

May 31: 1 Chronicles 28-29 and John 11: 47-57

David gathers the people. He explains that he had it in his heart to build a temple for God, but God does not want him to do it. Instead, it will be Solomon. He charges Solomon to be single minded in his devotion to God. He exhorts Solomon to be strong. Building the temple would make a revision to Israel's history. For hundreds of years, sacrifices had been made anywhere in the country under the direction of different priests. Now, the Israelites will be shifting back to the way that God originally wanted the sacrifices conducted. This will be hard for the people to adjust to.

Contributions are taken for the temple. Not everyone can give the same amount. Some give a lot, some give a little. Everyone gives something, though. David then prays a prayer. In this prayer he gives more truths about following God. It is impossible to give God anything because God already owns everything. God also knows who is giving willingly out of devotion to Him and who is giving just to be seen by others. The key is having a heart that seeks to please God, not men. Solomon becomes king and we read a summary of David's life. With that, we close out 1 Chronicles.

In John, the Pharisees are beside themselves with the news of Lazarus's resuscitation. There were many that witnessed this miracle, so it will be hard for them to deny it. They assemble the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was comprised of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees and Sadducees did not get along most of the time. They unite to defeat their common enemy. Neither party likes Jesus and they want to get rid of Him.

The Passover is coming soon. Jesus, an obedient Jew, will make His pilgrimage to observe the Passover in Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin know this, so they give orders that if anyone sees Him or know where He is at, they should report Jesus' whereabouts so they can arrest Him.

June 1: 2 Chronicles 1-3 and John 12: 1-19

God approaches Solomon and asks what he would like as king. Solomon requests wisdom to lead the people. Since Solomon's request is for the benefit of the people, God gives him wisdom and also blesses him with wealth and a long life.

We are told that Solomon decided to build a temple for The LORD. David had already commissioned him to build the temple. This statement shows that Solomon has decided that the temple will be even more ornate than David had originally planned. Solomon sends a letter to Hiram. Hiram was a shrewd trader. Solomon informs him that if he cuts corners in putting the temple together, it will be an offense toward God, not Solomon. Solomon also emphasizes that the greatness of the temple should exceed all other temples since Yahweh is greater than any gods the other nations worshipped.

In the fourth year of his reign, construction on the temple begins. In the Holiest of Holies, two cherubim were built. The wings were 7 and a half feet long, for a total of 30 feet. This meant their wingspan went from one end of the Holiest of Holies to the other. The curtain in front of the most holy place is the highest expression of Phoenician art. It had a fabric of many colors

comprised of blue, purple, crimson, and more. Solomon's temple was based off of the tabernacle Moses constructed during the Exodus. However, the temple was much more ornate and more permanent than the tabernacle.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus is still in Bethany. While He is at dinner at Martha and Mary's house, Mary takes a pound of fragrant oil and anoints Jesus' feet with it. Judas complains, stating that the oil should have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor. Judas was merely trying to look like he cared in front of the people gathered. He had no desire to help the poor out, only himself.

Lazarus is becoming more of a problem to the Sanhedrin. Many witnessed him coming back from the dead. The evidence is hard to deny. The Sanhedrin decide the best way to solve the problem is to kill Lazarus. They do not deny the miracle, they just want to get rid of the proof of the miracle.

June 2: 2 Chronicles 4-6 and John 12: 20-50

The bronze furnishings that Solomon put in the temple complex were outside the building in the courtyard. The bronze altar was by far the largest item, keeping the same dimensions of the most holy place. It was 30 feet by 30 feet and 15 feet high. The priests had to climb a ramp in order to perform services.

Solomon has the consecrated things of his father brought into the treasuries of God's temple. There is debate, but most folks believe David would have been disappointed that Solomon relegated these items to the treasury of the temple. God shows His approval of the temple by filling the most holy place with His glory.

The temple is dedicated. Solomon gives the same familiar story. God chose David and David designated as the one that would build God's temple. Solomon had a platform constructed so the people could see him praying the prayer of dedication. In his prayer, Solomon recognized that God is not confined to the temple.

In the New Testament reading, a group of Greeks request an audience with Jesus. Jesus responds that the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Jesus explains that a seed must die in order to produce a great crop. If the seed remains in its state, it will remain in itself. Jesus is about to die to free many people so that they may live. If He does not go through with it, then He will remain alive, but there is no hope for anyone else.

Jesus has performed many signs and wonders, but there are still people that refuse to believe Him. This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah. Their eyes have been blinded and their hearts are hardened. They cannot see or believe so they will never convert. Still, there were some that believed, but they would not speak His name for fear of being driven out of the synagogue. These people loved the praise of men more than they loved Jesus.

