1:6 The Chronicles record is very positive compared to the accounts of Solomon in 1 Kings. But Solomon’s many sacrifices must be compared with Mic. 6:7, which says that God isn’t impressed by such “thousands” of sacrifices, but looks instead for humility, justice and kindness in a person. Solomon’s father had likewise appreciated that the cattle on one thousand hills are God’s and so we can’t give Him anything materially which He doesn’t have, but we can give Him our personalities and characters (Ps. 50:10). But Solomon thought that external generosity to God was what He wanted, and he ignored the spiritual sacrifices which are far more important to God.

1:10 ‘Going out and coming in’ is an idiom for leadership. Solomon was asking for wisdom because he thought that he was the Messiah, and he saw wisdom as a Messianic characteristic. He failed to realize that the promises to Abraham and David were only being primarily fulfilled in him (e.g. 1 Kings 4:20); he thought that he was the ultimate fulfilment of them (1 Kings 8:20 states this in so many words). His lack of faith and vision of the future Kingdom lead him to this proud and arrogant conclusion (cp. building up our own 'Kingdom' in this life through our lack of vision of the future Kingdom which is to come at Christ’s return).

1:11 We too can prefer wisdom over wealth when we decide to turn down a more demanding or a second job or course of education because we don’t want to be left without time or heart for God’s word.

1:16 *The king’s merchants purchased them*- This was specific disobedience to Dt. 17:16, which taught that Israel’s king shouldn’t cause the people to go to Egypt to buy horses. And Solomon would have copied out this section of the law and memorized it (Dt. 17:18). This shows how we have a tendency to not only ignore God’s word but actually to do exactly the opposite. Israel was strategically situated between Egypt and other nations, and so Solomon became a middleman for the horse and chariot trade (:17); but Israel were not to have horses and chariots themselves (Dt. 17:16). Inevitably, Solomon ended up keeping horses for himself because he was ‘in the trade’, and became obsessed with them. It’s rather like a person dealing in alcohol becoming themselves an alcoholic; and in more subtle ways we too can fall for the goods of Egypt through wilful association with them and enabling others to enjoy them.

2:1 Solomon wanted to build two houses, one for God and another for himself. There was always a duality in Solomon’s service, rather than a total commitment to God alone.

2:3-6 These words seem to smack of a false humility. He pompously informs Hiram of the magnificence of his project, lost in the manic obsession of the powerful architect, and then concludes: "Who am I then, that I should build (God) an house?". Confirmation of this is provided by the way in which Jer. 22:13-17 describes Jehoiakim's proud building of his own cedar house in the language of Solomon's building of the temple. We can serve God with pride, in which case it is an abomination. There’s an obvious contradiction in Solomon’s reasoning; if God is indeed so great that He doesn’t dwell in human houses (Acts 7:48; 17:24), then why build Him a house? This was all false humility, draped, as it were, in out of context Biblical quotation and spiritual allusion.

2:5 *The house which I build is great*- The Hebrew word translated “great” is used again by Solomon at the end of his life when he lost his faith and looked back at how he had built “great” buildings (Ecc. 2:4) in a vain search for self-fulfilment which he ultimately found to be vanity. The lesson of Solomon is that we can serve God on a surface level whilst our heart is far from Him, and the works we do for Him are in fact only a living out of our vain search for self-fulfilment, rather than a total devotion to Him and His causes.

3:1 This implies David assumed that the spot where the Angel appeared to him in 2 Sam. 24:17,18 was where he should build the temple. But this could be one of several examples of David wildly over-interpreting in order to justify his obsession with his son building a temple.

*Mount Moriah*- This was where Abraham offered Isaac (Gen. 22:2), and it was near Jerusalem- further strengthening the connections between that offering and the sacrifice of Christ on a hill outside Jerusalem.

3:3 A cubit was the distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger.

3:12 *Joining to the wing of the other cherub*- The cherubim totally covered the ark. In the Psalms, David reflects that the righteous dwell under the shadow of God’s wings (Ps. 17:8; 36:7), as if we are located on the atonement cover which was on top of the ark, where the blood of atonement was sprinkled, which represented Christ’s blood. Our covering by God’s Angelic cherubim protection is therefore total and complete. But the cherubim described here aren’t those which covered the ark; these covered the entire Most Holy Place. Likewise the constant theme of cherubim everywhere in the temple suggests that Solomon wished to expand the concept of the holiness and protection of the atonement cover to the entire temple. The temple represents all God’s people; for we are His temple. The New Testament expands the theme further- the person of each individual believer is the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:17; 6:19). Each of us personally becomes as it were within the Most Holy Place and likewise constantly in God’s most intense presence and covered by His wings.

4:1 Stephen says that David tried to find a tabernacle for God, "But  Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne... what house will ye build me?" (Acts 7:46-49 AV). This cannot mean 'God no longer dwells in the temple as He used to before Christ's death', because the reason given is that the prophet Isaiah says that God cannot live in houses. This reason was true in Isaiah's time, before the time of Christ. It would seem that Stephen is politely saying: 'Solomon made this mistake of thinking that God can be limited to a physical building. You're making just the same mistake'. And he goes on to make a comment which could well allude to this: "Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers (including Solomon) did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51 AV). Further evidence that Stephen saw Solomon's building of the temple in a negative light is provided by the link between Acts 7:41 and 48: "They made a calf... and rejoiced in the works of their own hands... howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (AV). The word "made" is stressed here in the record of Solomon's building the temple (3:8,10,14-16; 4:1,2,6-9,14,18,19,21). The work of the temple was very much produced by men's hands (2:7,8). Things made with hands refers to idols in several Old Testament passages (e.g. Is. 2:8; 17:8; 31:7). Significantly, Solomon's temple is described as being made with hands in 1 Chron. 29:5. The lesson ought to be clear: we can expend huge effort in apparently serving God when in fact we are only serving ourselves; and thus we can turn the supposed service of God into an idol.

5:6 *Sacrificing sheep and cattle, that could not be counted*- Whilst the record here isn’t specifically critical of Solomon, he failed to understand his father David’s reflection that all the cattle on every hill are God’s (Ps. 50:10) and therefore God doesn’t so much as seek animal sacrifice from us as desire faith and a broken casting of ourselves upon God. David came to that understanding because his sin against Uriah and Bathsheba deserved death and there was no animal sacrifice which could take away that guilt- he had to throw himself upon God’s grace and learn that the real sacrifice God sought was that of a broken, penitent heart (Ps. 51:16,17). Solomon didn’t recognize his sins as David did, he didn’t mess up so publically as David did, and therefore he failed to appreciate this, focussing instead on the external rather than the internal. It’s amazing how God uses human sin and failure to teach us; those like Solomon who don’t sin publically and don’t recognize the weight of their private sins are often lead into the shallow, empty spirituality and surface level service of God which we see in Solomon at this time. See on 7:5.

5:8 *The cherubim covered the ark*- See on 3:12.

