that the life of the returned Exiles be based directly on God's written Word and not compromise with the Samaritans, for fear of being corrupted spiritually again. The Lord echoed this in saying "Salvation is of the Jews."

The writer speaks harshly about the religion of these people but in a sense the process of apostasy was being reversed. Israel had started with a knowledge of the Lord God of Israel, and step by step turned from Him. These people had started in total ignorance of God, and yet were willing to make the effort to begin to learn of Him and His ways. At some stage they also received a copy of the Pentateuch. They built a temple modelled on the Jerusalem one, with apparently similar offerings and services - They continued to kill a Passover Lamb down to modern times. By NT times Samaritan Synagogues looked and functioned in very much the same way as the Jewish ones with God's Word being read, and the Lord prayed to and praised. Bar 9:83

By God's Grace idol worship dropped out of Samaritan Religion, and it increasingly conformed to the Law, based on the Five books of Moses, which they must have received early in their history. From the time of Ezra and Nehemiah enmity between Jews and Samaritans built up so from then on for a copy to be offered or accepted is unlikely. Also by that time other books of the Bible would have been with it. Sufficient goodwill existed in Hezekiah's time for it to have been given and received, or perhaps the Bethel Priest brought a copy of the Pentateuch back. While the Lord Jesus made no effort to reach out to Gentiles, He accepted Samaritans as "Half-Jews" who had a right to hear of "The Kingdom," and be welcomed into it/experience the blessings of healings, etc. Jn 4. When the Gospel was proclaimed in Samaria converts were added to the church, before Gentiles were. When Israel ceased to exist as a unit, its independent-of-Jerusalem existence was destroyed. It became possible for the Godly among them to be re-associated with the Covenant and

their godly distinctives meant that Samaritans were brought into a state where they could respond to Christ and the Gospel in NT times, and that today RC's are forming Bible Study groups, and singing Gospel Songs.

Appendix II Hezekiah's Revival Hezekiah urged the nation to give to the Lord firstfruits etc as required by the law of Moses, and the people were so thankful to the Lord for their prosperity they gave generously. The work of the Priests and Levites was re-organised to cope with this generosity, and extra Temple storehouses were built to contain the gifts. Everything Hezekiah did was done wholeheartedly to the Lord, 2Chr 29:1-30:27. He reinstated the sacrifices and the service of praising the Lord with music and song. This honoured God, and His people were encouraged and blessed by worshipping Him.

Jeroboam and his successors tried to stop any from Israel going to worship at Jerusalem, 1Ki 12:25-33. Hezekiah sent word throughout the whole land of Israel and Judah- from Beersheba to Dan - inviting all Israel to return to the Lord, the merciful God of Abraham. The message repeated God's promises to bless His people if they repented and obeyed Him, Deu 30:1-10, etc. He invited them to come to Jerusalem and keep the Passover. We too should challenge professing Christians to come and obey the Lord with us. While many mocked, some came to Jerusalem to keep the Passover. This was significant as they were looking for a new Redemption from Assyria, not Egypt this time.

They faced the realities of the current situation, and decided to obey the Lord together, a month late, rather than some celebrate on the correct date. Many weren't ritually clean, so the Levites killed their lambs for them. And Hezekiah asked the Lord to forgive the fact that in eating the Passover without being ritually clean they were breaking the Law. This emphasised that God was GOOD in His Being and attitude towards them, rather than a fault-finding taskmaster. God approved this attitude and action. We shouldn't be indifferent to external obedience and correctness, yet need to concentrate on heart attitudes. If people are eager to worship in spirit and in truth, Jn 4:23-24, the external details will usually fall into place.

There was a good spirit of fellowship with each other and with the Lord in worship. They enjoyed it so much they continued the Passover feast for a second week. Hezekiah's generosity wasn't a requirement of God's Law, but showed his heart's desire that everybody be encouraged to enjoy themselves in honouring the Lord. As children, we were more interested in Sunday Dinner

The most joyful and spiritually inspiring conference or camp fellowship must come to an end, and everyone go home to face their familiar situation. It's then that the true worth of the special times of teaching and worship is proved. The Godly tolerance shared in the Feast, strengthened their Godly intolerance of worship that was mixed with idolatry. At Jerusalem the worship had been obeying the Lord together. The worship at Altars and High Places elsewhere was nominally to the God of Israel, but often it was mixed with Baal worship etc. Those who had united to worship God in Jerusalem, remained loyal to God and His people, and smashed the alternative places of worship. This would help keep them from settling back into the semi-Biblical religious systems they'd come from.

### Appendix III Arad - support of record in Kings

Excavation at the South Judean fortress of Arad, Num 21:1, showed that a High Place/Temple was included when Solomon built it and it is near where the Kenites had worshipped, Jud 11:6. After Pharaoh Shishak destroyed the fort, 1 Ki 14:25, it was rebuilt, and its sacrificial altar rebuilt with unknown stone, Ex 20:25, and to the size given for the Tabernacle altar, Ex 27:1.

Names such as Meremoth, and Pashur, 1 Chr 9:12, Ezra 8:33, were written on pieces of pottery, and on a ~~box~~, and lists of payments made to "The Sons of Korah," and "The sons of Bezalel," Ex 31:1, Ps 42:1; make it clear that the High Place/Temple was part of the Normal worship of the Lord, associated with the Bible.

The altar of sacrifice was covered with earth in Hezekiah's time, as he required all sacrifices to be offered in the Lord's Temple at Jerusalem, 2 Ki 18:22. Incense altars remained in use. The fortress was destroyed by Sennacherib's army, and rebuilt. (Arrow heads excavated show what army was responsible for each destruction.)

In King Josiah's reign, this High Place/Temple was closed. The incense altars, incense burner, bowls for offerings, (with QK stamped on them (Quodesh= Sacred, or set apart, Kohanim= for the Priests.) Mazzeboth= Sacred stone pillars, or images, Gen 28:18, 2 Ki 18:4, etc, and a small bronze lion, were laid flat, and covered with earth which became the floor of what seems to have become living quarters Bar 8:2

E. Read 21.1.99.

(Correction or Criticism with a view to improvement is appreciated.)

#### Other booklets

Listening to the Lord:- 1 Kings; Habakkuk, Ruth, Haggai; Romans; 1 & 2 Corinthians; Colossians; 1 & 2 Thessalonians; 2 Peter & Jude; Revelation .

