



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

2 KINGS

2 CHRONICLES 10-36

Week 4

Up, Down and Up Again!

2 Chronicles 28:1–29:17

OPENING
up to the Word

Does your life have an up-and-down quality to it, or has it been a relatively smooth ride? What main factors have caused it to be that way?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. “He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel.” That is a blunt condemnation for a king of Judah. What abominable practices did Ahaz carry out? Did God’s punishment fit the crime (28:1-8)?

2. Why did Oded intervene with the Israelites? Did they listen (vs. 9-15)?

3. Do you think Ahaz learned his lesson (vs. 16-25)? Did his burial indicate what his subjects thought about his conduct? Though he was buried in Jerusalem, what honor was denied him (vs. 26-27)?

4. What was Hezekiah’s first priority when he became king (29:1-9)? What was his next goal? Who would help him in carrying this out (vs. 10-17)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Ahaz stubbornly looked for help in the wrong places. Do you ever do that? What were the results?

2. Some Christians use the example of the Israelites freeing their Jewish captives as evidence that war can bring about good things. Do you think this is a valid argument?

3. Hezekiah and his priests had cleansed the temple in 16 days. What New Testament teaching is reemphasized by this example (Jas 2:14-17)?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The **weak and foolish Ahaz** had injected a dangerous new element into the politics of Israel and Judah. He asked the Assyrians for help and submitted to them shamelessly. They would not leave the scene until Israel was deported and Judah left a wreck.*

2 Chronicles 29:18-36

How important do you think donations and offerings are in the life of a Christian?

1. What great national hero did Hezekiah consciously keep before the people throughout his dynamic reforms (vs. 18-27)?
2. What procedures did Hezekiah restore to the Temple (vs. 28-30)?
3. Did the people's response indicate that they were pleased with what Hezekiah was doing—or were they just following orders (vs. 31-34)?
4. Do you think the people's responsiveness to the new administration was driven by their unhappiness with the previous one (vs. 35-36)?

1. "The whole assembly bowed in worship" (vs. 28). Is there a period or time of worship that stands out in your life? What made it so special?
2. What motivates you to give or to support Christian endeavors?

Tithing was required in old covenant Israel and it was a part of the "welfare legislation" for the poor and the needy. Tithes and offerings were necessary for the upkeep of the Temple system and the national worship. Today, however, God's people are no longer a national political entity with a central place of worship but are an international spiritual community with no fixed center except Jesus Christ, our great High Priest. The approach to tithes as a specific percentage and offerings mandated within the old covenant has been replaced by the new covenant teaching to give voluntarily, cheerfully and generously.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

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The Evangelist King

2 Chronicles 30:1–31:21

OPENING
up to the Word

How important are Christian festivals and observances in your life?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How did Hezekiah plan to unite Israel and Judah (30:1-5)?
2. What reasons did Hezekiah use to encourage the people to return to God (vs. 6-10)? God's graciousness and compassion are the basis of all human opportunities to repent (Ro 2:4).
3. Were there any responses to Hezekiah's gracious offer? What ritual requirements of the Law did he suspend in order to include "unpurified" Israelites (vs. 11-21)? What authority did he have to do that?
4. What was the result of such sincere devotion? What "glory days" did this recall (vs. 22-27)?
5. The king's concerned attitude had an immediate effect (31:1-10). But for the long term, Hezekiah saw the need for an educated priesthood. How did he accomplish this (vs. 11-21)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. King Hezekiah led the people in worship. Have you ever felt "let down" because important officials have been missing at a time of important worship occasions?
2. How important was religious education and training in your family?

WINDOW
on the Word

*In 2 Chronicles 30:6-9 there are references to an **early captivity of Israelites by the Assyrians**. Isaiah also refers to this in Isaiah 9:1-2. The Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser III (744-727 B.C.) had invaded northern Palestine at the request of Ahaz of Judah and deported the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali in 734 B.C. Deportation was a favorite Assyrian method of dealing with rebellious or newly-conquered peoples. An inscription by Tiglath-pileser confirms this : "[I deported] 30,300 inhabitants from their cities...1,232 I settled in the province of the Ullabal country" (Finegan, Light From the Ancient Past, page 207).*

Hezekiah's Finest Hour

DAY 25

2 Chronicles 32:1-32

What has been your most difficult spiritual test?
Did you sense that God was helping you?

1. What aspects of leadership did Hezekiah display during the Assyrian threat (vs. 1-8)?
 2. How did the Assyrians attempt to undermine faith in Hezekiah's brave stand (vs. 9-15)?
 3. Did the Assyrian propaganda campaign go too far? How so (vs. 16-19)?
 4. Do you respect Hezekiah's response? Did it prove to be the right one (vs. 20-23)?
 5. Hezekiah possessed his share of human weaknesses. How did they manifest themselves (vs. 24-33)?
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1. "With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles" (v. 8). What timeless truth is illustrated by this brave statement of Hezekiah (see Ro 1:17)?
 2. Why is pride such a fatal weakness for rulers?
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*The mention of the **death of the Assyrian king Sennacherib** in this chapter is a good example of how Bible writers compress historical events in order to drive home a moral lesson. Sennacherib moved against Hezekiah in 701 B.C. but was assassinated later in 681 B.C. Sennacherib left extensive archaeological inscriptions describing his successful campaign against **Lachish**, a fortified city 24 miles southwest of Jerusalem. These wall reliefs tell us a lot about Assyrian methods of warfare.*

OPENING

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An All Time Low— and a Big Surprise

2 Chronicles 33:1-25

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever seen someone make a surprising turnaround on a major encumbrance or fault?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How did Manasseh place his “stamp” on his reign? Does it seem to you that he went out of his way to offend God (33:1-9)? Again, the state of Temple worship is the touchstone of how kings are evaluated.

2. What was God’s response (vs. 10-11)?

3. What did Manasseh do when in captivity (vs. 12-13)? Had such a deliverance been promised following real repentance (1Ki 8:46-51)?

4. What were some of the results of Manasseh’s repentance (vs. 14-17)?

5. Verses 18-20 mention some of the historical sources used by the Chronicler. Does the career of the next king indicate the political climate in Judah at that time (vs. 21-25)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Manasseh’s example has often been cited to show it is never too late to repent. How do you feel about what some describe as “death-bed repentances”?

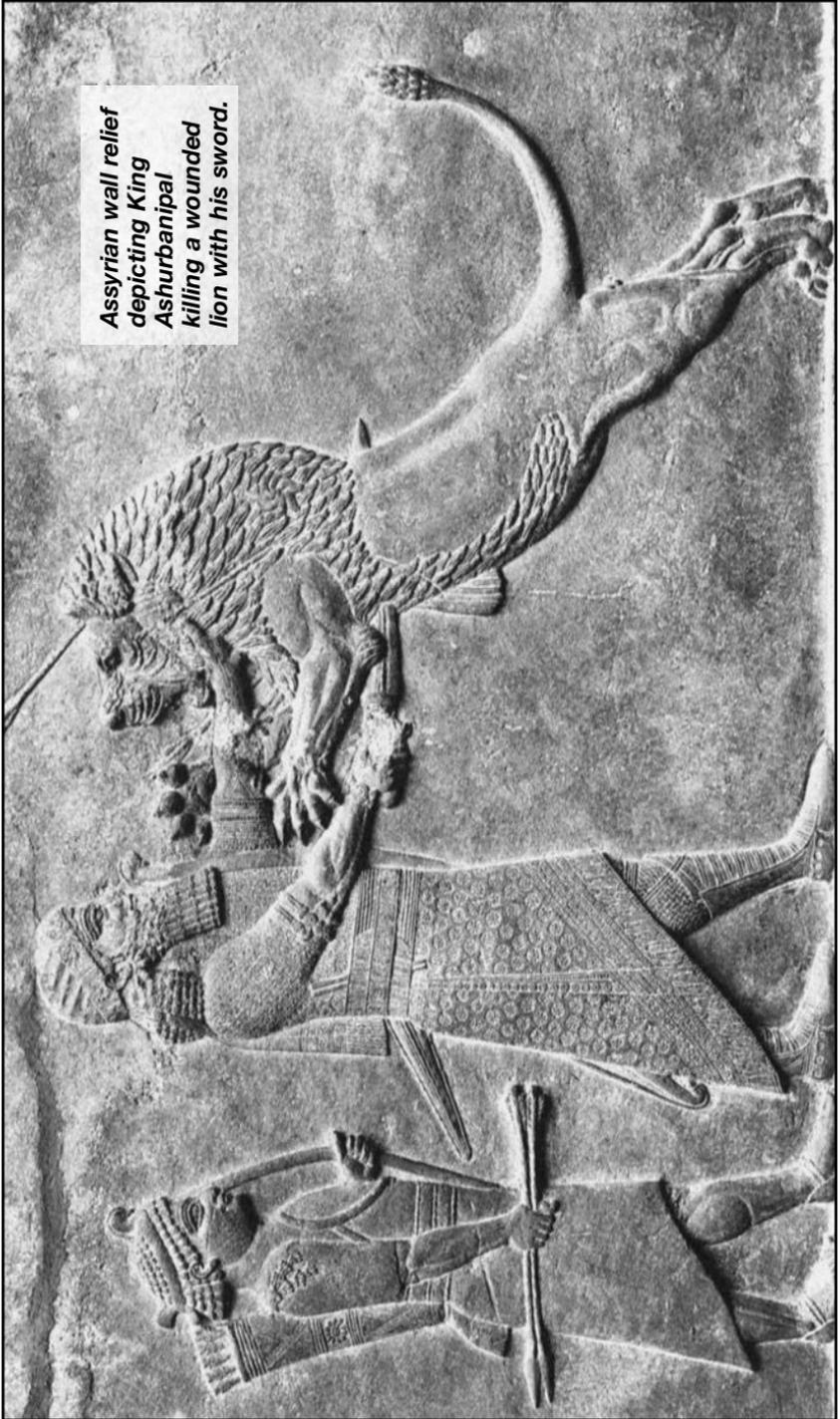
2. Deuteronomy 18:9-13 mentions that those who practice black magic are “detestable to the Lord.” That describes Manasseh before his repentance. Do you know people who dabble in the supernatural? How can you help them?

3. Manasseh’s example reminds us not to take God’s grace for granted. What other New Testament virtue does Manasseh’s repentance exemplify (Ro 15:4)?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The cruel practice of **putting rings in captives** (33:11) to lead them into slavery is depicted on monuments. There are references to **Manasseh** in records left behind by Assyrian kings Esarhaddon (681-669 B.C.) and Ashurbanipal (669-627 B.C.). During their reigns there were revolts against Assyrian power. Manasseh’s dates (698-641 B.C.) suggest that he may have been reappointed by the Assyrians as an ally to help support overextended Assyrian power.*

Assyrian wall relief
depicting King
Ashurbanipal
killing a wounded
lion with his sword.



The Last Revival

2 Chronicles 34:1-33

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever been involved in a restoration or rebuilding project?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How old was Josiah when he began to purge Judah of its idolatry? How far did he extend his reform (34:1-7)?
2. What was the project nearest his heart? Did he have help (vs. 8-13)?
3. What great and unexpected event happened next (vs. 14-21)?
4. What did the prophetess predict for Judah? What was the message to King Josiah (vs. 22-28)?
5. What was Josiah's encouraging response to this prophetic warning (vs. 29-33)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. The Chronicler often gives recognition to people—usually priests and Levites—who helped in the work of restoration. Why?
2. Non-profit volunteers can often be unappreciated and staff are often underpaid. Josiah made sure the workers were well paid. Is this a Christian principle (Lk 10:7, 1Ti 5:18)?

WINDOW
on the Word

*By the time of Josiah **many in the northern tribes had been taken into captivity**. A major deportation occurred under the Assyrian king Sargon II beginning in 722 B.C. His annals record that he carried off 27,300 captives. This number may seem small compared to earlier biblical figures given for numbers of Israelite soldiers, but this may indicate that the Assyrians carried off only the leaders and left the rest of the population. In any case, these deportations effectively ended the existence of the northern kingdom of Israel as an independent nation. This is why Josiah was able to carry his reforms as far north as Naphtali.*

Going to or Being the Church?

DAY 28

2 Chronicles 35:1-19

How do you understand the distinctions between the building-centered old covenant and the Christ-centered new covenant?

1. Josiah spared no effort in organizing a special assembly. Did he use some of the same reminders Hezekiah used to encourage the people (35:1-6)?
2. What sacred object did Josiah command special care to be taken with (v. 3)?
3. What was the reaction of the priests and leaders to Josiah's call for this great celebration (vs. 7-15)?
4. What events made Josiah's Passover a unique event in the history of the monarchy (vs. 16-19)?

1. How do you think the people felt about the seesaw approach of their government to religion? How would you feel?
2. What is the great potential snare of observing rituals (Mt 23:27-28)? What are the benefits?
3. According to the book of Hebrews, how do specific implements, elements, sacrifices, rituals and ceremonies have significance for Christ-followers?

*The reference to the **Ark of the Covenant** in this chapter indicates that Josiah may have been deliberately reenacting David and Solomon's efforts to secure a fixed place for it. Josiah may have been indicating to God his desire for Judah to start all over again. This was a sincere testament to Josiah's faith but, however well-intentioned his actions, external reforms can go only so far. Within a generation from Josiah, Solomon's magnificent Temple would be leveled and the Ark would disappear.*

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Land of Promise, Land of Blood

2 Chronicles 35:20–36:14

OPENING
up to the Word

There is a well-known saying, “History repeats itself.” Do you see this in the books of Chronicles?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What rash act ended Josiah’s promising career (35:20-24)? What do you think his reasoning was?
2. Which part of the Hebrew Scriptures were dedicated to the young king (vs. 25-27)? By whom?
3. What fate befell Josiah’s young son Jehoahaz (36:1-4)? Did the new king’s brother fare much better (vs. 5-8)?
4. Which foreign ruler was playing the role of kingmaker in Judah (vs. 9-10)?
5. Who was Judah’s last king? What notable accomplishment of Josiah did the leaders of Judah undo (v. 14)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Which two great powers was Jerusalem trapped between?
2. No one gets anywhere on someone else’s spiritual coattails. How does this apply to the story of Josiah’s successors?

WINDOW
on the Word

*By Josiah’s reign (639-609 B.C.), the Assyrians had been the superpower of the ancient world for well over a century. But cracks were appearing. **Babylon** was rising up as a rival. Egypt’s Pharaoh Necho rushed to aid the Assyrians at Carchemish. That was in 609 B.C., when Josiah intercepted him. In 605 B.C., Necho marched to meet the rising military power of Babylon again at Carchemish. The Egyptians were defeated at Carchemish but successfully repelled Nebuchadnezzar’s attack on Egypt in 601 B.C. These shifting political conditions may have encouraged Josiah’s successors to foolishly try their hand at balancing one power against another.*

Down— But Not Out!

DAY 30

2 Chronicles 36:15-23

Can you recall the end of an era in your life, when clouds and fog seemed to obscure the future?

1. What summary statement begins this “mini-sermon” at the end of Chronicles (vs. 15-16)?
2. How did Nebuchadnezzar punish Judah? Was God behind this (vs. 17-19)?
3. As Solomon had warned, the fate of a nation that knew God’s will and refused to heed it was grim indeed (2Ch 6:36-39). What bittersweet commentary does the Chronicler make on the land’s fate during Judah’s exile (36:20-21)?
4. Verses 22-23 are almost identical with the opening of the book of Ezra (Ezr 1:1-3). The key phrase, “let him go up,” is a common expression for going to worship in Jerusalem. Would this ending to Chronicles engender hope in the returned exiles?

On the political and national level it certainly looked like the end for God’s people, Judah. Has God ever brought you to such a point in your life? What helped sustain you through it all?

The 70 years of captivity in Babylon is normally reckoned from the final sack of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. to the dedication of the new Temple in 516 B.C. Some date the captivity from the Babylonian ascendancy over Jerusalem, 605 B.C., to the decree of Cyrus the Persian in 537 B.C. Either way, all was not lost for Judah. “The book ends, therefore, on a high note. On one level it points the reader forward to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which tell the story of the re-establishment of the returning community in the land. On another, it points forward to the endless possibilities for a people that walks with its God” (J.G. McConville, 1 and 2 Chronicles, page 270).

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