

April (C2C)
(Comments based on ESV text)

April 1 — **Shaky Start** — 2 Samuel 1-3. David showed his strong character after the deaths of Saul and Jonathan by publicly weeping, fasting, and praising Saul in a poem (1:19ff). Saul's army General Abner arranged to have Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, anointed as king but later deserted him after an argument. Abner was then murdered in revenge by David's general, Joab the son of Zeruiah, for killing his brother. Having no part in that, David again publicly mourned the death of the leader Abner (3:35). I learned something new today: that Zeruiah was a female, one of David's sisters (1 Chron. 2:16)—so Joab was David's nephew. Going against God's command that a king of Israel "*shall not acquire many wives for himself*" (Deut. 17:17), David accumulated seven wives by the time he had been king for seven years, including reclaiming his wife Michal who had been given to pitiful Paltiel who wept as she was taken away (3:15-16). We need to pray for our national government leaders right now who may be in a similar transition.

April 2 — **Blemished but Blessed** — 2 Samuel 4-7. Although "*the LORD ... was with him*" (5:10), David disobeyed by taking even more wives and concubines (5:13). Perhaps in ignorance, David disobeyed again by moving the ark of the covenant in a cart instead of on the shoulders of the Levites (6:3). He was then angry (6:8) and afraid of God (6:9) for striking the cart attendant, Uzzah. Michal thought David was indecent in his dancing before the ark being brought into Jerusalem (6:16) but David's prayer showed his innocent heart toward God as he humbled himself before Yahweh (7:18) and acknowledged that it was God who elevated him to the position of a king (:21). He expressed God's greatness (:22) and his thanks that God had redeemed a people for Himself (:24). May our hearts be pointed to God in genuine humility and thanks in worship throughout each day!

April 3 — **Slippery Slope** — 2 Samuel 8-11. The story of David and Bathsheba is very familiar, even for many unbelievers. To those who love God and try to serve Him faithfully, it reads like a tragic story. It is a picture of how one sin leads to another for the enemy's purpose of destroying lives spiritually, emotionally, and physically. As Job did, David should have vowed, "*I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?*" (Job 31:1). The first slip of lustful thoughts started the slide downhill and led David to a sinful sexual act. The consequences of his sexual wrongdoing led him to try to cover up his sin by sending home from battle Bathsheba's much more disciplined husband, Uriah. With that plan failing, David slipped even further by setting up Uriah to be killed in battle. Finally, he sinned again by adding another wife to his growing collection, in disobedience to God's command against it (Deut. 17:17.) Tomorrow we will read of Nathan's rebuke and David's repentance but why did that tragic chapter in David's life have to go that far? It could have been arrested when he first saw Bathsheba if he had turned away, knowing that it displeased God. We will be tempted today in some way, perhaps in lust, but maybe in something like anger, greed, or lying. Will you have the courage to say, "No!" at the beginning, rather than let it kick you into a downhill slide toward something worse?

April 4 — **Consequences** — 2 Samuel 12-13. Two statements stood out to me in chapter 12: The loving rebuke, “*You are the man!*” (12:7), and the humble recognition, “*I have sinned*” (12:13). Sin always has consequences, even forgiven sin. God told David he was forgiven (12:13) but that he still had to pay the penalty—the death of Bathsheba’s child (12:14). Additional punishment for his sin included perpetual warfare for David (12:10), family rebellion, and having his wives publicly disgraced (12:11). There were also negative consequences of Amnon’s unrepentant sin with his sister Tamar. His so-called love immediately turned to bitter hatred (13:15) as guilt and shame swept over him. Then he was murdered by his brother Absalom in revenge (13:29). Sin not only starts us down a slippery slope but there are barbs at the bottom. There are also two positive things that stood out to me in these chapters. One was David’s response after the convicting confrontation with the prophet Nathan. David “*went into the house of the LORD and worshiped*” (12:20). He was repentant from the heart. The second striking thing was the grace and love that God showed not only in giving David another son through Bathsheba but that God loved him and chose him to be the successor to David (12:24). Even out of the penalty of sin God was willing to bring blessing.