My prayer is that we will love Jesus above all else.

June 3: 2 Chronicles 7-9 and John 13:1-17

Solomon finishes praying. The LORD comes down in fire and consumes the burnt offering. Solomon offered 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep. God appears to Solomon and tells him that if He closes the sky or commands the grasshoppers to eat the land, or if pestilence is sent to His people, if they will humble themselves, seek His face, and turn from their evil ways, then He will heal the land. Essentially, what He is communicating is that if they remain in Him then He will continue to bless the land. If they stray from Him, then those blessings will be withdrawn. From our perspective this might seem unfair, but in reality, it is along the lines of discipline parents give their children. Albeit, this discipline is corporate to the entire nation, not just the ones straying from Him. All it takes to get back on the right path is for them to turn from their evil and seek Him.

Unfortunately, we will see that neither the Israelites nor their king will stay completely obedient to God. Solomon dies after reigning for 40 years. He is the last king of the unified kingdom.

In the New Testament reading Jesus and His disciples meet for what will be known as the Last Supper. While they are at the table, Jesus gets up, ties a towel around Himself, and begins washing the feet of the disciples. Peter objects, saying that He cannot wash His feet. Peter must be washed, though, if he is going to have any part of Jesus. When Peter hears this he asks that his entire body be washed. Jesus explains that if a man has bathed and then walks, it is just the feet that are dirty. This is how sin works in the life of a believer. As believers, we have been washed. We are set apart for God. However, we will still get dirty from sin by walking in the sinful world. When that happens, we pray that God clean us from that particular sin.

Jesus teaches them that just as He has loved them by washing their feet, they must do the same for each other. He is the master, they are the servants. A servant is not above the master. Since Jesus, the master, served His people, we can rest assured that we are called to service as His followers. Faith is not a spectator sport. God expects us to get out there and get our hands dirty doing His work and loving His creation.

June 4: 2 Chronicles 10-12 and John 13: 18-38

The kingdom is split. I know we already went through this in Kings, but it is important for us to remember what happened. Since the names sound similar, we can do a quick review of these two kings.

Rehoboam was the first king of Judah. He caused the kingdom to split in two. Judah to the south and Israel to the north. Judah had a particularly big advantage because Jerusalem and the temple complex was within its territory. Rehoboam divided the people by promising to make their lives even harder than Solomon had.

Jeroboam was the first king of Israel when it became the northern kingdom. He had the advantage of having more tribes in Israel than Judah had. However, he instituted official idol worship in Israel. From what we can tell, this departure from worshipping God was extreme. He

appointed his own priests for the high places, the goat demons, and the golden calves that he had made.

Neither king is good. The both do evil in God's sight. When Rehoboam had established his power, he abandons The LORD. As a result, God sends judgment to him through Shishak, the king of Egypt. Rehoboam's reign lasts for 17 years.

In John, the Last Supper continues. Jesus predicts Judas's betrayal. What amazes me is that the other disciples question each other because they don't know who He is talking about. For all they know, it could have been any one of them. After Judas is identified, he leaves the feast. The other disciples think nothing of it since he has the money bag. They assumed he was going out to buy more for the festival.

When Judas is gone, Jesus commands them to love one another just as He has loved them. That is how people will know that they are His followers. The world will know we are Christians by our love.

June 5: 2 Chronicles 13-16 and John 14

Abijah becomes king of Judah. He goes to war with Jeroboam. Abijah asserts that the kingdom split because of evil and wicked men that did not support Rehoboam. There might be some level of truth to that. However, Rehoboam lost support of the people when he decided to make their labor more intense than Solomon did. Abijah proclaims that Yahweh is Judah's God. Abijah has done what is right in God's sight. When Jeroboam set up an ambush against Judah, God routes him, and all of the Israelites flee.

Asa becomes king of Judah. He also does what is right in God's sight. He shatters the sacred places, cuts down the Asherah poles, demands that the people seek God, and follow His commands. Asa is so dedicated to The LORD that he even removes his grandmother Maacah because she made an obscene image of Asherah. Despite his faithfulness to God, Asa makes a treaty with Aram. Hanani the seer rebukes Asa for this act. Rather than repent and see the error of his ways, Asa has Hanani imprisoned. When we read Kings, this sin of Asa was glossed over. However, this sin was bad enough that it caused Asa to develop a severe disease in his feet that became worse and worse. This disease caused him to spend the last bit of his reign locked away from anyone else.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus continues giving instructions to the disciples. He tells them not to fear. He is about to go away to prepare a place for them. Thomas indicates that they do not know where He is going and asks how they can know the way. Jesus explains that He is the way the truth and the life. No one will come to the Father except through Him.