6:2 *A place for You to dwell in forever*- This is one of several hints that Solomon felt that the full fulfilment of the Davidic promises was to be found in him (see on :10). He failed to look forward to the spirit of Christ, instead becoming obsessed with the achievement of his own works. He was largely encouraged in this by David, who seems to have felt that Solomon was the Messiah figure the promises spoke about. Thus Ps.72 is dedicated to Solomon, and yet it speaks clearly of the messianic Kingdom. David thus came to misquote and misapply the promises God made to him in his obsession about his own family, rather than the see the promises as concerning the great spiritual family which would be built by Messiah. Solomon repeated his father’s error. God had told David that He did not want a physical house, because He had never commanded this to be done at any time in the past. Solomon misquotes this in :5,6 to mean that God had never asked for a physical house in the past, but now He had asked David's son to build such a house in Jerusalem. This is a lesson to us all against misquoting and misapplying Scripture to justify how we would like things to be for us and our immediate family.

6:6. Solomon claims that God said: “But I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name might be there”. God had chosen no resting place, although it would have been politically convenient for Solomon if Jerusalem as a city was where God had chosen to dwell. And so he kept thinking that way until he persuaded himself that in fact this was what God had said, and misquoted God’s word to that end.

6:10 *Yahweh has performed His word that He spoke*- The promise to David about his great son building God’s house was a promise of Messiah building a house in the sense of a spiritual family (Lk. 1:31-35). The promise was given in response to David’s desire to build a physical house for God. But Solomon was too eager to see the prophecy fulfilled in him and before his eyes, and this lack of Christ-centeredness and focus on the future, ultimate Kingdom of God on earth led him astray.

6:12,13 The record emphasizes how Solomon prayed in front of everyone and showed his apparent humility before all. Christ’s teaching condemning such behaviour may well allude to Solomon’s failures in these things (Mt. 6:6).

6:18 These fine words contradict what Solomon just said in :2, that he was building a house where God *would* dwell, and would do so, he claimed, “for ever”. This is all therefore false humility, which is something every spiritual person must ever be on their guard against.

6:20 *Pray toward this place*- Prayer should’ve been directed toward God, but Solomon gave in to the human tendency to want a buffer between God and man, just as Israel didn’t want to hear God speaking directly with them. Popular religion has pandered to this tendency through hierarchical systems of priesthood etc., but God has always revealed Himself as thirsting for relationship with man and therefore is eager for the most direct form of contact with us which our humanity permits. This is supremely enabled for those who are by status “in Christ” who can come directly to God because of Christ’s achievement for us.

6:24 *Turn again and confess Your name*- God’s Name refers to the declaration of His characteristics (Ex. 34:4-6). Repentance involves a recognition both of our wrongness, and God’s rightness. See on 12:6.

6:30 *Render to every man according to all his ways*- This will happen when Christ returns at the final day of judgment (Rev. 22:12). And yet it is said to happen in response to prayer now. When we pray, we come before God’s throne; the experience of prayer is therefore a foretaste of the day of judgment. As we feel toward the Lord now when we are in His presence in prayer, so we will then.

6:33 Solomon speaks as if the heavens where God lived were actually the temple; he bid men pray towards the temple where God lived, rather than to God in Heaven. Yet theoretically he recognized the magnitude of God (:18); yet the vastness of God, both in power and spirituality, meant little to him; it failed to humble him as it should have done.  It is a feature of human nature to be able to perceive truth and yet act the very opposite. His enthusiasm for his own works lead him to lose a true relationship with God. The idea of salvation by grace became lost on him, loving response to God's forgiveness was not on his agenda, he felt true humility was unnecessary for him, given his certainty that he was King as God intended.

6:35 *Uphold their case*- The crises encountered by God’s people on earth are as it were considered by the court of Heaven, with God acting as both the advocate and judge, upholding their case. But this is if we bring our case before Him in prayer. This is why simply telling God the situation we’re in, although He knows it in the sense that He knows all things, is so necessary.

6:36 Solomon is alluding in this verse to God’s threatened punishments for Israel if they totally rebelled against Him. But Solomon seems to minimize that sin by describing it as if it’s inevitable- “for there is no man who sins not”. God set before Israel the blessings for obedience and abiding in the covenant, and the curses for disobedience and breaking covenant with God, which included being scattered amongst the Gentiles and losing their land. And Solomon minimizes such serious rebellion as something ordinary. This minimizing of sin is what led him to spiritual self-destruction.

7:1 Although God had clearly told David that He didn’t want a physical house built for Him, He made a concession to Israel’s weakness as He did in allowing them to have a human king- and worked through that concession, that lower level of spiritual life which His people had chosen. Such is His thirst for relationship with us His people. Therefore His glory filled the temple as a sign that despite Solomon’s pompous prayer of chapter 6, He was willing to accept that system of temple presence.

7:5 These huge numbers of animal sacrifices weren’t really what God was looking for; each animals represented the dedication of one person, and we cannot dedicate other people’s devotion; they must themselves offer it. The fact Solomon’s animal sacrifices were too many or too large to fit on the altar God had designed and specified the size of (:7) indicates that they weren’t what God had intended. See on 5:6.

7:11 *The house of Yahweh, and in his own house*- Twice in this verse and often elsewhere we see God’s house paralleled with Solomon’s house. His dedication to God’s house wasn’t total and undivided.

7:12 2 God accepted the temple only as a place of sacrifice, i.e. a glorified altar (cp. 2 Sam. 24:17,18). And yet- God didn't really want sacrifice (Ps. 40:6; Heb. 10:5). It was a concession to weakness.

7:14 Solomon in his prayer had said that if Israel sinned and then prayed toward the temple, God would then forgive them. But God corrects this; He wants sinners to pray directly to Him, and He will forgive them- the temple was not to be seen as the instrument or mediatrix of forgiveness which Solomon envisaged. Likewise, Solomon’s implication that prayer offered in the temple would be especially acceptable was not upheld by God’s reply to him about this (6:24-26 cp. 7:12,13). Again and again we see that God thirsts for direct relationship with Him, rather than via any system of priesthood or human religion, even attending meetings because that’s our social club and family background. Solomon says that God will hear the prayers of His people because the temple is called by God’s Name; but God’s response is that “My people who are called by My name” would pray to Him themselves and be heard, quite apart from the temple (6:33 cp. 7:14). He sees *them* as bearing His Name rather than the temple building, as Solomon perceived it. God goes on to parallel the temple and His people in :21,22, saying that if He punishes the temple He will punish the people. Solomon seems to have thought that the temple would still stand favourably in God’s eyes even if the people were punished. The lesson is that it’s individual people rather than religious structures, of whatever sort, which God is interested in.

7:16 This is a conditional promise, followed by five verses of conditions concerning Solomon's spirituality which he overlooked. Like Solomon, we too can fix upon promises without considering their conditionality. There is good reason to think that communally and individually we so easily shut our eyes to the possibility of our spiritual failure and disaster, the sense of the future we might miss. God constantly warned Solomon about the conditionality of the promises, before the building started (2 Sam. 7:14), during it (1 Kings 6:11-13) and immediately after completing it (1 Kings 9:2-9).

7:20 God here corrects Solomon’s idea that if Israel were dispersed, then the temple would still stand and they could pray to it from their dispersion.

8:1 *Solomon had built the house of Yahweh and his own house*- Again Solomon’s building of God’s house is paralleled with building his own house, implying his dedication to God’s house wasn’t wholehearted, unlike David his father. This chapter goes on to use the word “built” many times. Solomon’s building of God’s house is set within the context of the way he liked building anyway. At the end of his life, he admits that he went through a phase of being obsessed with building, in some vain search to find self-fulfilment without God (Ecc. 2:4). In his apparently zealous building of the temple, Solomon was therefore only serving God in ways which he enjoyed, which reinforced his own personality type. Hence :6 speaks of how he “desired to build for *his* pleasure”. On one hand, we must use our God-given talents to serve Him; and yet on the other, we are asked to take up Christ’s cross and follow Him, going right against the grain of how we would naturally like to be.

8:6 Solomon had so many horses and chariots that he needed to build cities to store them. This was a specific disobedience to the command that the king of Israel was not to multiply horses to himself (Dt. 17:16). Yet that was the very section of the Law which he had to copy out and remember (Dt. 17:19). He had the ability, like all of us, to know God’s requirements and yet do the very opposite. He must’ve assumed that somehow he was an exception... but if we accept and love God’s principles we will not wish to make ourselves any exception to them.

9:5 *No more spirit in her*– The Hebrew word translated “spirit” has a wide range of meaning. It can refer to the life force within people; or as here, it can refer to the mind.

9:6 People usually need to see intellectual truths lived out in practice before they will really believe them. This is why the Gospel is more powerfully taught by people, rather than through impersonal mediums like the internet or reading books.

9:8 *To be king for Yahweh your God*- Israel were God’s Kingdom on earth, and their kings were reigning on God’s behalf. The Kingdom was therefore overturned when the last king of Israel was deposed; but it will be re-established at Christ’s return (Ez. 21:25-27; Acts 1:6). The hope of the coming Kingdom of God on earth is therefore the hope of the re-establishment of God’s Kingdom which once was upon earth. Again we see that the promised Kingdom will be on earth- this is the Biblical hope, not going to Heaven on death.

9:13 The reference to 666 cannot be coincidental; this is the number of a man who is the epitome of “the beast” (Rev. 13:18). There are many other similarities between the descriptions of the beast’s kingdom and that of Solomon’s kingdom. And yet his kingdom was clearly a type of Christ’s kingdom. We see in this the terrible duality possible within human beings; and we see how what may appear very spiritual and wonderful on the surface can in fact be very sinful. This is true of both individuals and communities.

9:19 Solomon came to see his throne as the throne of God; he seemed to think that the promise to David that Messiah would sit on his throne could be fulfilled if he built the most amazing throne ever seen in the world. He made 12 lions to stand on either side of his throne, perhaps in imitation of how the Angels were perceived to be on either side of God’s throne (1 Kings 22:19). He was indeed sitting on the throne of the Lord as king over Israel, but in the sense that he was reigning on God’s behalf; for God was Israel’s true king. Solomon seems to have thought that he himself was some kind of God over Israel. And the lesson for us is to perceive ourselves as God’s servants and representatives, but not to take this to the extent that we think that all of our actions are thereby justified as somehow Divinely sanctioned. The end result was that Solomon lost sight of the future Kingdom- and we too will likewise lose our way if we de facto consider our little kingdoms to effectively be God’s Kingdom.

9:23 Solomon had God's wisdom throughout his apostasy (Ecc. 2:9), as the Truth ever remains with us in intellectual terms. God put that wisdom in his heart in order for him to help others, both in Israel and in the world; yet Solomon failed to realize that he needed to apply it to himself. The more truth passes through our lips to others, the stronger we are tempted to not apply it to ourselves personally.

10:4 The temple project became an obsession with Solomon; after his death, his people complained at the “grievous service” which Solomon had subjected them to. But the Hebrew word translated “service” is that repeatedly used to describe the “service” of the temple by the people (1 Chron. 25:6; 26:8,30; 27:26; 28:13-15,20,21; 29:7; 2 Chron. 8:14).Solomon became obsessed with making others ‘serve God’ when it was effectively serving *him*; he came to be abusive to God’s people, when the initial idea of the temple was that it was to be built in order to help God’s people serve Him. And such obsession, turning well motivated projects into means of personal ego tripping, with all the resultant abuse, has sadly damaged so many within the body of Christ. Jesus invited people who were heavy burdened under a hard yoke to come to Him and have that yoke made lighter (Mt. 11:29,30). He was clearly alluding to this incident, where heavily burdened people ‘came’ seeking a lighter yoke.

10:10 Younger people are often harsher than older ones, and therefore make good soldiers in wars of aggression, both literal and figurative. As we grow older we ought to become softer and the more influenced by God’s grace, rather than growing hard and gnarled as some do.

10:15 *It was brought about of God*- Rehoboam’s response to the people seems obviously wrong and unwise. Yet this error of judgment was worked through by God to fulfil His prophetic word. Whilst we have freewill, God confirms us in the attitudes and choices which we make.

11:4 *So they listened to the words of Yahweh*- This is very commendable. When we’ve prepared to do something on a major scale, turning back from the project because we perceive God’s word to teach otherwise is a hard thing to do. But this must be the power of God’s word in our lives. Any war of aggression against our brethren just has to be wrong; and we as the Israel of God should bear this always in mind regardless of what provocation we receive from our brethren.

11:14 Despite Jeroboam being so apostate from the true God, the ten tribes are still called the “brothers” of Judah (:4). No matter how far some go from the Lord or His truth, once a brother always a brother. Once a person is within the family of God through baptism into Christ, it is not for us to ever say in this life that they are no longer in that family.

11:16 In times when the children of God turn away from Him, the faithful minority will go to great lengths to meet with others who are still faithful; and it may even require our geographical relocation, with all the economic costs associated with that (:13).

11:18 This implies that David married his own niece. There were many anomalies in David’s life, especially in his personal relationships; and yet God accepted him and spoke so highly of him. This isn’t to justify any sin or complacent attitude in ourselves personally; but to encourage us in the hard work of being patiently acceptive of those who have similar anomalies in their lives.

11:21 *Eighteen wives, and sixty concubines*- The weakness of Solomon his father was repeated in Solomon’s son. Justifying sin and worldly behaviour inevitably influences our children to think such behaviour is acceptable. And in their turn, Solomon’s son sought to lead *his* children into failure in this area of polygamy (:23).

12:1 *Made himself strong*- The Hebrew word translated “strong” is *hezek*. Good king Hezekiah had the same word within his name, but with ‘Yah’ added on the end- ‘the one made strong by Yah’. Human strength and prowess is the very opposite to God’s strength. We wonder why we don’t always have all we want- wealth, health, acceptance, good relationships, praise of men, nice homes and vehicles... but it’s not surprising really, because human strength nearly always leads us away from God.

12:6 *Yahweh is righteous*- Repentance involves not only a recognition of our wrongness, but of God’s rightness. See on 6:24.

12:8 *They shall be his servants, that they may know My service*- Sometimes God teaches us how to relate to Him by putting us in situations where we simply have to be obedient to some human entity or person. In this way we can serve our worldly masters in our employment as if we are serving Christ (Col. 3:22-24; it seems Paul there is alluding to the LXX here).

13:7 *When Rehoboam was young and tenderhearted, and could not withstand them*- This was an exaggeration, because he was 41 when he became king (12:13). We can so easily justify the sins and weakness of others whom we perceive as being ‘on our side’, trying to reduce everything to a simplistic black and white view of the world, whereby people are either wonderfully good or totally bad (:11). Reality is far different- we only have to realistically analyze our own lives and personalities.

13:12 *Don’t fight against Yahweh*- It seems Abijah was assuming that he was as it were in the place of God. He had picked a fight with Jeroboam (:3), but then realized he was outnumbered and wanted a way out- and so he starts claiming how righteous Judah are (:10-12) even though they were rebellious against God from the day He knew them (Is. 65:2; Ez. 16,20) and were worshipping idols (14:3). He also starts playing God, by assuming that his enemy is God’s enemy. Therefore God brought Judah’s strong men into a situation where they were about to be destroyed, and had to throw themselves upon His grace (:14).

13:13 This was exactly the situation which the Gentile people of Ai were in as described in Josh. 8:21,22. They were caught in an ambush and hemmed in on all sides. Judah who thought they were so superior spiritually were being taught they were no better than Gentiles who had to be cast out by God.

14:3 This shows that the previous king’s claim to such great spirituality in Judah was hypocritical; see on 13:12.

14:11 *Him who has no strength*- All Asa’s human strength he considered as non-existent. He had learnt the lesson of 12:3 [see note there]; that the *only* strength is in God. God brought Asa to this realization by putting him in a situation where he was hopelessly outnumbered, just as He tried to teach Abijah in13:12.We see God working to a pattern in these men’s lives, just as He does with us. He puts us in situations which are quite beyond our own strength- and then makes a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:8; 8:3). This not only strengthens our faith for the next crisis we face, but awes us into an appropriate humility.

15:8 *And put away the abominations out of all the land of Judah*- But 14:3 says that Asa did this at the start of his reign. Whenever we root out weakness from our lives, it tends to return. The records of Judah’s kings are full of such accounts of purging out the idols- and then we read the same again soon afterwards. The tendency to idol worship was and is very strong.

15:9 The faithful in the 10 tribes relocated to be near the believers in Judah. We should make every effort to fellowship with other believers, even if it may mean relocating.

15:15 *All Judah rejoiced at the oath*- Joy comes from full dedication to God; indeed true joy can come from nothing else.

*Sought Him... and He was found*- Christ’s invitation to seek knowing that we shall find is in the context of His teaching that whatever we ask for in prayer will be given; if we knock, the door will be opened (Mt. 7:7; Lk. 11:9). However, this isn’t a blank cheque offer to give us whatever we wish; rather is it teaching that if we pray to find God, if we really seek relationship with Him- we will find it, and thereby all other requests and needs in our lives will appear far less significant.

16:2 By giving the wealth of the temple to Ben Hadad, Asa was acting as if it was his personal wealth, to spend as he wished. But those things had been given or dedicated to God; if you give somebody something, it’s theirs and no longer yours. Although God was invisible to Asa, it’s as if He was sitting there in that temple with His silver and gold- which had been given to Him in thanks for what He had done for His people. And then Asa walks up to God and takes that silver and gold right from His presence and gives it to a pagan idolater whom he considers a better defence against enemies than God. The more we sense the presence of God, the more we perceive His total ownership. What we dedicate to God is His, it’s not for us ‘play God’ by then taking it back and acting as if it’s ours. And we are asked to dedicate our whole lives to God.

16:3 *Let there be a covenant*- Asa’s covenant or treaty with Yahweh in 15:12,13 demanded total dedication to Him; he should therefore have trusted in Yahweh rather than now making another covenant with a pagan king. Covenant relationship with God is all demanding, as Asa had said at the time; we can’t be in covenant with more than one God.

16:8 God gave Asa a test of faith when He sent a huge army against him earlier; and Asa passed the test. But like any good teacher, God repeats the circumstances in our lives; and sometimes like Asa we may do well in one test, but fail when it is repeated. God gave Asa more such wars (:9)- not simply as a punishment, but so he would learn the lesson of trusting in God and not men against our enemies.

16:9 These “eyes of Yahweh” refer to the Angels. If we ask how, mechanically, as it were, God sees and knows all things, the answer is perhaps ‘Through His Angels’. Their activity is amazing; because their work is invisible to us, we may get the impression at times that God is somehow silent and inactive. But the colossal network of Angelic work on earth is constantly humming with activity- for our sakes (Heb. 1:14).

16:10 *Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time*- In our deepest conscience, we know when we sin; even if we don’t consciously recognize every sin. We also realize that sin must be punished. When we sin but don’t confess that sin, or if we refuse to accept the punishment for sin, we have a tendency to subconsciously transfer that sin onto others and punish them for it. This is why religious people can be capable of the greatest hypocrisies and inconsistencies, punishing others for the very sins which they commit, or falsely accusing others of committing the sins they commit and then eagerly punishing them for them. Asa’s bad conscience at this time is reflected in how he treated others.

17:3 *In the first ways of his father David*- Does this imply that David became less spiritually committed as he got older?

18:1 This chapter shows how Jehoshaphat was wrong to make this alliance with Ahab; our covenant with Yahweh precludes any other covenant. Ahab was one of God’s people, but clearly his faith in Yahweh was weak and he had surrounded himself with false prophets who claimed that whatever Ahab wanted to be true was in fact the word of Yahweh (:4-7). Even within those who are externally the children of God, we must be careful whom we choose to closely associate with; for not all are seriously interested in following God’s word.

18:14 Considering Micaiah had already seen the vision of :18-21, this was a significant failure of his. In some contexts, we all have a tendency to quickly perceive and then say what we think the other person wants us to say. The fact we know God’s word means that we are now bound not to do that, but to speak according to how His word has influenced us.

18:18-21 We have here a unique insight into how the court of Heaven operates. God states His plan, but the Angels discuss how they will operationalize it. The “spirit” in :20 refers to an Angel- for God makes His Angels spirits (Ps. 104:4). One Angel had the idea that Ahab’s false prophets could be moved to prophesy to him a false prophesy about going to Ramoth Gilead, where he would die. God liked that idea, perhaps because it was an appropriate way to punish Ahab for his rejection of the true prophets. And that Angel was empowered to bring that about, and went out from the court of Heaven to do it. God confirms people in the way they wish to go, and He can do this through leading them into mindsets and theological understandings which are false (2 Thess. 2:11). The amazing thing is that God is holding case conferences about us in Heaven, with Angels discussing how best to bring about God’s will in our lives.

19:2 *Love those who hate Yahweh*- We can imagine how Jehoshaphat would’ve justified the alliance he made with Ahab in 18:1,2- ‘We both serve the same God... believe more or less the same things... face a common enemy...’. But God’s wrath was upon Jehoshaphat for saying this. Ahab’s refusal to hear Yahweh’s word in 18:4-17 was counted as hating Yahweh.

19:3 *Nevertheless*- God didn’t reject Jehoshaphat because of his failure in one area in one period of life; He saw the bigger picture. When one aspect of another believer’s failure is extremely difficult for us to tolerate, we too need to see this bigger picture and think of the other areas of their lives where they are spiritual.

19:10 *Between blood and blood*- Perhaps a reference to controversies about revenging bloodshed, alluding to Dt. 17:8.

20:2 A great multitude is coming- Jehoshaphat was expected to have learnt the lesson from Asa’s experience when hugely outnumbered (16:8), and it seems he did. The whole purpose of Biblical history is for *our* sakes, that we might learn from the experiences of others who in essence were in our situation- and be strengthened, warned and encouraged (Rom. 15:4).

20:12 *God, will You not judge them?*- Jehoshaphat like David in the Psalms saw the crises of life as a foretaste of the final judgment; he stated the situation before God in detail (:10) and felt his prayer was a coming before God’s throne of judgment. Our prayers likewise come before the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16); our feelings toward God in prayer now are as they will be in essence at the final judgment.

20:21 There is a strong theme of praise; and praise is something one does to their God *after* a victory, not *before* it. Humanly, they must have feared that they were being asked to trust in mere words. Yet Jehoshaphat praised God for the assurance of victory as if it had already happened; and his battle plan was hardly humanly wise. He sent out ahead of his troops a group of priests who were praising God for the victory. Such faith is all about adopting God’s perspective, who speaks of things which are not yet as if they are, so sure is His word of promise of fulfilment (Rom. 4:17).

20:35 *Jehoshaphat king of Judah joined himself with Ahaziah king of Israel*- When he earlier joined himself with a king of Israel, he nearly lost his life and was rebuked for it severely in 19:2. We too can deal with a situation in the wrong way, repent for doing so, and then the essence of the situation is repeated in another context- and again we fail. And yet although at the end of his life, Jehoshaphat failed in this matter, he was on balance reckoned as righteous (:32). This shouldn’t lead us to think that some aspects of human behaviour don’t matter and we can ‘get away’ with them. But it helps us in not rejecting brothers or sisters who clearly have weakness in one point of their lives at some period of their spiritual journey, even if as with Jehoshaphat it’s right at the end of their lives when we might expect more spiritual maturity from them. We will all come to the end of our journeys with some incomplete spirituality, and we should show others the same grace God shows us.

21:6 Jehoshaphat his father had been rebuked for his alliance with Ahab (19:2) and had continued to fail in making alliances with the rulers of Israel (see on 20:35). The result of this was that although he himself was righteous, his son committed failure in the same area but went much further to the point of becoming totally sinful and being rejected by God. The problem with sin and permitting ourselves weaknesses is that our children and others will likely commit the same weaknesses but take them much further; the mother who gets drunk once a year on her birthday shouldn’t be surprised if her son becomes alcoholic.

*For he had the daughter of Ahab as wife*- The history of the kings often stresses the huge influence of women upon a man, especially his wife or mother. Women at that time were considered mere chattels, but the Biblical record grants them human dignity and significance, and stresses their huge influence especially in spiritual matters.

21:12 This incident is well after the time when Elijah had ascended into the sky at the close of his public ministry. It seems that Elijah was simply taken up into the sky and put down somewhere else, which is why his servants went out looking for him; it was done in this dramatic public manner to indicate to all that his public ministry had come to an end. But it seems that he returned to earth and continued a more discrete ministry, as this incident demonstrates. The Bible doesn’t teach that we go to Heaven at death; Jesus was the first person to be raised from the dead and given eternal life, and all the faithful will receive eternity together at the day of judgment when Christ returns.

21:16 God is able to work directly on the mind or “spirit” of people, according to His will. We should therefore eagerly ask Him to work on our spirit / mind to make it holy; for the human mind is the ultimate arena of our spiritual warfare.

22:3 *His mother was his counsellor to do wickedly*- Again we see the influence of women on the spiritual lives of their children; see on 21:6. Her ‘counsel’ to him likely refers to the way she raised him in his youth. His grandfather, righteous king Jehoshaphat, had a weakness with respect to his friendship with the Ahab family (19:2). Jehoshaphat’s son Jehoram even more so (see on 21:6), and the grandson likewise. The failure of a righteous man had disastrous spiritual consequence even for his grandchild. Grandfather Jehoshaphat nearly lost his life by going to war in tandem with Ahab king of Israel; and the grandson failed in exactly the same way (:5), at the very same place, Ramoth Gilead (18:11). He didn’t learn the lesson of his grandfather’s failure but rather repeated it.

22:6 Ahaziah was severely punished because he didn’t learn the lesson from spiritual history. Jehoshaphat had been nearly killed because of his union with Ahab the king of Israel; we really are intended to learn from Biblical history and take concrete action based upon what we perceive within it, rather than let these records drift over us without taking a grip upon our lives in practice.

23:1 *Took... into covenant with him*- Note how at this same time they made a covenant with God (:3). Our covenant with God is often connected with our covenant with each other; covenant relationship isn’t just a deal between God and us, rather does our relationship with Him involve us in relationship with the rest of His true people. We can’t be in relationship with God and isolate ourselves from His people.

23:11 *Jehoiada and his sons anointed him*- One of these sons was Zechariah, whom Joash was later to ungratefully murder for daring to criticize him (24:20-22). Indeed, 24:25 says that Joash killed all these sons. Ingratitude is a sin because the kindness we were shown is a reflection of *God’s* grace to us through a human channel, and to be ungrateful for it is thereby a rejection of God’s grace.

23:16 The parallel record in 2 Kings 11:17 says this covenant was between Yahweh and the people, but here we read that it was between Jehoiada and the people. Jehoiada as the priest was God’s representative, and therefore what he did was on God’s behalf. God’s representatives can be spoken of as if they are God, even though they aren’t God Himself in person. This principle, which is found throughout the Old Testament, should prepare us to accept that God’s Son, Jesus, as His Father’s total representative, isn’t God Himself but can be spoken of as God, as Jehoiada was, because He functions so completely on God’s behalf.

23:21 *The people of the land rejoiced*- In the same way as “all the people” destroyed the temple of Baal (:17) and “all the people” rejoiced at the idea of Joash being made king (:13). Although the people were spiritually weak at this time, there was deep within them a desire to do the right thing- they just lacked the strength to do it, and needed someone like Jehoiada to present it clearly to them. We may consider those around us to be totally disinterested in spiritual things, but if we present them with the right way, we will be surprised how this is passively and unconsciously what a lot of apparently ‘worldly’ people are in fact looking for. See on 24:10.

24:10 People do respond generously when someone gives them firm leadership and explains the need; see on 23:21.

24:14 *All the days of Jehoiada*- Joash’s zeal for restoring the temple appears to have been all on his own initiative. But clearly his zeal for God was all the result of Jehoiada’s influence upon him, and as soon as Jehoiada was dead, he turned to other gods (:17,18). People can serve God, even in a very zealous way, purely as the result of others’ influence upon them. This is why how we end our spiritual journey is so important- when those who influenced our youth are no longer with us, and we serve God with no possibility of the motivation of pleasing those we respect. It seems Joash was grateful to Jehoiada for saving his life and organizing the coup which led to his having the kingdom at seven years old- when his gratitude should’ve been to *God*, who used Jehoiada merely as a human channel. If we don’t see our spiritual elders as *channels* used by God, but glorify them in themselves, then we will tend to do spiritual things just to please those elders. And when they are no more, we are left with no real relationship with God Himself. This would explain how *immediately* on the death of Jehoiada, Joash turned to other gods.

24:17 *The king listened to them*- So often the history of the kings repeats itself. This was exactly the mistake of Rehoboam- listening to bad advisors and rejecting the Godly advice of older men (1 Kings 12:8,10). Our life situations likewise tend to repeat in essence the situations faced by Biblical characters; and we really are expected to learn the lessons. We have to ask how often it is that we base a life decision specifically upon a Biblical precedent... How much does Bible history really affect our life choices today?

24:21 *At the commandment of the king*- See on 23:11.

24:22 *May Yahweh look at it, and require it*- This is one of many Biblical indications that at the day of judgment, situations in this life will as it were be played back to the wicked, and be ‘required’ from them. All their sins will be mentioned unto them, whereas this will not be the case for the righteous, whose sins have been forgiven (Ez. 18:22; 33:16).

25:3 *When the kingdom was established to him, he killed his servants*- This sentence structure is common in the record of the kings; *when* they became strong, *once* they were set up in life, *then* they did wrong (11:17; 12:1; 17:1; 21:4; 26:8,16). Some people never get set up in life or become financially or domestically ‘strong’ as they would wish, and resent it. But remember this formula; perhaps if that had been granted them by God, they would turn away from Him. Amaziah repeated the pattern of Jehoram, who became strong in his kingdom, and then killed his brothers (21:4). Again we see how God intended Amaziah, as He intends all of us, to perceive how we should be and live on the basis of the examples in the history of His people. This is why reading the records of these kings is so valuable for us; and more than valuable, God intends us to be familiar with the history He has recorded and carefully preserved for so long, and learn from it, applying it specifically in our lives.

25:4 Despite committing murder after the pattern of wicked Jehoram (21:4), he was careful to be obedient to part of God’s law. We so often justify wrong behaviour by mixing it with some element of legalistic obedience to God’s word, just as we see in the account of the judgment and crucifixion of Jesus, with the Jews careful to obey parts of the Mosaic Law in detail- whilst totally missing the bigger picture

25:6 Jehoshaphat (19:2) and other kings of Judah had always gotten into trouble by making military alliances with Israel; but still the lesson wasn’t learnt, spiritual history wasn’t allowed by Amaziah to really have a practical impact upon him.

25:8 *But if you will go, go and take action, be strong for the battle*- A classic example of the downward spiral, whereby God pushes people along the road of self-destruction if this is the path they choose.

25:13 We might be surprised at this; Amaziah had paid money to hire this army, but in humility to God’s word had dismissed them and as it were wasted his money, just because God had told him not to use them but trust in Him. But then they do so much damage to Amaziah’s kingdom. Perhaps this was because his obedience to God’s word was only external, and not with a complete heart (:2). Likewise Amaziah won a great victory by faith in Yahweh, but immediately adopted pagan gods (:14,15).

25:17 Earlier Amaziah had wanted to make an alliance with Israel (:6,7); now he picks an argument with them and purposefully provokes a war with them. This unstable, inconsistent attitude arose from his incomplete devotion to God (:2). The instability and inconsistency evident in so many aspects of so many lives is reflective of a lack of steady, consistent devotion to the God who is eager to be our rock.

26:4 But Amaziah only did a few things right before God and turned to other gods in the end (25:20). God so thirsts for human response to Him that He writes these records so positively, in recognition of any spirituality which there was.

26:16 *But when he was strong*- He was strong only in his own self-perception, because his strength was only the result of God’s help (:15). Again we see how human strength precedes spiritual failure, which is a common theme in these lives of the kings and indeed throughout history; see on 25:3.

26:18 Uzziah is here condemned for doing what only the priests could do. However, David also did what only the priests (of the tribe of Levi) could do; but he was of the tribe of Judah and therefore not a priest (1 Chron. 15:27; 16:3). So we conclude that the same action can be sinful for one person but a sign of spiritual maturity in another. We need to bear this in mind when considering the behaviour of others, and try not to legislate against it in a legalistic manner but treat each case on its merits. We also learn from this that motive and not external action nor appearance are of ultimate importance to God. All our works need careful analysis once we grasp this point. It could be that Uzziah was trying to imitate David in acting as a priest when he wasn’t; for 2 Kings 14:3 emphasizes that Uzziah did *not* do his good deeds in the spirit of David. It was all just an attempt to externally mimic a righteous man when the heart is far from spirituality; and God judges such hypocrisy very hard.

26:17 Azariah was very brave to do this; for kings, especially like Uzziah at this time, considered themselves all powerful and beyond such criticism. We shouldn’t fear to bring God’s word to those who are ‘senior’ in rank, even if it criticizes them explicitly or implicitly; for compared to God’s word, all men are as grass, of whatever rank they are in human society (Is. 40:6-8).

27:6 If a man prepares his way after God’s principles (see too Prov. 4:26), then God will ‘prepare’ that man’s way too (Ps. 37:23; 119:5), confirming him in the way he chooses to go.

28:5 *Therefore Yahweh his God*- Yahweh was still his God even through this very evil part of his life when Ahaz had forsaken God (:6); we too shouldn’t give up on our brethren who clearly leave God’s principles. Even if we disbelieve God, He still remains faithful to us (2 Tim. 2:13). God is still working with our lost brethren, and so should we, after the pattern of the shepherd who searches until he finds the lost sheep.

28:9 The “rage” of sinful Israel against sinful Judah was likely because they transferred their own sins onto their brethren, and then eagerly punished them for them. This psychological phenomenon explains why there is so much judgmentalism and anger against other members within the church. To avoid it, we must face up to our own sins, and believe that the judgment for them has truly been laid upon Jesus. We will therefore know our guilt to have been lifted and will not feel the need to transfer it onto others.

28:11 *Fierce wrath*- This seems a stronger term to the ‘anger’ of God with Judah for their idolatry (:9). Hypocrisy and harshly judging our brethren when we too are sinners is something which makes God fiercely angry.

28:13 This kind of thing happens several times in the record of the kings; men had committed themselves already to a significant plan like hiring many soldiers and are then told to not go ahead with the plan (e.g. 25:9) at the risk of loss of face or money. This kind of thing ought to be a regular aspect of our lives- stopping in our tracks and turning back from a course of action because of God’s word.

28:15 Clothing the naked, putting them on donkeys and taking them to Jericho is all the basis of the good Samaritan parable (Lk. 10). We can therefore understand that parable in terms of our having compassion upon those within the ecclesia who are suffering for their sins; we are to take care of them, considering our own sins deserve the same judgment (:10).

28:27 *They didn’t bring him into the tombs of the kings*- This is mentioned several times about the sinful kings. Although the people were themselves sinful and rebellious, they recognized that the kings who hadn’t followed the spirit of king David shouldn’t be buried together with him. There is in society a basic sense of right and wrong, which is reflected in such decisions as this. It’s not the case, therefore, that people are totally disinterested in spirituality and have no sense of right or wrong. There is interest in spirituality in people; it’s just connecting with it in an appropriate way which is our challenge.

29:2 We of course wonder how it could be that such an evil man as Ahaz had such a righteous son as Hezekiah. Perhaps the extreme sinfulness of Ahaz made Hezekiah reflect upon the wrongness of sin; perhaps Hezekiah was angry with his father for killing his brothers and sisters in sacrifice to stupid idols (28:3) and so he went the other way, as it were. Whatever, we learn that bad background doesn’t force people into sin; Hezekiah had an awful spiritual background but he was righteous. We can’t blame our sin on anything, including bad background.

*In the eyes of Yahweh*- These “eyes of Yahweh” refer to the Angels (16:9). If we ask how, mechanically, as it were, God sees and knows all things, the answer is perhaps ‘Through His Angels’. Their activity is amazing; because their work is invisible to us, we may get the impression at times that God is somehow silent and unobservant. But His “eyes” are constantly informing Him of our situations and indeed forming an opinion about them.

29:3 There is a frequent cycle in the record of the kings of mass apostasy by the people, reformation by a faithful king and then quick descent into apostasy again. This mirrors the cycle of sin, repentance, devotion and sin which is seen in so many personal lives. One of the greatest joys we can look forward to in the Kingdom of God is not just the eternity of the life, but the spiritual quality of it, never able to sin again. The cycle of the kings suggests, however, that much of the reformation was as a result of the personal leadership of the king; people go back to the easier way of the flesh very easily, and good leadership can only go so far in personal reformation; because our relationship with God is ultimately so very personal.

29:11 *My sons*- Hezekiah was only 25 years old when he said this (:1), but when others are spiritually weak and someone takes spiritual leadership, they become the elder- regardless of their age.

29:23 It would seem from :21 that the male goats were the sin offering. Jesus understood goats to represent those who would be rejected at the final judgment (Mt. 25:33). We are to put our hand as it were on the head of such goats, recognizing that we should come to judgment day and be condemned, treated as goats. Yes, we need to imagine how it would feel to be at the judgment and be sent to the left hand side. This is what we deserve, and we recognize that by placing our hand on the head of the goat, as it were. But we are saved by the blood of the lamb; we are identified with Him and will therefore be treated as Him, and moved to the right hand side where the sheep are. All these principles are brought together in baptism into Christ, whereby through that immersion in water we die the death of a sinner and yet rise again with Christ; and we are to continue living out the essence of baptism in an ongoing sense throughout our lives.

30:1 By doing so, Hezekiah was seeking to bring together the spiritually minded of both Israel and Judah (see too :5). Technical divisions between God’s people are always ended ‘on the ground’ when like minded believers find they have so much in common, and the official divides between them only exist from a human viewpoint; God sees His people as one, whatever divisions between them there may be from human perspectives.

30:2 *The second month*- Passover was to be kept in the first month; but Hezekiah perceived the urgency which there is in serving God, and he rightly perceived it was better to technically infringe the Law in order to keep the spirit of it.

30:9 Note that if *they* turned to Yahweh, then their spiritually weak brethren currently in captivity would be blessed; to some extent, our spirituality can affect third parties.

30:12 God is capable of working directly on the human heart to make us obedient to His word; given the tragic weakness of our will, we should also ask Him to be with us in this way, as David often does in Ps. 119.

30:18 *They ate the Passover otherwise than it is written*- This needs to be ever remembered by those who fear they aren’t worthy to participate in the breaking of bread service, which is the Christian equivalent of the Passover feast. Our desire for God and His thirst for relationship with us are between them more than enough to make our weaknesses no barrier to remembering the great salvation He achieved for us in Christ. However, the reference in :20 to God’s healing of the people at this time suggests that although He agreed with their keeping of Passover in an unclean state (:12 “by the word of Yahweh”), He also made them recognize their sinfulness at this time.

30:23 If we truly love God, we will not be minimalists, doing the minimum required by His word; we will joyfully go beyond. For His commandments are but a springboard to more total dedication by us on our own initiative. We need to ask, when was the last time we decided to do something for God as it were “extra”, on our own initiative?

31:3 *The king’s portion of his substance*- Hezekiah led this reformation by his personal example- absolutely vital in any leadership role within God’s people.

31:7 There are many ‘small’ details in the Biblical record which indicate that we are reading real history, inspired by God and infallible. The third month was at the end of the grain harvest, the time of the feast of Pentecost. The seventh month was at the end of the fruit and wine harvest, the time of the feast of tabernacles.

31:8 The Hebrew idea of ‘blessing’ carries more weight than a casual ‘Bless you!’ or ‘Well done!’. It was loaded with the solemn belief that something actual would happen as a result of the blessing being pronounced (the same is true of the idea of ‘cursing’). Passages like Ez. 44:30; Hag. 2:19 and Mal. 3:10,11 state that there would be material blessing in the homes of those who gave the tithe, and Hezekiah surely had this in mind. Our giving to God is responded to by Him; maybe not in cash terms (otherwise the concepts of giving and generosity lose their significance), but we can be assured that there will be a real blessing in response.

31:10 Several times in the record of Israel’s history we have this feature- of response to a call for donations far over what was required (e.g. 24:10). And yet the prophets emphasize that Israel never really quit idol worship and were constantly rebellious against Yahweh. We observe from this that there was a conscience toward God amongst them, and people love and need to be given some concrete way of serving God; generally, people lack initiative and need to have a structure given to them within which they can serve God. But we also see that it’s far easier to give material things at one point in time than to give our hearts to God for a lifetime.

32:1 *After these things, and this faithfulness*- This is clear enough evidence that devotion to God doesn’t save us from trial, nor guarantee us an easy life in the flesh. Hezekiah’s devotion was extraordinary- and now calamity came. Although it could be that his dedication wasn’t matched by Israel’s, and the Assyrian crisis came as a result of their unfaithfulness.

32:12 *His high places and His altars*- We see in this comment the nature of Israel’s apostasy. They hadn’t rejected Yahweh totally, become atheists; rather they had proclaimed the pagan high places and altars as actually being Yahweh’s, thus justifying pagan idol worship as if it were a form of Yahweh worship. Something similar happened when the pagan feast of December 25th and the worship of the evergreen tree was declared a Christian festival, and the pagan tree turned into the “Christmas tree”. But we make the same mistake countless times, in justifying fleshly behaviour (e.g. anger, judgmentalism, gossip, pride, exclusivity, character destruction etc.) as a form of serving Yahweh.

32:13 All this was true; but to the faithful mind, it was actually an encouragement, although a discouragement to the weak in faith. Truly the pagan gods had been powerless, and so too would be the Assyrian gods.

32:21 *Those who came forth from his own bowels*- The reference is to his sons. But children come forth from the “bowels” or inner parts of a woman, not a man. But husband and wife are seen as one in the production of children; ‘they’ become pregnant and jointly bring forth children. This was a radical perspective in a society where women existed basically to bear children and the fathers carried little responsibility for their children.

32:24 *In those days Hezekiah was sick even to death*- The Kings and Isaiah record show that Hezekiah reigned for 29 years, and the Assyrian invasion came in the 14th year of his reign. At the time of his sickness, God gave him another 15 years of life; hence his sickness and the invasion were at the same time. When circumstances come together in such an awful way, we know this is the hand of God trying to develop us; not coincidence, nor any personal Satan being, of whom the Bible knows nothing.

32:25 We have all received grace; and the intended response to it is humility. It is because God so hugely values humility that He has arranged the whole concept of grace as the basis of our salvation. Those who deny grace and rather trust in works will therefore tend towards pride and away from humility.

33:2 Manasseh’s father Hezekiah was a righteous man; his grandfather Ahaz a very wicked man. This just shows that spirituality isn’t totally the result of our upbringing and background. We each stand as individuals before God and can overcome the influence of where we came from; and on the other hand, faithful parents are no guarantee of personal spirituality. It could be that Hezekiah in the last 15 years of his life was somewhat switched off from devotion to God, resting on his laurels and enjoying the good life in retirement. Whilst he didn’t himself turn to other gods, this laid back attitude to the true God meant that his son turned away from Him.

33:12 *Yahweh his God*- God was still his God even in those years of revolt against Him; God never gives up with us so long as we live on this earth. Although Yahweh was *his* God, only on repentance years later did “Manasseh [know] that Yahweh was God” (:13), and we read of Yahweh as “*his* God” (:18). Thus in repentance, a man makes Yahweh’s knowledge of him mutual; and in that meeting of God and man in repentance there is a huge synergy. Hence all the Angels of God rejoice when one person repents (Lk. 15:10). Hence the huge, cosmic joy at each repentant baptism into Christ.

*Humbled himself*- This shows that no matter how wicked a person is, there is always a way back to God; but the supreme requirement is of humility. We should therefore never give up on people as too far gone. Self humbling is spoken of in :19 as he same as repentance; this is what repentance is all about, not a passing recognition on a mental level of a small slip, but a deep humbling of self.

33:22 The consequence of sin, even if we ourselves repent of it, is in the bad pattern it sets to others. Our examples are more powerful than we think; sin is largely sin because of the effect it has upon others.

34:3 A 16 year old can significantly search after God; and a 20 year old isn’t too young to do major things for God or take a leadership role if there are no others willing to do so.

34:14 *Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of Yahweh given by Moses*- Jeremiah (Jer. 15:16) says that when this book was found, it was to him the joy of his heart and he as it were ate it. Yet the part of the Law which was found listed the judgments for disobedience and the explanation of the terms of the covenant (:31). He didn’t regard these things as some might- the boring droning on of God about sin. Jeremiah perceived in it God’s requirements and the blessings for obedience, and rejoiced in it all, as only one who truly loves God can do. Note that in the generations that didn’t have access to this book of the Law, there were still people who pleased God greatly, including Josiah. And yet they did so in ignorance of all His word. We who have the completed word of God so conveniently accessible can come to think that therefore anyone without a complete knowledge of God’s word on every point cannot please Him or have a relationship with Him. But this is clearly not the case; for those at Josiah’s time and the generation before who were ignorant of parts of God’s word could still please Him. However we who have God’s completed word have a far higher level of responsibility before Him. It could also be argued that God revealed more of His word and requirements to Josiah in response to Josiah’s zeal to do the right thing before God so far as he knew, after the pattern of Cornelius in the New Testament. Those who truly seek after God will have His true word revealed to them.

34:19 *He tore his clothes*- He realized that sins of ignorance are still sins; hence the Law of Moses required offerings for sin once the sin was recognized. “Great wrath” was from God because of this disobedience, albeit performed in ignorance (:21). The fact sins of ignorance are still felt by God should lead us to search His word the more diligently to know what exactly He requires and hopes for from us. Spare a thought for God in this; He feels sin, all sin, committed by whoever, even in ignorance. His sensitivity to sin should lead us to vow the more passionately to live pleasingly before Him.

34:22 *Huldah the prophetess*- The Hebrew word translated ‘prophet’ doesn’t just refer to someone who predicts the future, but to one who spoke forth God’s inspired word. It’s significant that in such a male dominated society, God chose to relay His word at times through women.

34:31 Josiah didn’t just accept the threatened judgment to come as inevitable. He believed that by repentance it could possibly be averted by God’s grace, just as the people of Nineveh believed.

35:3 *Serve Yahweh your God and His people*- We serve God through serving His people; our attitude to them, our care for them, is effectively our attitude to the Lord, and will be the basis upon which we are judged at the last day (Mt. 25:40). We can’t simply believe in God from the isolation of our own homes or computer screens, and not get involved with actively serving His people.

35:11 *Flayed them*– This seems to imply that the skin was flayed off the lambs, in uncanny prediction of Christ’s whipping and scourging before His offering as the ultimate Passover lamb.

35:18 *Neither did any of the kings of Israel keep such a Passover as Josiah kept*- Kings like David and Solomon were more prosperous than Josiah was, and yet he was the more generous in his Passover celebration. Seeing that God isn’t impressed by numbers of sacrifices, this may not necessarily be an indication of Josiah’s spirituality; he should’ve learnt the lesson from the success of David and the failure of Solomon, that God seeks a broken heart rather than physical sacrifice. In any case, the people of Judah were soon taken into captivity because of their wickedness; Josiah gave them sacrifices to offer, whereas ideally they should’ve brought their own. We simply can’t give spirituality to others.

35:21 This spirit of seeking a fight was his destruction; he should’ve learnt the lessons from Abijah in 13:3 who made the same mistake. God’s history is written so that we might learn from it; but whilst it remains in our minds as mere history for the sake of it and doesn’t become a living word speaking to us personally, it won’t fulfil its intention. Perhaps Josiah’s zeal for God had lifted him up in pride, and he thought that he could show his zeal for God by aggression towards ‘the world’, represented as always by Egypt. But aggression for the sake of it is so displeasing to God; God gave His Son to die for this world, this Egypt, rather than to try to destroy it for the sake of it. And it cost Josiah his life. Spiritual superiority, arrogance and aggression are simply so abhorrent to God.

35:22 *The words of Neco from the mouth of God*- The words of pagan Neco weren’t inspired by God but were indirectly from Him, just as the words of Caiaphas were in Jn. 12:49-51. We mustn’t think that unbelievers have nothing to teach us; God may be trying to communicate with us through them, although this doesn’t make the channel of His communication righteous.

36:9 *Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign*- 2 Kings 24:8 says he was 18, and Ez. 19:5-9 speaks of him as a young lion who killed people- relevant to an 18 year old but not an 8 year old. The Septuagint- the Greek version of the Old Testament which the New Testament writers tend to quote rather than the Hebrew text- gives “eighteen” here. This is an example of where although the Bible text itself is inspired, there may be slight errors of copying in a few places as the manuscripts were transmitted over the centuries.

36:17 *King of the Chaldeans*- Assyria is here called ‘Chaldea’ perhaps to bring out the fact the people of Abraham, who had been called out of Ur in Chaldea, were now returning there. The call of the Gospel is a call to separation; if we don’t want to be separate from this world, we shall be returned there. When Christ returns, those responsible to Him will come before His judgment, and the rejected will be sent back into the world to share the judgments coming upon it (1 Cor. 11:32). But that will be the last thing they want- seeing the eternity of God’s new world stretching before them, to be sent back into this world which they so preferred in this their day of opportunity.

36:22 *Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus*- Although God can work directly on the mind / spirit of people, Dan. 10:13 says that the Angel who brought this about was initially resisted by the king of Persia for 21 days. This amazing proclamation by Cyrus, to allow the Jews to return to their land with his blessing and rebuild their temple, was genuinely from him; and yet the Angel had worked through various ways to stir him up to it. The amount of Angelic activity going on behind the scenes in our lives and in the geopolitics of the world is amazing; God isn’t indifferent nor inactive, but is ceaselessly at work to bring about His Kingdom plans for us His people.