April 5 — **Tolerating Politicians** — 2 Samuel 14-16. Absalom had all the qualities of a politician. He was handsome (14:25), had good hair (14:26), criticized his opponent (15:4), kissed babies (okay, they were adults! — 15:5), and knew how to rally the masses (15:12). His rebellion was one of the consequences of David’s sin with Bathsheba predicted by the prophet Nathan: “*I will raise up evil against you out of your own house*” (12:11). Also, Absalom’s sexual acts with David’s concubines (16:22) were consequences of David’s sin predicted by Nathan (12:11). But David took these punishing consequences with humility and a desire to please God. He tolerated the verbal abuse and rock-throwing by Shimei without retaliation, thinking that it was part of God’s discipline (16:11). Jesus said, “*Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent*” (Rev. 3:19). We can avoid discipline by turning away from sin instead of having to endure subsequent pain.

April 6 — **Tragic Ending** — 2 Samuel 17-18. God’s punishment for David’s sin with Bathsheba ended with the death of Absalom, who represented the “*evil*” from David’s “*own house*” (12:11). In spite of Absalom’s plan to kill and replace his father, David’s heart remained soft toward him as he commanded his generals to “*deal gently*” with Absalom (18:5) and his heart broke when he learned of his death (18:33). “*O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!*” A tragic ending to a sinful slide that started with a lingering look into a neighbor’s yard. Help us to see, O God, the tragic folly of following after sin!

April 7 — **Good and Bad** — 2 Samuel 19-21. Our passage for today begins with forgiveness and ends with punishment. David showed forgiveness to Joab by not punishing him for killing his son Absalom (19:5ff). He was forgiving to Shimei for his rock-throwing rampage against David (19:23). He was kind to lame Mephibosheth and to lying Ziba by dividing land between them. Then a rebellion led by Sheba came to a

punishing end with his beheading (21:22) through the intervention of a wise woman (21:16). Finally, in 21:1ff, God showed David that a famine was the result of Saul's breaking the long-established treaty by Joshua with the Gibeonites (Josh. 9:15). As an atoning solution, seven descendants of Saul were given to them to be hanged (21:6). Sometimes bad things happen to us that we just have to deal with. Our responsibility is to always do good whether things are going well for us or not.

April 8 — **Contrast** — 2 Samuel 22-24. In reading David's song in chapter 22, there is no doubt as to why God was pleased with him. He genuinely honored God and gave Him credit for the victories that came to David and to Israel. Many such poems of praise were also written by David and collected in our book of Psalms. In fact, a slightly modified version of this song of David became Ps. 18. Although David was a mighty man of valor and a strong leader; he was also a tender man who loved, played the lyre, and wrote poetry. He was not perfect, however, and his life history was marred by sinful acts. His sin of ordering a census of the people appears excusable since God "*incited David against*" the people (24:1) but the parallel passage in 1 Chron. 21:1 says that "*Satan ... incited David*," so God used the devil to get David to count the people, which He allowed on only two occasions. The books of 1 & 2 Samuel end with a reminder of both how great God is and how prone to sin we are.

April 9 — **Kings** — 1 Kings 1-2. After 1 & 2 Samuel told the stories of the first two kings of Israel, Saul and David, the books of 1 & 2 Kings summarize the 400-year story of the remaining kings of God's chosen people. The first 11 chapters of 1 Kings tell the story of the rise and reign of Solomon, David's chosen successor. He begins well but drifts away from God toward the end of his life, beginning a long deterioration of the kingdom. Solomon's son Rehoboam unwisely precipitated the split of the nation into two kingdoms, Judah (and Benjamin) in the south and the other 10 tribes (called Israel) to the north and east. Fairly brief histories of each king in the north and south are given in roughly chronological order, always being compared to God's ruling standards in Deuteronomy. Many of Judah's kings did not follow the ways of the Lord but all of the kings of Israel were evil. Because of their wickedness, Israel fell first (2 Kings 17), being conquered by Assyria from the north around 721 B.C. For the same reason, Judah was seized and deported to Babylon in the east about 135 years later (2 Kings 25). The interesting stories of the prophets Elijah (1 Kings 17-22) and Elisha (2 Kings 2-10) describe their lives and warnings to Israel. The author of 1 & 2 Kings is not mentioned but Jewish tradition says that Jeremiah collected and published these historical books near the end of Judah's kingdom.

April 10 — **Wise and Rich** — 1 Kings 3-5. Who wouldn't want to be wise and rich?! Solomon was, and it is important to note how he got there. When God offered to give him one wish, Solomon chose wisdom to govern his people. God was pleased with Solomon's choice and said, "*because ... you have not asked for yourself*" (3:11), he was granted not only the wisdom he requested but also the riches he had not asked for. Although Jesus promised us that, "*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you*" (Jn. 15:7), it is good to remember that He

seems to place a higher priority on unselfish prayers. We naturally think to ask for ourselves but it takes wisdom to ask for others.

April 11 — **Architecture** — 1 Kings 6-7. If any architects read our passage for today, they were probably very interested and stimulated. For the rest of us, however, we might review Stephen Altrogge's reasons for continuing to read when it doesn't seem to move us spiritually. We should keep reading because 1) It reminds us of our dependence on God, 2) We are anticipating the promised rewards for those who seek Him, 3) We are planting trees that will bear fruit later, 4) God is speaking to us whether we realize it or not. Today we will add the fifth and final reason: **God's Word protects us**. Jesus used God's Word against Satan when He was attacked spiritually. It was protective. Our exposure to it also protects us against temptations, false teachings, worldly thinking, lack of purpose, harboring sin, and many other threats. When it seems boring, just keep reading! It is good for us and it is changing us.

April 12 — **Dedication** — 1 Kings 8-9. Similar to what happened at the completion of the wilderness tabernacle (Ex. 40:34), the glory of the Lord filled the new temple in the form of a dark cloud (8:11). Solomon said that God dwells *"in thick darkness"* (8:12), yet *"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all"* (1Jn. 1:5) and in heaven, *"the Lord God will be their light"* (Rev. 22:5). It seems that although darkness can represent the domain of Satan (Acts 26:18), God used it in the OT to shield people from His glory. Then in the NT, God lets *"the light of the gospel ... shine out of darkness ... to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus"* (2 Cor. 4:4-6). What a privilege it is to live on this side of the cross! Nothing dramatic happened at the end of Solomon's long, powerful prayer of dedication for the temple; instead, God quietly appeared to him privately after he had built his own house 13 years later (9:1), telling him that He had consecrated the temple *"by putting my name there forever"* (9:3). Sometimes God demonstrates His presence and work in dramatic ways, and sometimes in quiet, personal ways.

April 13 — **Disobedience** — 1 Kings 10-12. In spite of the advantage of Solomon's great wisdom, he disobeyed every command God gave in Deut. 17:16-17 regarding Israel's future kings. He accumulated many horses from Egypt (1 Kings 10:28), many wives (11:3), and excessive silver and gold (10:14). Then, although Jeroboam was told that God was pulling part of the kingdom away from Solomon because of his drift away from obedience to God (11:33), Jeroboam doubly repeated the sin of Aaron by making two golden calves to worship (12:28). Jeroboam was promised *"a sure house"* if he obeyed God (11:38) but he refused to obey. Disobedience has long-lasting consequences. Why go there?! By the way, although it is tempting to think that Rehoboam and Jeroboam were brothers or even twins, they were not related.

April 14 — **Punishment** — 1 Kings 13-14. The unnamed man of God prophesied to Jeroboam 190 years in advance, that King Josiah would rule in David's kingdom (13:3). God performed two miracles by paralyzing Jeroboam's arm when he tried to destroy the man of God, and by divinely destroying Jeroboam's altar (:4). Revealing his spiritual condition, when Jeroboam asked the man of God to pray for him, he referred to God as

“the LORD your God” (:6). One would think that a divine demonstration of that magnitude would turn Jeroboam to God but *“Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way”* (:33). As an additional punishment for sin, God took the life of Jeroboam’s son, Abijah. There are two similar names here: Abijah [“Yahweh is father”] (14:1) and Ahijah [“Yahweh is brother”] (14:2). The almost-blind prophet Ahijah (:4) called out the deception of Jeroboam’s wife before she even got to his door and gave her the *“unbearable news”* (:6) that her son would die when she re-entered the city (:12). The NT statement that *“the wages of sin is death”* (Rom. 6:23) is demonstrated repeatedly in these OT stories.

April 15 — **My Mother’s Son** — 1 Kings 15-17. The mother of Judah’s King Abijam was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom (15:2). She was also the mother of King Asa, who followed him three years later and reigned for 41 years (:10). So, they were brothers, the first one being sinful (:3) but the second *“did what was right in the eyes of the LORD,”* even destroying his own mother’s Asherah image (:13). Two very different sons from the same mother. Abijam might have blamed his mother’s poor influence but King Asa overcame his mother’s impact. We are responsible for our own direction in life regardless of the influences of our past. Good and bad children develop from both good and bad parents. Nevertheless, we ought to do all we can to guide our children and grandchildren in the right path of knowing and serving God alone.

April 16 — **He is risen, indeed!** — 1 Kings 18-19. I thought it was unfortunate that we didn’t read yesterday’s story today. Elijah’s bringing back to life the son of the widow would have fit so well with this year’s [written in 2017] Easter’s celebration of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead! But there is also a connection in today’s reading. The demonstration on Mt. Carmel with Ahab and the prophets of Baal gave dramatic evidence of the reality and power of God when He burned up the sacrifice along with the altar stones. That is also what happened on Resurrection Day. The resurrection of Jesus was a dramatic demonstration that Jesus was truly God and that the death He had died was truly effective in providing forgiveness for the world of people who would turn to Him. Even Elijah’s name (“the LORD, he is God”) emphasizes the focus of who God is. The meaning of Elisha’s name (“God saves”) climaxes the importance of Passion Week, showing what God has done.

April 17 — **Wicked and Weak but Humble** — 1 Kings 20-21. Israel’s King Ahab was a pretty pitiful man. He was both wicked and weak. He was probably the most wicked king in Israel’s history (21:25-26) and in his weakness, was led into evil by his wife Jezebel (21:7). In spite of that, he provided one of my favorite quotes in the Bible when he replied to Ben-hadad’s threat: *“Let not him who girds on his armor boast like him who takes it off!”* (20:11 NASB). In other words, save your bragging for what you have *done*, not for what you *plan* to do. Our dreams often exceed our deeds. Ahab did later humble himself before God, however (21:29), which brought a postponement of a predicted punishment. Actually, our own sinful nature reminds us that we are also pretty wicked and weak people, but God is always pleased when we humble ourselves before Him, confessing what we have done and expressing gratitude for what He has done for us.

April 18 — **Pleasing People** — 1 Kings 22. The prophet Micaiah was not a people-pleaser, but a God-pleaser (22:14), refusing to prophesy with the majority, who happened to be false prophets. The fact that there were 400 of these “prophets” makes it tempting to think they were the same 400 prophets of Asherah (18:19) who did not participate in the showdown on Mt. Carmel with Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal. The falseness of these “prophets” of Ahab was confirmed when their prophecy of victory did not come true. There are some preachers today who seem to prefer to tell people what they want to hear rather than what God has said. That is one reason why it is so good that you are reading through the Bible this year. You are reading what is true, which will make it easier to recognize things you hear from people, like some college professors or TV preachers, who may teach things that are contradictory.

April 19 — **Baldy** — 2 Kings 1-3. There are some interesting tidbits in these chapters. First, Baal-zebub (1:4) means “lord of the flies,” the meaningful title of the book by William Golding and two subsequent films. Secondly, at one point in time, the king of Judah and the king of Israel shared the name, Jehoram (1:17). Thirdly, we have repeatedly seen references to “*the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel*” (1:18) regarding the kings of Judah and Israel, but this is not the same as our 1 & 2 Chronicles because those OT books cover only the reigns of Judah’s kings, not Israel’s. Fourthly, and this is important to me, “Don’t mess with a bald man!” (2:23). Finally, to fill a streambed with water without rain “*is a light thing in the sight of the LORD*” (3:18). The One who can part, “heal,” and produce water, call fire down from heaven, and send she-bears out of the woods after snotty boys is an all-powerful God. Any feat is a “*light thing*” to Him.

April 20 — **Doors of Opportunity** — 2 Kings 4-5. There were two doors mentioned in this passage: the door Elisha told the widow to shut while the miracle of multiplying the oil was performed (4:4), and the door Elisha shut while he prayed to bring the boy back to life (4:35). Both kept a miracle private. There was also the figurative door of opportunity offered by Naaman for his healing: silver and gold, worth over \$210,000 and \$3 million, respectively by today’s value (5:5). Elisha refused to deflect any credit away from God by taking a gift (5:16) but Gehazi saw it as a door of opportunity and ran to open it (5:20). In the last of the seven miracles in these two chapters, Gehazi received his “reward” of perpetual family leprosy. What doors will be presented to you today? Will you see them as opportunities to give credit to God or to satisfy your personal desires?

April 21 — **Lepers** — 2 Kings 6-8. Going from yesterday’s stories of the leprosy of Naaman, the Syrian commander, and Gehazi, Elisha’s servant; we now see how four lepers (7:3) were used to mark the end of the starving condition of the Samaritans caused by the siege of their city. Going to “surrender” themselves to the Syrian army, the lepers found the camp abandoned with plenty of food available. What was their first response? Selfishness. They started eating and hiding valuables for themselves (7:8). How ironic—lepers with a death sentence storing for the future! Thankfully, they woke up to their selfish perspective and decided to bring the good news to the starving

city (7:9). Too often we also are focused on ourselves at the expense of the needs of others and should “wake up” and tell them the Good News.

April 22 — **Zeal for the Lord** — 2 Kings 9-10. Although the leaders of Israel and many of the people had become wicked and served other gods, at God’s direction, Elisha had Jehu anointed as “*king over the people of the LORD*” (9:6). God still claimed them as His chosen people. Jehu declared that he had “*zeal for the LORD*” (10:16), which was shown in his campaign to kill all worshipers of Baal in his realm (10:25). He was probably the closest thing the northern kingdom had to a “good” king but he was soundly criticized for not removing the idolatry of the two golden calves that Jeroboam and set up in Bethel and Dan (10:29). He had a zeal for the Lord but it was empty. May that not be said about any of us! Our loyalty and devotion to God must be wholehearted and must extend to every aspect of our lives.

April 23 — **Leadership** — 2 Kings 11-13. I was impressed with the leadership of Jehoiada the priest (11:4) in today’s reading. He was so effective in protecting the child Joash (11:2; a short form of Jehoash [11:21]) for 7 years that even the temple guards didn’t know he was hidden in the temple. He arranged for the crowning of Joash (11:12) and the death of the murderous queen Athaliah (11:15). He made a covenant with the Lord that aligned the people to serve Him, leading to the destruction of the leadership of Baal worshipers (:18). His instruction of young Joash was the basis for his godly reign (12:2) of 40 years. That reminds me of Prov. 22:6, “*Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.*”

April 24 — **Instability** — 2 Kings 14-15. How would you like to have been a king in the years described in these two chapters? Me neither! Although there were godly kings in Judah, there were turbulent times with several of the kings being assassinated by conspirators. Judah’s Amaziah was a godly king who followed the commandments of Yahweh (14:6) but he proved to be unwise, at least in his challenge to fight Israel (14:8). There was no indication that he sought God before doing this. King Jehoash (= Joash) of Israel seemed to be the wiser of the two when he cautioned Amaziah about his challenge. Perhaps another evidence of his unwise leadership was the conspiracy against him that led to his death (14:19). We have very little control today over who leads our nation and how they lead it. But even in times of national instability, God is our ultimate solid and faithful leader.

April 25 — **Israel’s Fall** — 2 Kings 16-17. God’s patience finally ran out with the northern 10 tribes, as Assyria conquered them, deporting many to faraway places and importing foreign people to take their place. Thus, Samaria and the cities of the north became a melting pot of nationalities and religions. The result was the Samaritans of Jesus’ day who were despised by the Jews. From now on in our readings, we will follow the history of the southern kingdom of Judah until they are also conquered and exiled because of their continued sin. God’s punishment of these two nations reminds me of Paul’s warning to us today: “*Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap*” (Gal. 6:7).

April 26 — **Wipeout** — 2 Kings 18-19. Can you imagine the horror of looking over the wall of Jerusalem to see 185,000 enemy soldiers ready to destroy your city and kill you?! It was terrifying to Hezekiah, too, but his response was to turn to God by going to the temple, to Isaiah the prophet (19:1-2), and to God through prayer (19:15). He did that because his focus was on God. He was Judah's best king since David (18:3), even removing the high places and destroying Moses' 700-year-old bronze serpent (18:4). When they looked over the wall the next morning, they saw 185,000 soldiers slain by God's angel (19:35) in answer to a prayer for help. What threatening force is on the other side of your wall today? Turn to God like Hezekiah did to ask for help and then anticipate looking over that wall again tomorrow morning for His answer!

April 27 — **Not All Good** — 2 Kings 20-22. Although Hezekiah was the godliest king since David, we find in these chapters that there were some problems with his heart. His prayer for healing seems to be based on his view of his own righteousness (20:3). He showed an apparent lack of faith by asking for a sign rather than being willing to wait for three days to see the answer (20:8). He revealed apparent pride in showing off his wealth to the Babylonians (20:13). He showed some self-centeredness in being satisfied that the predicted misfortune would happen to his descendants but not to him (20:19). We are not all good either. For instance, although we may be showing godly discipline in reading through the Bible this year, we need to check our hearts. Are we doing it in pride, wanting others to see our accomplishment? Let's read and keep up simply to learn more about God and let Him use it to speak to our hearts about how to walk obediently in His light.

April 28 — **Best of the Best** — 2 Kings 23-25. David was such a great king that all subsequent kings were compared to him. Hezekiah came in second place with his many reforms. Near the end of Judah's existence as a kingdom, however, a king even better than David arose—King Josiah. His introduction in 22:2 placed him as David's equal (*"he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the ways of David his father"*). But restoring observance of the Passover (23:21) in obedience to the Law surpassed even what David had done (*"Before him there was no king like him who turned to the LORD with all his heart ... nor did any like him arise after him"* — 23:25). At your memorial service, how many people would be able to honestly say that they knew no one who turned to the Lord with all their heart as you did?

April 29 — **The Chronicles** — 1 Chron. 1-3. Today we begin reading 1 & 2 Chronicles, books that retrace much of what we have already read, but adding other significant information. Jewish tradition says they were written by Ezra the scribe who returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. These books focus primarily on the kingdom of David and his descendants who followed as kings in Judah for about 430 years until their exile. The history of the spiritually wayward northern tribes of Israel that broke away during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam is basically ignored. The story of these two books is mostly a religious history and a challenge to follow God.

April 30 — **Prayer of Jabez** — 1 Chron. 4-6. It was interesting to me that the subject of pain appeared twice regarding Jabez. First, his name was chosen because of the

pain experienced by his mother in childbirth (4:9). Jabez sounds like a Hebrew word meaning “he causes pain.” Secondly, in his recorded prayer, he asked to be spared from pain (4:10). This prayer was made famous in the year 2000 when Bruce Wilkinson wrote the short book “The Prayer of Jabez,” encouraging Christians to pray this prayer daily. The book sold 8 million copies in two years. The prayer seems a bit self-centered to me: *“Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!”* It was not a bad prayer, however, because God answered it.