Since they have seen Jesus, they have also seen the Father. Jesus indicates that there is a hierarchy within the Trinity. The Father is greater than the Son.

Jesus also promises them the Holy Spirit. This is an amazing gift because the Spirit rests upon the believers. Up until Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came to people, it was for a specific task.

Through Christ's sacrifice on the cross, the Holy Spirit is available to anyone who calls on Jesus as Lord and Savior.

June 6: 2 Chronicles 17-19 and John 15

Jehoshaphat becomes king of Judah. He walks in the way of David. He does not seek the Baals or follow any of the ways of Israel. As a result, The LORD is with him. He sets about educating the people about God's Law. It was important for the people to know what was in the Law, since it had been neglected for so long.

Things are going great for Jehoshaphat which makes his next move all the more puzzling. He decides to set up an alliance with Ahab. Ahab was a wicked king of Israel. In fact, he was so wicked that he made the official religion of Israel Baal worship. Ahab has surrounded himself with people that will tell him what he wants to hear. He has placed himself in an echo chamber. There is only one prophet that actually tells him the truth, Micaiah. Ahab hates him because he never prophesies anything good about the kingdom. When Micaiah is consulted about Israel's fate in an upcoming battle, he delivers the message of their impending defeat.

As they go into battle, Ahab hatches a plan. He will disguise himself as just an ordinary soldier. Meanwhile, Jehoshaphat will go into battle with all of his royal attire. No doubt, this was to draw attention to Jehoshaphat and taking their eyes off of Ahab. The plan does not work, though. Instead, a man draws his bow without taking any special aim. The arrow pierced Ahab through the joint in his armor.

After the battle, Jehoshaphat returns home where he is rebuked by Jehu. The rebuke comes because Jehoshaphat has given his men and his time to helping a group of people that hate The LORD. Jehoshaphat once again goes and draws the people back to Yahweh.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus teaches what it means to be in Him. He is the true vine. His Father is the vineyard keeper. Every branch that does not produce fruit will be removed. Every branch that is producing fruit is pruned by Him so that they will bear even more fruit. The only way for a believer to produce fruit is by remaining attached to the true vine. One way we can know how we are doing in our walk with The LORD is to see what kind of fruit we are producing. Are we producing the things of this world or are we producing the fruits of the Spirit?

Jesus also warns them of the persecution that is coming their way. The world hated Him, so they will be hated. They are not of the world, so the world will hate them. As believers, we are in the world, but we are not of it. Our true home is with Him.

June 7: 2 Chronicles 20-22 and John 16: 1-15

The Moabites, Ammonites, and some of the Meunites decide to take up arms against Jehoshaphat. He is terrified. Rather than try to solve the problem on his own, he calls the people to fast and he prays to The LORD. Jehoshaphat concedes that they are powerless against these enemies. The only One that can save them is God. God responds by saying that the battle

belongs to Him. The LORD destroys their enemies and the people walk away with an abundance of plunder from their fallen foes.

Jehoshaphat dies and his son Jehoram becomes king. Rather than act like his father, Jehoram decides to act like the kings of Israel. To protect his reign, he slaughters the rest of his brothers. His reign lasted eight years. Since he has been so evil, God sends a word of judgment through the prophet Elijah. Jehoram will get a disease of the intestines that will cause them to come out day after day. He dies just as The LORD said he would. The people do not have a fire in his honor. The text informs us that Jehoram died to “no one’s regret”. He was such a disliked king that he was not even buried in the tombs of the kings.

Ahaziah becomes king in his place. This is where things can get slightly confusing since there is a duplication of names in the northern kingdom (Israel) and the southern kingdom (Judah). In the northern kingdom, Ahab had two sons, Ahaziah and Jehoram. When Ahab died, Ahaziah became king. Ahaziah died and Jehoram became king. In the southern kingdom Jehoshaphat was succeeded by his son Jehoram. When Jehoram died, he is succeeded by his son Ahaziah (Jehoshaphat’s grandson). I hope that this helps with keeping the names straight of the various kings in both kingdoms!

Ahaziah reigned in Judah for one year. When he is killed, his mother usurps the throne. She sets about killing all of the royal heirs to the house of Judah. However, she misses on. Joash was rescued. While Athaliah, Ahaziah’s mother, was reigning over the land, Joash was hidden in God’s temple.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus continues explaining that persecution is headed their way. It will get so bad for them that a time is coming when someone thinks they are doing a good thing for God when they kill a believer. Jesus is telling them this so that they will remember He told them these things when the terrible times are upon them. Jesus also explains that He has to go so that they can receive the Counselor. The Counselor will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment.