

# RICHES *of* GOD'S WORD

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT  
DISCOVERING THE LOVE OF GOD

## Book 2 POSSESSING THE LAND

*Vikki Tynan*

***Colossians 2:2-3*** *I pray that your* “hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

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Cover Design by Reece Capps

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ISBN: 978-1541019997

Printed in the United States of America



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*This Is Your*  
Season Ministries

This Is Your Season Discipleship Studies are designed to encourage all believers to dig deeper into the Word of God, to know the Love of God, and to be filled completely with His Presence.

# DEDICATION

It is my desire to share my love for God and His Word with the next generation and with all believers, who have either stumbled over the words of the Bible or ignored the Bible all together. I pray that this study will make the path smoother for your journey to know God and His love for you in a richer way.

This book is dedicated to the third graduating class of the New Generation International Worship Institute. Brittany, Cody, Jana, Johana, Reece, and Victor were the first ones to completely go through this study. For two years they faithfully attended class, and learned how to study and share the Word of God with others. They all have a passion for God and His Word. I am very proud of them, and it was my privilege to open up the Old Testament with them in this way.

I pray they take what they learned and share it with others who do not understand the importance of the Old Testament. It is full of great truths and wonderful promises for our lives, if we follow God's way. The only way to know His way is to study all about God in the totality of His Word.

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**Psalm 145:3-7** *“Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts. On the glorious splendor of Your majesty and on Your wonderful works, I will meditate. Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts, and I will tell of Your greatness. They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness and will shout joyfully of Your righteousness.”*

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# RICHES *of* GOD'S WORD

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT

DISCOVERING THE LOVE OF GOD

## Book 2

### POSSESSING THE LAND

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# RICHES *of* GOD'S WORD

## Book 2

### POSSESSING THE LAND

#### Introduction

Welcome to the continuation of our historical journey through the Old Testament. In Book 2, we will study the history of God and His people in the 1500 years from their entering the Promised Land until the birth of Jesus Christ. As God's chosen people, the Hebrews, took possession of the Promised Land, they had many challenges; some ended in victory and others in defeat. God faithfully led His people into greatness when they obeyed Him, and sadly into captivity at times, because of their sins. The Lord was always faithful to forgive their wayward hearts and lovingly welcoming them back into His presence, when they repented of their sins. This study will clearly show us God's powerful sovereign hand in the rise and fall of nations. As we observe how faithful God had been to mankind; we can be assured that He will be faithful to us as well!

**God has given us an amazing gift in His Word.** The Bible shows us how to live our lives in a way that we will be blessed and God will be glorified. To many Christians, the Bible can be a rather intimidating and boring history book that they hear quoted in sermons on Sunday, but they don't see how it relates to their everyday lives. The Bible is full of teachings and examples of how we are to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to God, abundantly full of love, joy, and peace!

**God created us to fellowship with Him.** Not just to know Him as Almighty God and Judge, but as the One who loves us and desires to have a very close and personal relationship with us. God desires the best for our lives because He loves us so much. He gave us His written Word to introduce Himself to us, and to invite us to discover the treasures He has placed in His Word for us to find.

The Bible was written by over 40 authors in a time span of 1400-1800 years. **2 Timothy 3:16** tells us that "**all scripture is inspired by God.**" This means these authors partnered with God, in the form of the Holy Spirit - **God spoke and they wrote.** These authors were from many different walks of life, and they lived in many different countries; yet there is a beautiful continuity throughout the entire Bible. For instance, there are many promises in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in the New Testament; and Jesus and others in the New Testament often quoted from the Old Testament. Many Christians only read the New Testament because it is all about Jesus. But as we will see in our study, **Jesus can be found all over the Old Testament;** in promises and prophecies, and even in numerous appearances.

You will see from time to time footnotes of Bible references throughout this study. I encourage you to have a bible handy and look up these verses to get more depth out of this study. Even though we will be studying the Old Testament, we will journey to the New Testament from time to time through cross references.

Many people have the misconception that the Bible is a book that cannot be understood without someone explaining it to them. God gave us the Bible, His precious word, to make His heart of love clear to us and to show us how to walk in the blessings that He longs to bestow upon us. God promises us in His Word that the Bible is not too hard nor is it outside the reach of our ability to understand. We do not need to go up to heaven and have a heavenly encounter with God or to go beyond the sea, to have others explain it to us.<sup>1</sup> The more we study the Word of God, the more we will understand who God is and the relationship He desires to have with us. He loves to reveal Himself to us, and He has made that even easier for us by **giving us the gift of God's Spirit to teach us and to guide us**. All who accept the free gift of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ are given the Holy Spirit to dwell inside of them.<sup>2</sup> He will teach us everything we need to know, and then bring it to our remembrance when we need it.

Much of God's Word is history, things that have happened in the past between God and mankind. In these passages of history, we can learn a lot about God and His character. We all come into the family of God with preconceived ideas of who God is, and very few of those are accurate. As we study His Word, we will see that God is all-powerful, faithful, true, loving, kind, just, compassionate... just to name a few. Each time you read a passage in the Bible, look at the character of God and ask the Holy Spirit to change your thinking to a correct representation of who God truly is!

God's Word also has passages of prophesy, things that are spoken of events that will happen in the future. Many prophecies were spoken of Jesus, our Messiah, in the Old Testament, and many were fulfilled when He was on the earth 2000 years ago. But Jesus is returning, and all the prophecies left to be fulfilled will come to pass. We who are alive on the earth in the days of His second coming need to know these prophecies to be prepared and encouraged to participate with Jesus to bring all mankind to know about Jesus. We must all be built up and prepared for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. **The knowledge of the riches found in the God's Word is vital for the spiritual survival of all believers in the difficult times to come.**

This is the second book in our study of the Old Testament. In this section we will **see God's chosen people crossing over the Jordan River and taking possession of the land God had promised to give them through Abraham, the father of the Jews**. Abraham had moved to the land of

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 30:10-14

<sup>2</sup> John 14:16-17, 26

## Riches of God's Word

Canaan at God's request; and once there, God made an unconditional covenant with Abraham. He promised to:

- make a great nation out of Abraham's descendants
- give his descendants (Jewish nation) the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession
- bless all the people of the world through him (Jesus was one of his descendants)

Abraham and his sons and grandsons lived in the land of Canaan, but they never possessed it. Abraham's descendants left Canaan during a seven-year global famine, and moved to Egypt. The sons of Israel ended up living there for over 400 years, most of the time as slaves to Pharaoh. When the years of captivity God prophesied to Abraham<sup>3</sup> were at an end, God raised up a leader, Moses, to bring His people out of Egypt by the mighty hand of God. Moses spent 40 years travelling with around three million people (a great nation) and their livestock in the wilderness, where their hearts were tested to see if they would follow God. After Moses died, God told Joshua to take God's chosen people into the Promised Land, and He would help them possess it! We will see in the first few chapters how that came about.

Some people wonder **why Christians need to study the Old Testament**, and learn about the Jews. What we need to know is that Jesus Christ, our Messiah, was Jewish; and when we accepted Him into our hearts as our Savior and Lord, we became **grafted into His family**.<sup>4</sup> So the Old Testament is a history of our heritage, as grafted-in Jews.

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***Ephesians 2:12-13** "remember that you were at that time separate from Christ (unbelievers), excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."*

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Some may ask another question, "**Why is it important to study about the Promised Land?**" When you look at the land mass of the entire earth (57,000,000,000 square miles), and compare it the Promised Land (10,000 square miles), you will see that it is a very tiny piece of land – but it is the most fought over piece of land in history, and in the future. **In this study we will look at a few times when the Jews lost possession of the Promised Land because of their disobedience**<sup>5</sup>, the last time in 70 AD to the Roman Empire. Today, much of the Promised Land is the nation of Israel. In 1948, after WWII, the Jews were given back the Promised Land by the British. From that time until now, millions of Jews who had been dispersed all over the world, have immigrated back

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<sup>3</sup> Genesis 15:13

<sup>4</sup> Romans 11:17

<sup>5</sup> Ezekiel 36:19

to Israel.<sup>6</sup> This is land given to the Jewish people as an everlasting covenant, and every attempt to take it away from them, whether by war or treaty will fail. At the end of the age, when Jesus returns, He will appear in Jerusalem, the capital of Israel. Much of the end time's events will take place in Israel.

**The Promised Land also represents the hearts of all believers.** In Matthew 13, Jesus compares different types of soil to different types of hearts of those who listen to the Word of God (seed).

- Those who do not understand the Word – the seed fell beside the road and was eaten by birds.
- Those who let their troubles steal their joy and understanding – the seed fell on rocky land where it could not take root, so it died.
- Those who let the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke out the truth of the Word of God – the seed fell upon land filled with weeds and thorns, which choked out any growth and produced no fruit.
- Those who hear the word and understand it – the seed fell on good soil and produced ever increasing fruit.

When we come into the Kingdom of God through believing in Jesus Christ, we are given a new heart<sup>7</sup>, one that is soft and fertile, ready to receive the seeds of the word of God. **But in order to possess this new heart, we must fight against the “nations” in our being** (desires of our flesh and the iniquities we inherited from our ancestors) that want the land back. We must strive to obey God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength,<sup>8</sup> so we can live our lives full of joy and peace.

As we study how the sons of Israel fought against their enemies, how they removed the influences of the idolatrous world around them, and how they overcame the iniquities of their ancestors and obeyed God; we can learn how to have victory and live at peace in the land God has promised us! **Come along on the finest journey you will ever take; a journey through the Old Testament, and discover for yourself the true depths of the love God has for you.**

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*Isaiah 57:14 “...build up, build up, prepare the way. Remove every obstacle out of the way of My people.*

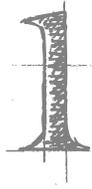
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<sup>6</sup> Ezekiel 36:24

<sup>7</sup> Ezekiel 36:26

<sup>8</sup> Mark 12:29-30



# Preparing to Enter the Land

Please Read Joshua 1-2.

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*Joshua 1:2-3 "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses."*

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## Joshua

As we continue our study through the Old Testament, we are at the point in history where **the sons of Israel were preparing to cross over into the Promised Land.** Moses had died; and God appointed Joshua, the son of Nun, to lead the people in Moses' place. Over the years, Joshua had proved himself faithful to Moses, the people, and to God!

The Lord instructed Joshua that **he would need to be strong and courageous to lead the people of Israel to take possession of the land** He had promised to Abraham almost 500 years earlier. Think back to the covenant promises God gave Abraham when He led him to Canaan. God told Abraham he would become a great nation<sup>9</sup> (there were probably over 3,000,000 descendants of Abraham with Joshua), and the land of Canaan would be given to Abraham and his descendants as an everlasting possession.<sup>10</sup> Abraham did not see how these promises would come to pass, but we will see in the book of Joshua that they did.

God laid out the boundaries of the land He set aside for His people in the book of Numbers. The Promised Land was bordered on the west by the Mediterranean Sea; on the south by the wilderness of Zin and the Brook of Egypt; on the east by the Dead Sea, Jordan River, and the Sea of Galilee; and to the north by Mount Hor.<sup>11</sup> Some of the sons of Israel insisted on settling outside the boundaries of the Promised Land, to the east of the Jordan River in the land they captured from King Sidon of the Amorites and King Og of Bashan. These tribes were Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. Their 40,000 warriors promised to help their relatives fight against the nations in the Promised Land.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Genesis 12:2

<sup>10</sup> Genesis 13:15

<sup>11</sup> Numbers 34:2-12, Joshua 1:3-4

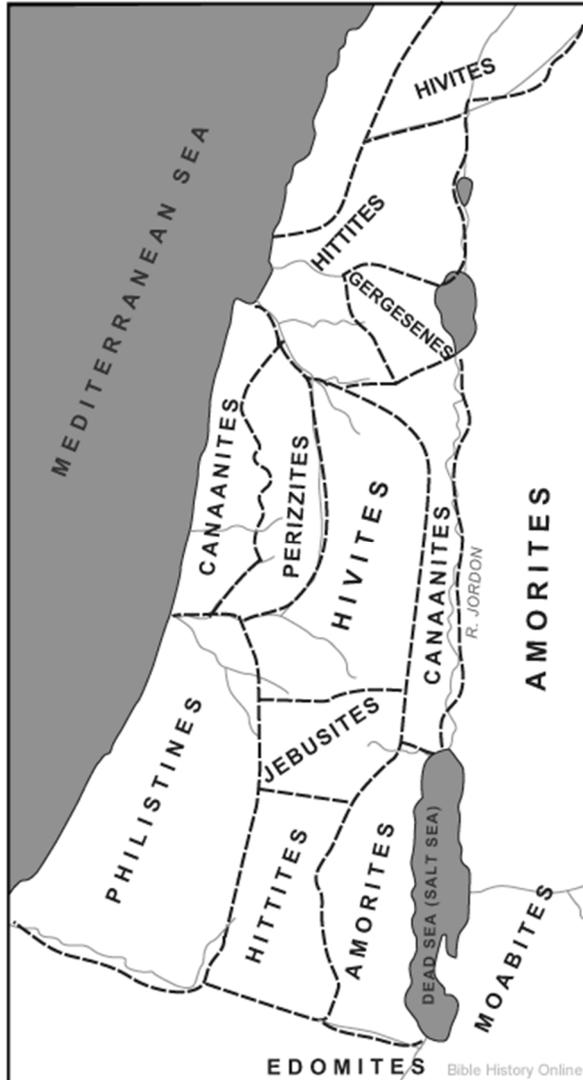
<sup>12</sup> Joshua 1:12-14; Joshua 4:12-13

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**Deuteronomy 31:23** "...Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you."

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Ever since Joshua became the leader of God's people, **God told Joshua eight times he needed to be strong and courageous.** One of the reasons the Lord kept telling Joshua to be strong and courageous was because **there were strong nations living in Canaan that the sons of Israel**



**would have to utterly destroy in order to take possession of the Promised Land.** God told the sons of Israel that there were seven nations greater and stronger than them, already living in the Promised Land; but God would be with them to lead them in defeating their enemies. **The nations that were already in Canaan were the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.**<sup>13</sup>

They lived in large fortified cities<sup>14</sup> that seemed impossible to defeat. God led them in various ways to attack these cities, and then instructed the sons of Israel to utterly destroy all the people, and every form of their pagan worship. God commanded His people to remove all engraved stones, molded images, and high places of worship.<sup>15</sup> This might seem harsh, but **God knew that any bit of remaining idolatry in the land would be a snare to His people.**<sup>16</sup>

God spoke to Joshua and told him it was now time for His people to cross over the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Joshua told the people to take three days to prepare their families and flocks to leave their wanderings and take possession of the Promised Land.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Deuteronomy 7:1-2; Joshua 3:10

<sup>14</sup> Numbers 13:28

<sup>15</sup> Numbers 33:52

<sup>16</sup> Numbers 33:55

<sup>17</sup> Joshua 1:10-11

While the people were getting ready, Joshua sent two men to secretly cross the Jordan River to spy out the city of Jericho, which was directly across the river from their camp. They went to a local lodging and gathering place, the house of Rahab, a harlot. While there, she told them that **everyone in Jericho was terrified of the sons of Israel**. They knew that the God of Israel was the Supreme God by the stories they had heard of how He had brought His people out of Egypt, how He had dried up the Red Sea for them to cross, and how He had defeated King Sidon and King Og!<sup>18</sup> Rahab knew that Jericho was going to be destroyed, so she hid the two men and helped them get away safely. In return for her help, she asked the two men to promise to spare her life and the lives of her family. The two men agree, but strongly warned her to not break her promise, and to keep her family inside during the battle. They told her to tie a scarlet cord around the window of the exterior wall of her house. The two men shimmied down a rope at that very window at night, and hid in nearby mountains for a few days before crossing back over the Jordan River. When the two men returned to camp, they reported to Joshua, *"Surely the Lord has given all the land into our hands, for the inhabitants of the land are frightened of us."*

**Please read Joshua 3-5.**

## Crossing Over

The very next day, on the tenth day of the first month<sup>19</sup>, the sons of Israel arose early and came to the shores of the Jordan River. It was spring time and the water in the river was high, overflowing its banks. Joshua told the Levitical priests carry the Ark of the Covenant ahead of the people, and he instructed them to enter the river. As soon as their feet touched the water, it parted; just like the Red Sea had for their parents. God provided a 19 mile wide section of dry land the people were able to cross on.<sup>20</sup> Why do you think God made it so wide? Jericho was situated on a hill on the western shore of the Jordan River. From anywhere in the city, the people of Jericho would have seen what had happened to their river. **God wanted to let the people of Jericho and the surrounding areas witness His unlimited power first hand!**

The Priests stood with the Ark in the middle of the now dry Jordan River, while everyone and all their livestock crossed over on the dry land. Joshua had them set up camp in Gilgal, to the east of Jericho. Then Joshua had one man from each tribe take a stone from the middle of the Jordan River where the Priests stood, and carry these stones to Gilgal. They placed the twelve stones on top of each other as a memorial of what God had done. In the future, the sons of Israel were to tell their children and grandchildren whenever they passed by Gilgal what God had done here. He did this so that *"all the peoples of the earth would know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, so they would fear the Lord forever."*<sup>21</sup> The priests stood faithfully in the middle of the river bed until everyone had

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<sup>18</sup> Joshua 2:9-11

<sup>19</sup> Joshua 4:19

<sup>20</sup> Joshua 3:16

<sup>21</sup> Joshua 4:20-24

crossed. Then Joshua told them to come up from the Jordan. As soon as their feet touched the shoreline, the waters of the Jordan River returned to their place, overflowing the banks as before.

**The land of the Amorites and the Canaanites was adjacent to where this miracle occurred.** When they saw and heard what God had done, **they became very fearful and discouraged** about their future.<sup>22</sup> I am not a military strategist, but if I knew my enemies were emotionally defeated, I would attack immediately and finish their defeat. But that was not even close to what God had Joshua do!

## Circumcision

Here they were in enemy territory, and God commanded Joshua to circumcise all the men. Their fathers had been circumcised in Egypt, but while they were in the wilderness for 40 years, this generation of men had not been. Remember God made a covenant with Abraham to make Him a great nation and to give his descendants a land set apart for them. **The sign of that covenant was for all the males to be circumcised. Now that they were in the Promised Land, the first thing God had them do was renew their covenant with Him.** God wanted to encourage His people with His covenant promising to be their God. They were no longer the sons of slaves, but they were sons of the living God. All of the males were circumcised while the surrounding nations cowered in their homes behind their locked gates, oblivious to the weakened condition of those they feared. The sons of Israel remained nearby in Gilgal, until they were healed.

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*Joshua 5:9 "Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day."*

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The sons of Israel had been in the Promised Land for four days when **they celebrated Passover**. This too was to remind the people of the power and sovereignty of their God. Their parents started this journey on Passover, and now it had ended with their first Passover in the Promised Land. On the next day, a remarkable thing happened when they went out to gather their daily ration of Manna; it was not there. **After 40 years, the miracle of God providing daily Manna stopped!**<sup>23</sup> The sons of Israel gathered grain from the land and made unleavened bread with it, instead of using manna. Now they were to live off of the bountiful produce of the Promised Land.

While his men were recovering, Joshua took a walk near Jericho to see what they might be up against in the coming battle. A man appeared in front of him with his sword drawn. Joshua did not know who He was; but asked if He was a warrior for his side, or for Jericho. He said, neither. **I am the captain of the Lord's host**, the leader of God's angelic army. **Joshua realized this was Jesus**,

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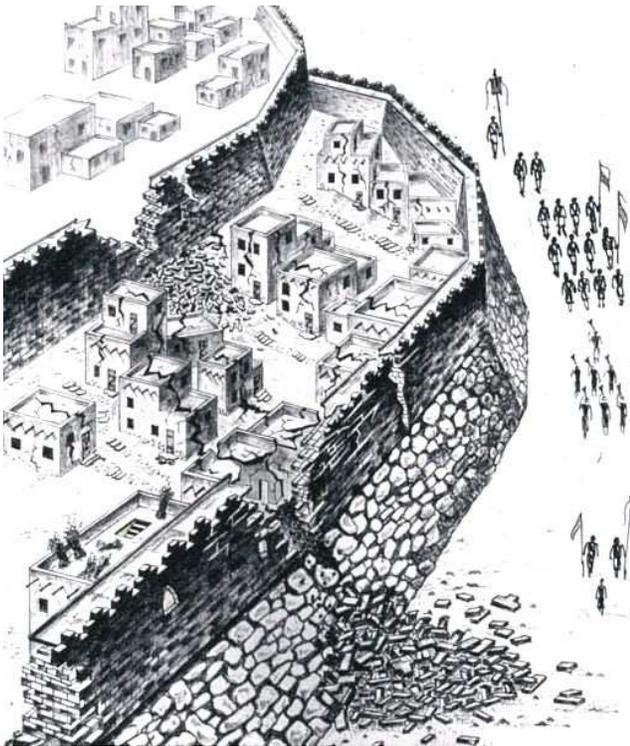
<sup>22</sup> Joshua 5:1

<sup>23</sup> Joshua 5:11-12

and bowed low to the ground. Jesus told him to take off his shoes for he was on holy ground. From that day on, Joshua truly realized that Jesus was in charge, and He would lead them into battle.

## Jericho

Jesus spoke to Joshua and told him that He would give the city of Jericho into his hands; and their king and all their soldiers would be defeated! He then gave Joshua the battle plan, once again proving that *God's ways are not our ways!* **Jesus told Joshua to march around the city one time a day for six days.** In this "parade" half of the armed men were to lead, with seven priests following them carrying trumpets made of rams' horns. These priests were to blow these trumpets continually as they walked around the city. They were followed by more priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant, with the rest of the armed men making up the rear guard. No one was to say a word as they walked. I believe God told them to be quiet so no negative words would be spoken. These were strange instructions, and we tend to get negative when we don't understand what is going on.



On the seventh day, they arose at dawn and proceeded to march around the city seven times. On their seventh lap Joshua told the men to "**SHOUT, for the Lord has given you the city**". As they shouted, the fortified walls of the city fell flat!<sup>24</sup>

The city of Jericho was built on a mound, surrounded by a great earthen rampart, or embankment, with a stone retaining wall at its base. The retaining wall was 12–15 feet high. On top of that was a mudbrick wall six feet thick and about 20–26 feet high. At the crest of the embankment was a similar mudbrick wall whose base was roughly 46 feet above the ground level outside the retaining wall. Humanly speaking, it was impossible for the Israelites to penetrate the impregnable walls of Jericho.<sup>25</sup>

**When the walls fell, all the men of war walked up into the city, over the rubble and took the city.** They utterly destroyed everything in the city, except Rahab and her family. Joshua had the two spies escort them out of Jericho, and settled them outside the camp at Gilgal. Rahab chose to believe in Jehovah, and to live in the midst of Israel for the rest of her life. She later married Salmon,

<sup>24</sup> Joshua 6:20

<sup>25</sup> [answersingenesis.org/archaeology/the-walls-of-jericho](http://answersingenesis.org/archaeology/the-walls-of-jericho)

from the tribe of Judah, and they had a son named Boaz. He became the husband of Ruth; and was in the lineage of Joseph, Jesus' father.

When the Israelites stormed the city, Rahab and her family were saved as promised. But if the walls fell, **how was her house spared?** At the north end of Jericho, archaeologists made some astounding discoveries that seem to relate to Rahab. A German excavation from 1907–1909 found that on the north side of Jericho, a short stretch of the lower city wall did not fall like everywhere else. A portion of that mudbrick wall was still standing to a height of over eight feet. What is more, there were houses built against that wall! It is quite possible that this is where Rahab's house was located.<sup>26</sup>

After the men of war burned the city, Joshua cursed anyone who ever tried to rebuild this city. Even today, the original plot of land Jericho rested on is still desolate ruins. The only items that were kept from destruction were things made of gold, silver, bronze and iron. These metals were considered holy to the Lord, and put in the treasury of the tabernacle.<sup>27</sup> Every other possession the sons of Israel saw, they were banned from taking. If they did, **their sin would make the entire camp accursed and bring trouble to all the people.**

Unfortunately one man named Achan, from the tribe of Judah, could not resist the riches he saw in Jericho. He took a beautiful Babylonian garment, 100 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels; and hid them in the ground under his tent. **His sin was uncovered when Joshua sent 3000 soldiers to go up against Ai, and they ended up running for their lives.** Joshua cried out to God, and He told him that Israel had sinned; someone had taken banned items for themselves. Because of that, **Israel was not able to defeat her enemies.**<sup>28</sup> God told Joshua to consecrate the people and have them gather the next day, when the Lord would reveal the sinner. God revealed him by casting lots - the man was from the tribe of Judah, the family of Zerah, the household of Zabdi, the son of Carmi; that man being Achan. Joshua implored him to tell the truth, and he did. He confessed that he had sinned and took some things that he coveted. Joshua took Achan and his family, along with all his possessions and the things he took, and brought them to the valley of Achor. There they were stoned to death because they brought trouble to the sons of Israel.

## Instructions for Battle

God had given Moses very clear instructions for His people when they entered the

Promised Land in **how to clear away the nations who were in the land.** We see these in Deuteronomy 7 and 20. God promised to deliver the enemy over to His people, but **it was their responsibility to utterly destroy them.** They were **not to make any covenants with them,** or

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<sup>26</sup> ibid

<sup>27</sup> Joshua 6:19

<sup>28</sup> Joshua 7:12-13

show them any favor. They were **NOT to intermarry** with them, because this would cause their sons and daughters to turn away from God to follow after the false gods of the land. This was something mankind had done over and over since the creation of man. The sons of Israel were to tear down every pagan altar, smash their sacred pillars, cut down their wooden fertility statues, and burn their idols with fire.<sup>29</sup> You will see that they totally destroyed most cities they came up against, setting them on fire, so all vestiges of the world and idol worship would be done away with.

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**Deuteronomy 7:6** *"For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."*

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God desires for all His people to be a holy people, **separate and different from the rest of the world**. That is why He commanded the sons of Israel to utterly destroy the inhabitants of the land. God knew the people living in Canaan were wicked idolaters, even in the time of Abraham. God had made a covenant with Abraham telling him that the land of Canaan would be an everlasting possession for his descendants, but they would not take possession of it for at least four generations. God gave the people living in Canaan that long to repent of the iniquity of idolatry.<sup>30</sup> But they did not, they continued in their hatred for the One True God. Their time was up, and God repaid their rebellion by utterly destroying them and their idols!

In Deuteronomy 20, the Lord gave Moses instructions for going out to battle. He said you will come up against enemies that have horses and chariots, and many more warriors than you; **but do not be afraid of them! For the Lord your God is the One who goes with you, to fight against your enemies**.<sup>31</sup> He went on to say that they must **utterly destroy all the inhabitants of the Land**, so that they do not teach you their idolatrous ways.<sup>32</sup> One other instruction was very practical. God said if you need to build a structure to get into a city, do not cut down any fruit trees, because they will provide food for you while you are laying siege to the city.

## Ai Revisited

After the camp was cleansed of Achan's sin, the Lord resumed His role as the Commander of the army. He told Joshua to arise and go up to Ai, and He would deliver the city into his hands. Jesus also told him that in this city they were allowed to take the livestock as plunder. God instructed Joshua to send 30,000 warriors to Ai at night, and set up an ambush behind the city. The next day Joshua and the rest of the people approached the city. When the people of Ai

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<sup>29</sup> Deuteronomy 7:1-5

<sup>30</sup> Genesis 15:16, Deuteronomy 9:5

<sup>31</sup> Deuteronomy 20:4

<sup>32</sup> Deuteronomy 20:16-18

came out to attack them, Joshua had his people flee in retreat, like they had done before. The king called for his soldiers and all the people to chase them, leaving the city empty. This opened up the city for the 30,000 warriors to enter the city from behind. They took possession of the city and set it on fire. Joshua then turned the warriors with him around and attacked the dejected people of Ai. All 12,000 residents of Ai were killed that day.<sup>33</sup>

## Promise of Blessings

After this great victory, Joshua took all the people (men, women, and children) on a “**field trip**” to **Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim**, which God had commanded them to take once they got into the Promised Land. Half of the congregation stood on Mt. Ebal where Joshua erected an altar to God of uncut stones. He also wrote the law on stones found on that mountain. The other half of the people stood on Mt. Gerizim. The priests stood in the valley between the two and read all the book of the Law God had given to Moses. They pointed to the beautifully lush and fruitful Mt. Gerizim, and talked about the blessings that God would give to His people if they obeyed His laws. Then they turned to the dry and barren Mt. Ebal, and explained the curses God would have to send if they did not obey His laws, precepts and commands.<sup>34</sup> God loves His people and He so desires to fill our lives full of His presence and His blessings. But when we choose to rebel against His perfect ways, He must send correction our way in the form of curses; all to get our attention and cause us to repent and turn whole-heartedly back to Him!

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**Deuteronomy 11:26-28** *"See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the Lord your God..."*

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<sup>33</sup> Joshua 8:1-29

<sup>34</sup> Joshua 8:30-35

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

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1. The two spies told Rahab to tie a red cord in the window of her house so she and all her family would be saved from the coming destruction to their city. What does that cord represent in the lives of believers today?
2. Why do you think God had all the men circumcised AFTER they crossed over the Jordan River, and were camped in the Promised Land, and not before?
3. Jesus appeared to Joshua as the captain of the heavenly army, encouraging Joshua that Jesus would lead him in the battles he would face. We saw amazing victories against overwhelming odds. If Jesus was there for Joshua and the sons of Israel, why do we not let Him lead us in the battles we face today?

What battle are you facing today on your life?

4. Read Deuteronomy 8:19-20. Why did Achan and his entire family have to die?
5. God had Joshua point out the differences between living in the blessings of God and the curses, by looking at two very different mountains. It is obvious that living a life of obedience and faithfulness to God is so much better for us than one of disobedience and rebellion; yet we don't always live that way. Write out a prayer of repentance to God for the areas of your life that are still on Mt. Ebal.

# 2

## Defeating Their Enemies

Please read Joshua 9-11.

### Gibeon

After the sons of Israel miraculously crossed over the Jordan River at flood stage, after the miraculous defeat of Jericho, and the tricky defeat of Ai; as the news spread throughout the land, **the kings of the cities in Canaan became even more fearful of God and His people!** Some of these kings banded together to attack Israel,<sup>35</sup> and others resorted to deception hoping their lives would be spared. The people of Gibeon fell into the second category.<sup>36</sup> They sent representatives to meet with Joshua, asking him to make a covenant of peace with them. They pretended they were from a faraway land, and not just over the next hill. They dressed themselves in dusty rags and worn-out shoes; and used worn out and torn wineskins and carried very old bread; telling Joshua that everything was fresh and new when they left their land. They said they had heard many incredible tales of what their amazing God had done for them. The men of Gibeon humbled themselves before Joshua, calling themselves his servants, and begging him to make a peace covenant with them.

They were very crafty in the complexity of their lies, and convinced the sons of Israel that they were telling the truth. The humility of the men from Gibeon probably played into the egos of the men of Israel, who were already flying pretty high after “their” victories over Jericho and Ai. Instead of asking God what to do; they listened to the lies of the Gibeonites, and agreed to make a covenant with them. Do you remember God gave his people a very specific instruction about making a covenant with the people of Canaan? He said, **DO NOT MAKE A COVENANT WITH THEM!**

How often in our lives has God spoken clearly to us that we are not to do something; and then because of the convincing voices of those around us, or even the voices inside of us, we do the very thing we knew we were not to do. Paul wrote about the same dilemma.

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**Romans 7:15,19** *“For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate... For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.”*

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<sup>35</sup> Joshua 9:1-2; Joshua 10:3-4

<sup>36</sup> Joshua 9:3-4

Three days later the sons of Israel found out that the men of Gibeon were their neighbors! The men of Israel discussed what they should do about this bad news. They had sworn to keep the covenant by the name of God; and breaking that was not something they could do. They told the Gibeonites they would let them live, but as their slaves. They would serve them by carrying water and firewood for the tabernacle, and by fighting beside them in war. The Gibeonites quickly agreed to this relationship, because they knew the alternative was death!<sup>37</sup>

### Amorites

Adoni-zedek, an Amorite king from the city of Jerusalem, became very fearful of Israel, and asked four other Amorite kings (King Hoham of Hebron, King Piram of Jarmuth, King Japhia of Lachish, and King Debir of Eglon) to fight with him against Israel. Instead of attacking Israel head-on, they attacked Gibeon. The Gibeonites sent word to Joshua to come quickly and save them from the Amorites. **God spoke to Joshua and told him to go and assist the Gibeonites, and He would give the Amorites into his hands.** Joshua and his warriors travelled on foot 15 miles that night, and surprised the Amorites in the morning. The Lord brought great confusion to the Amorites causing many to be killed. As they were retreating in terror, the Lord struck them further with hailstones. More Amorites died from the hailstones than they did from the swords of the sons of Israel.

An interesting miracle also happened that day. Even though the sons of Israel had been up all night traveling to Gibeon, and had fought all day; Joshua asked the Lord to make the sun stand still so they would have more time to kill the Amorites. **The Lord answered his plea and stopped the sun in the middle of the sky for a whole day.**<sup>38</sup>

After Joshua and his men defeated the Amorite soldiers, they found the five kings hiding in a cave. Joshua had his men roll large stones over the opening to trap the kings. The sons of Israel left them there to deal with them later, while they went and completely destroyed their fortified cities and killed all the inhabitants. In a few days, the sons of Israel went back to the cave and killed the kings. That same day the Lord of hosts (Jesus) led Joshua and the sons of Israel throughout the land of the Amorites, and then into the hill country, the Negev, to Kadesh-barnea to Gaza, and all the hill country of Goshen as far as Gibeon; utterly destroying all the cities and leaving no survivors. Then Joshua and all his soldiers returned to rest a moment at their camp in Gilgal. **In all these battles, not one son of Israel was killed, all returned to camp.**<sup>39</sup>

### Joining Forces

Joshua and the sons of Israel defeated many cities to the south of their camp, and then they turned their focus on the northern cities. But this time, the Lord sent the kings to them. **King Jabin decided the only way to defeat the sons of Israel was to join**

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<sup>37</sup> Joshua 9:24-25

<sup>38</sup> Joshua 10:12-14

<sup>39</sup> Joshua 10:43

**forces with the other kings, and come at them with a huge army and with many horses and chariots.** Joshua and his warriors did not have horses and chariots, so the kings through their chariots would ensure their victory over God's people who were on foot. Chariots were fast and highly mobile vehicles that would carry archers. They could swoop in and swiftly kill many with their arrows. Then they would quickly turn and run over as many soldiers as they could; all with the intentions of demoralizing the remaining soldiers, hoping they would break rank and run away. Once the soldiers were scattered it was easier to kill them.

King Jabin was able to convince the kings from the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Hivites to meet at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel. When Joshua saw this huge, well equipped force coming to engage them in battle, **the Lord told him to not be afraid because these warriors would be dead by the next day.** Instead of telling Joshua how to defeat this huge army, Jesus gave him instructions for what to do immediately after their victory. Jesus instructed Joshua to lame all the horses and burn the chariots.<sup>40</sup> God had never told Moses or Joshua to destroy the weapons of their enemies before. In fact, that was probably how they had been able to get swords for all their soldiers. As slaves in Egypt, they would not have owned weapons, so they would have had to gather them little by little on their journey.

Why now would God not want them to put the horses and chariots into their arsenal of weapons? Chariots were like tanks; and surely with these superior vehicles, they would have no trouble defeating any future kings. Over and over in the Bible the Lord told His people to not trust in horses and chariots, but to **put their trust in Him for their deliverance!** We must understand that God is the One who fights our battles, not us with manmade weapons!

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*Psalm 20:7 "Some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God."*

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After destroying all the armies and these kings, Joshua led the sons of Israel to capture all their cities and kill all the people, just as the Lord had commanded. For the next five to seven years they waged war with most of the kings in the Promised Land. **Even though everyone who came against Joshua was utterly defeated, one by one kings kept coming against Israel in battle.** This was because the Lord hardened their hearts. In their pride they thought they would be the one to defeat Joshua and his army. One king after another came against them; **but each army suffered the same fate – utter destruction by the sons of Israel and their God!**<sup>41</sup> Joshua even fought against the giants in the land and destroyed them all, except for those in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod.

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<sup>40</sup> Joshua 11:6

<sup>41</sup> Joshua 11:20

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**Joshua 11:23** *“So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Thus the land had rest from war.”*

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## Promised Land Divided

Joshua valiantly led the sons of Israel in taking possession of the majority

of the land God promised His people, **defeating 31 kings.**<sup>42</sup> But there were still regions of the Promised Land that needed to be conquered. **God spoke to Joshua and told him He would drive out the inhabitants of the remaining areas, but Joshua was not to lead the armies.** He was getting advanced in age, and the Lord wanted him to divide the land between the 9 ½ tribes. **It would now be the responsibility of the leaders of each tribe to follow the lead of the Lord to destroy the remaining inhabitants, and to govern their portion of land.**

The Tabernacle was set up in Shiloh, and the leaders of each tribe gathered there. Lots were cast for the distribution of the land, and each tribe received a specific amount of land according to the number of people in their tribe.<sup>43</sup> It is difficult to determine some of the boundaries of each tribe because the boundary lines were usually the names of cities; and most of those cities were destroyed by the sons of Israel. Little by little, Jewish archeologists have found remains of some of these cities. I will mention the geographic landmarks of lakes, rivers, or seas as much as possible to make it easier to see where the tribes settled.

**The tribes of Judah, Manasseh, and Ephraim were the first to pick where their land would be located. They grabbed rather large chunks, compared to later allotments.** Joshua changed how things were done after these three, to make it fairer for the others. We will see that land was even taken away from Judah, because they took too much.

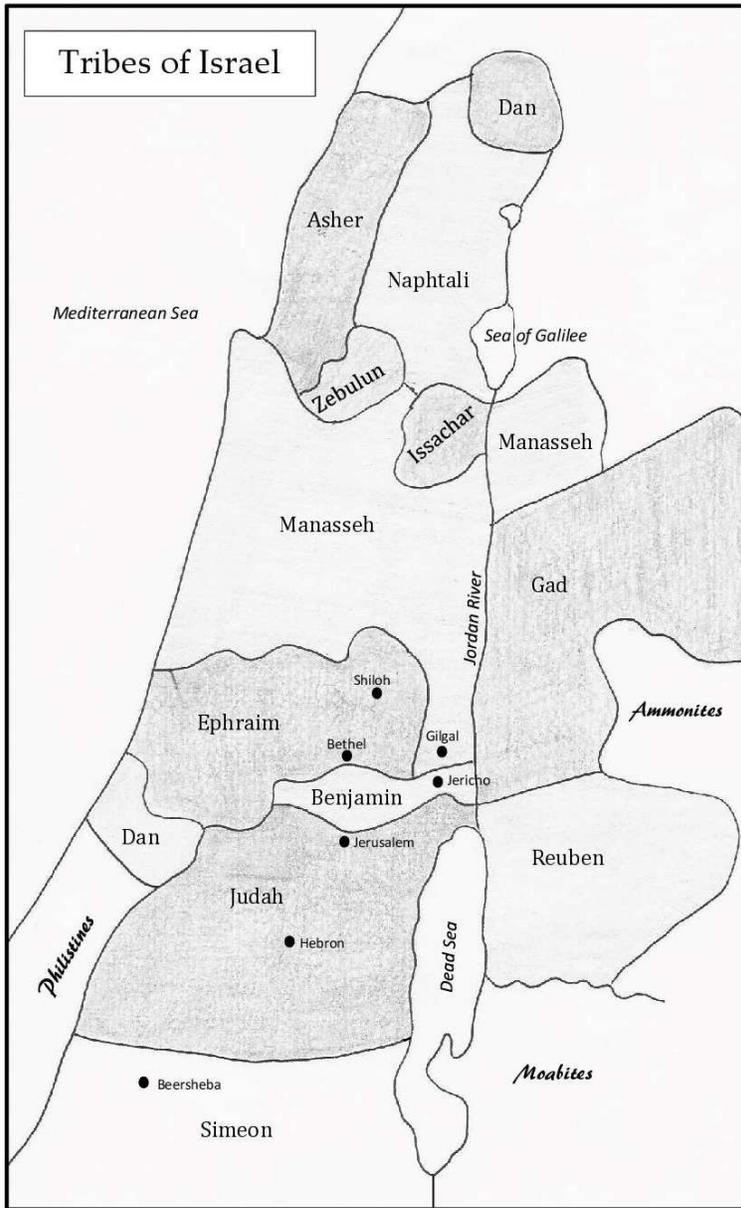
Caleb, from the **tribe of Judah**, was allowed to pick which land to receive as an inheritance. Even though he was 85, he was still strong and wanted to live in the land to the south that he had spied out with Joshua 40 years before. **He wanted to fight against the most difficult armies, the ones with giants.** He was personally given the city of Hebron, and Judah was given a large section in the southern part of the Promised Land, from Jerusalem to the Wilderness of Zin. The tribe of Judah received 112 cities with many villages around each city. **They drove out the inhabitants of most of these cities, except in Jerusalem, where the Jebusites lived.**<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Joshua 12:7-24

<sup>43</sup> Numbers 33:54

<sup>44</sup> Joshua 15:63



The land for the tribes of **Manasseh** and Ephraim were chosen next. Half of Manasseh had already settled east of the Jordan River, in the land of Gilead and Basham. The other half of the tribe received land from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, with Gilgal to the south and Carmel to the north. **They did not take possession of many cities of the Canaanites, because “they persisted in living in that land.”<sup>45</sup> They were able to make them slaves, but they could not drive them out completely.** The tribe of Manasseh came to Joshua demanding more land, because they had a lot of people in their tribe. Joshua said they could also settle in the forested hill country. They would have to clear the land of trees, Perizzites (with chariots), and Rephaim (giants); but since their population was so large, that shouldn’t be a problem. They continued to whine, but Joshua did not back down. He told them “you shall drive out the Canaanites, even though they have chariots.”

There was much more land to distribute, and **Joshua realized he had to have another system for allotting the land to each tribe.** He chose three men from each tribe to walk through the rest of the Promised Land and divide it into seven sections, for the remaining seven tribes. They were to write down descriptions of each portion of land, so the tribes could make informed decisions for their tribe.<sup>46</sup> If they were mainly farmers, they would want to know how fertile the land was; or if they were shepherds, was there good grazing land; or if they were fishermen, were they located near a large body of water.

<sup>45</sup> Joshua 17:12

<sup>46</sup> Joshua 18:2-10

**The tribe of Ephraim** was the next tribe chosen to the land they wanted. They chose a piece of land in between the land of Manasseh and Judah. **They were not able to drive out all the inhabitants of the land**, but they did enslave them.<sup>47</sup>

**The tribe of Benjamin** received a small piece of land between the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Ephraim, with their eastern border on the Jordan River. This land had fourteen cities with many villages.

The **tribe of Simeon** received land from the tribe of Judah, because the portion given to Judah was too large.<sup>48</sup> They received seventeen cities with their villages

The **tribe of Zebulun** and the **tribe of Issachar** received land to the north of the tribe of Manasseh. Zebulun received twelve cities with their villages. The tribe of Issachar had its eastern border on the Jordan River, and they received sixteen cities.

**The tribe of Asher** had a strip of land on the north side of the Promised Land, along the Mediterranean Sea. They received twenty two cities.

**The tribe of Naphtali** received land on the northeastern side of the Promised Land, including the Sea of Galilee. They received nineteen fortified cities with their villages.

The **tribe of Dan** was the last one to get their allotted land. They received land along the Mediterranean Sea, north of the Philistines. Later they needed more land, and attacked the city of Laish<sup>49</sup>, just north of the tribe of Naphtali; and settled there also.

## Land for the Levites

**Land was also to be set aside for the Levites** to live in, but not to own. They were given 48 cities

with pasture land outside the city walls extending for 2000 cubits (3000 yards) in all directions. Each of the twelve tribes donated land to the Levites. **The sons of Aaron**, who were to serve as High Priests, received 13 cities from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin. **The sons of Kohath** received 10 cities from the tribes of Ephraim, Dan, and the western part of Manasseh. **The sons of Gershon** received 13 cities from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and the eastern part of Manasseh. **The sons of Merari** received 12 cities from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.<sup>50</sup> As you can see, the Levites were scattered all throughout Israel. This was to ensure that a priest would never be more than ten miles away from any city in Israel. There were even Levites placed outside the Promised Land among the tribes on the eastern side of the Jordan River.

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<sup>47</sup> Joshua 16:10

<sup>48</sup> Joshua 19:9

<sup>49</sup> Judges 18

<sup>50</sup> Joshua 21:4-7

**Six of the cities given to the Levites were designated as cities of refuge.** Three were in the Promised Land: Kadesh, Shechem, and Hebron; and three were to the east, beyond the Jordan River: Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan<sup>51</sup>. These cities were spread all over the Land of Israel to be within a day's journey on foot. If someone accidentally killed someone, they were to flee to one of these cities, to escape being killed by the grieving family members of the dead man who wanted revenge. They would be safe in the city of refuge, and get a fair trial.<sup>52</sup>

The gates of these cities were never closed. When a man came to the city of refuge, he was to state his case at the gate before the elders. They would allow him to enter and take refuge in their city, until they held an impartial hearing to determine whether or not the killing was accidental. The elders would ask questions as to how the person was killed<sup>53</sup> and what caused the problems, calling on several witnesses for both sides. No one could be put to death on the testimony of one man.<sup>54</sup> If the killing was found not to be accidental, the man would be put to death. **If he was found to be innocent of murder, he was allowed to live; but he had to stay inside the city of Refuge.** If he ever wandered outside its walls, a blood avenger (hired killer) could kill him. If the High Priest died in his lifetime, he was then able to go back to his home as a free and redeemed man.<sup>55</sup>

## Eastern Tribes

**The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh were given land on the east side of the Jordan River by Moses, when they asked to stay in that land before even seeing the Promised Land.** Around 40,000 men from these tribes fought alongside Joshua until there was peace in the Promised Land. After fighting side by side with their brothers for many years, Joshua released them to head back to their land, to be reunited with their families.

Before they left, Joshua warned them to be careful to observe all of the Lord's commandments, to walk in His ways, and to teach these to their children.<sup>56</sup> These soldiers returned with great riches to share with their families. They had great herds of livestock; clothing; and large amounts of gold, silver, bronze, and iron.<sup>57</sup> Although they went home with many earthly riches, **the greatest treasures they gave their families were wonderful stories of their all-powerful and faithful God, who defeated all their enemies in many miraculous ways!**

**Right before they crossed the Jordan River to go home, the soldiers from Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh erected a large altar to the Lord.** When the other tribes heard they did this,

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<sup>51</sup> Joshua 20:7-8

<sup>52</sup> Numbers 35, Joshua 20

<sup>53</sup> Numbers 16-24

<sup>54</sup> Numbers 35:30

<sup>55</sup> Joshua 20:6

<sup>56</sup> Joshua 22:1-5

<sup>57</sup> Joshua 22:8

they became very angry! They wanted to go and fight their brothers, because they felt that erecting this “alternate altar” showed great disrespect to God. The Lord had commanded them to only sacrifice on the Bronze Altar in the Tabernacle, which was now at Shiloh. Joshua sent for Phinehas, the son of the High Priest to mediate in this matter. The soldiers from the tribes across the Jordan River assured their brothers that they did not set this up as an “alternate altar” to turn away from God, but as a **memorial of their devotion to God**. They said this would also be a witness between those on the east side of the Jordan River with those on the west side that they were united in their love and devotion to Almighty God. They were fearful that the future generations of the sons of Israel living in the Promised Land might not let their sons cross over to worship God at the Tabernacle.<sup>58</sup> Phineas was pleased with the sincere explanation of these men, and promised that they would always be their brothers, with this altar as a witness between the two groups.

## Final Words

When Joshua and the elders had finished apportioning the land to the twelve tribes, **the sons of Israel gave land to Joshua as an inheritance**. They presented him the land of Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim. It was centrally located in the Promised Land, and set among beautiful mountains and hills. He built up this city and settled there with His family.<sup>59</sup> He died when he was 110, and was buried there.<sup>60</sup>

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*Joshua 21:43-45 “So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. And the Lord gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand. Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.”*

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**Before Joshua died, he asked all the people to come to Shechem, where he reminded them of what the Lord required from His people.** God had truly given them the land of Canaan as their possession, He had destroyed the nations living in the land, and given the sons of Israel rest from war. He had gone before them to fight the wars, and **He would continue to be with them to drive out the few nations that remained in their land; IF they obeyed His commands.**<sup>61</sup> Joshua told the sons of Israel that they must keep all the laws that God had given to Moses. They must be very firm in their devotion to the Lord, and not turn aside from any of His laws. **They were not to associate with any of the people of Canaan, or have anything to do with their gods.** He warned them NOT to intermarry with them, because if they did, they would turn God's people away from

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<sup>58</sup> Joshua 22:21-29

<sup>59</sup> Joshua 19:49-50

<sup>60</sup> Joshua 24:29-30

<sup>61</sup> Joshua 23:8-11

God. If they chose to serve other gods, they would arouse the anger of the Lord, and He would remove them from the good land He had given them.<sup>62</sup>

Joshua spoke to the people, reviewing all that God had done for Israel from the time of Abraham until bringing them to possess the Promised Land. God had made promises to His people, and He had kept them. He had led them to the good land, and He had destroyed all the nations that came against them. He gave them cities they did not have to build, and fields they did not have to plant.<sup>63</sup>

Because of all that God had done, and because of who He is, **Joshua told the people to “choose for yourselves this day who you will serve. But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord”.**<sup>64</sup> He told the people they had a choice to make. They could worship the One true God, or they could worship idols. They had to understand that choosing to obey God brought blessings like they had witnessed in their lives; but disobedience brought curses, like their parents had experienced in their lives. **The people all said that they would serve the Lord, for He was their God!** Four times Joshua reminded all the people that God is a jealous God and He would bring them harm if they forsook Him. But each time, they answered, **“We will serve the Lord!”** Joshua and the sons of Israel made a covenant with God, declaring they would faithfully follow the Lord all the days of their lives.

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***Judges 2:7** “The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the Lord which He had done for Israel.”*

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Joshua trusted Jesus every step of the way as his Commander-in-Chief. Whatever the Lord spoke to Joshua, he did! He never questioned, he never disobeyed, and he was always victorious! We too must learn by His example and trust in the Lord to lead us in every situation. We must never move or speak before we inquire of the Lord, and wait for His answer.

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<sup>62</sup> Joshua 23:7, 12-16

<sup>63</sup> Joshua 24:2-13

<sup>64</sup> Joshua 24:15

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

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1. God repeatedly told His people when they went into battle, they were to utterly destroy the idolatrous people in the land, along with all of their idols and objects of worship. We must follow Joshua's example when we are in a spiritual battle, and utterly destroy all that comes against us to separate us from God. **Why do we not utterly remove and destroy every worldly or fleshly thing in our lives?**
2. God wanted His people to take possession of the Promised Land. The land God wants to possess in Christians is our hearts. He wants us to be totally devoted to Him! **Please read Deuteronomy 7:1 and see the seven nations that that lived in the Promised Land. Look up the meanings of their names.** Each represents a negative emotion that is in each of us, as we have been wounded in our lives by the sinful choices we have made, or that others have done against us. Which ones hinder you from trusting God completely?
3. God set aside cities of refuge in the land of Israel. Please read Psalms 46. Who is to be our refuge and what does this Psalm say about it?
4. Summarize Psalm 33:16-18. How can you practically apply this scripture to your life?

# 3

## Troublesome Enemies

**Please Read Judges 1-2:9.**

After the death of Joshua, no single leader was chosen to lead the nation of Israel. Before his death, **Joshua assigned the responsibility of governing the land and people to the elders, leaders, and judges of each tribe.** Joshua told them God would continue to lead them in battle, and give them complete victory over the remaining enemies in the land; if they stayed faithful to God!

God had led His people to defeat 31 kings and capture most of the land in Canaan, but He left five Philistine lords who lived along the Mediterranean Sea, and a few kings of the Canaanites, Hivites, and Sidon. So why did God change the game plan in the midst of purging the pagan nations from the Promised Land?

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***Judges 3:4** “And they were left, that He might test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the Lord, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.”*

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Up to this point of taking the Promised Land, God had led His people in miraculous victories. As incredible as they were, it is human nature to grow complacent, even while living in the midst of great miracles. The sons of Israel grew accustomed to what God had done, and their sense of awe was diminished. They also had leaned too heavily upon Joshua and his relationship with God. God wanted each of the people in Israel to come to Him, to seek Him, and to worship Him. **He wanted His people to mature in their relationship with Him, so God brought a change.** One of God’s main ways to mature us is to bring testing and trials into our lives. When we are unsettled by these hardships, we tend to spend more time talking to God, and more time listening for His voice. We stop and reevaluate our lives, and ask God to get us back on track to obey Him faithfully.

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***James 1:2-4** “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”*

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After Joshua's death, **the sons of Israel met before God and asked Him for instructions in defeating their enemies. They specifically asked which tribe should be the first to fight against the remaining Canaanites in the Promised Land.** The Lord answered them and said the tribe of **Judah**. God promised He would give the enemy into their hands.<sup>65</sup> Instead of shouting, "the Lord is with us"; the elders of Judah turned to their brothers from the tribe of Simeon and **asked for their help** in the upcoming battles, promising to help them in theirs. **This was not God's perfect will, for He wanted them to rely upon Him, and not man.** But God in His mercy and grace led them to defeat 18,000 men in their first battle against the Canaanites and the Perizzites in Bezek. Then they fought against the Jebusites in the city of Jerusalem. They captured the city, killed many of the inhabitants, and then set the city on fire.<sup>66</sup> Afterwards they fought against the Canaanites living to the south in the hill country and the Negev Desert. Judah then helped **Simeon** to utterly destroy the Canaanites living in Zephath.

**Caleb** was from the tribe of Judah, and even though he was 85-90 years old, he was still was able to fight against the enemy. He led his men in the capture of Hebron, a city Joshua promised would be given to Caleb. They were able to kill the sons of Anak, three mighty giants. They moved on to the next city on their list, Debir; which was also known as Kiriath-sepher. Caleb offered his daughter in marriage to whoever could take this city. I'm not sure if Caleb was getting weary of war, or if he was trying to challenge the next generation to rise up and lead in war. His nephew Othniel took the challenge, and led in the attack and capture of Debir. Later on we will see that Othniel became an important judge among the sons of Israel.

## Did Not Drive Out

Things went fairly well in these first battles after the death of Joshua; but soon things took a bad turn. Caleb and the warriors of Judah defeated the Philistines living in the cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron; **but they could not defeat the Canaanites living in the valleys because they had iron chariots.**<sup>67</sup> Remember, just a few years before this, five kings had come against Israel with their strong chariots at Merom; and God totally destroyed them. Why were the chariots of this one king now too much for Judah? What happened?

Whatever had happened in Judah soon spread through all the other tribes. One by one the battles of the remaining tribes are described in Judges 1 with the same phrase, **"They did not drive out the inhabitants of the land."** It is not that they COULD not drive them out, but they DID not. This was a choice they made.

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<sup>65</sup> Judges 1:1-2

<sup>66</sup> Judges 1:8

<sup>67</sup> Judges 1:19

- The tribe of **Benjamin** let the Jebusites live in Jerusalem.
- The tribe of **Ephraim** went up against Bethel, but let one man and his family go free, and he started the city of Luz. Ephraim also was not able to drive out the inhabitants of Gezer.
- **Manasseh** did not take possession of Beth-shean, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, or Megiddo but they did enslave the Canaanites in their land.
- **Zebulun** did the same thing in Kitron and Nahalol.
- **Asher** did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco, Sidon, Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob.
- **Naphtali** did not drive out the Canaanites living in Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath; but made them their slaves.
- It was pathetic when we got to **Dan**. They were chased into the hill country by the Amorites, who did not allow the tribe of Dan to live in the valleys.

Do you remember the promises that God made to His people? **God promised them He would deliver all the enemy nations into their hands, and then they were to utterly destroy them.**<sup>68</sup> Utterly means totally, entirely, to the full extent. God told them to **kill all the inhabitants of the land** and to **destroy ALL forms of their pagan worship**. They could take silver and gold from the defeated cities, but only if it was not an idol. All idols, no matter what material they were made from were to be completely destroyed. Why did God make this command to His people, something that sounds so “harsh” in our culture today? God knew if the people who worshiped pagan gods were allowed to live, they would intermarry with the sons and daughters of Israel and they would turn them away from serving God. Why would He say that about the people that He loved? Because as we have seen over and over again in the Word, that is exactly what had happened since the beginning of mankind; and unfortunately it has continued to today.

We see in every tribe that they did not utterly destroy the people in the land. And why were they not able to clear away some of the nations? That was God’s job, yet it didn’t happen. **We must remember that God put conditions on His help; so since it didn’t come, the sons of Israel must have turned away from God.** This became much more evident in the next generation.

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*Judges 2:10-11 “... another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel. Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals.”*

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**This generation forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers; and they followed after the gods of the people in the land that their parents had not killed.** Their idol worship provoked the Lord to anger. He did not let them stand strong against their enemies. He allowed the nations

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<sup>68</sup> Exodus 23, Deuteronomy 7, Joshua 23

around them to harass, plunder, and enslave His people. Wherever they went, the hand of the Lord was against them, and they were severely distressed.<sup>69</sup> God promised His people this would come to pass if they forsook Him and turned to idol worship!

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**Judges 2:3** *"Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.' "*

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### Canaanites

Let's look more closely at the nations that were a continual thorn in the flesh of God's people, then and now. The people who lived in the land of Canaan were descendants of Noah's son Ham, through his sons Canaan, Cush, and Mizraim.<sup>70</sup> **Cush's son Nimrod built the city of Babylon and started the worship of false gods in the years after the flood.** The descendants of Canaan, Cush, and Mizraim settled in the land now known as Israel, the land God promised to give to Abraham and His descendants. God did not give His people possession of the land for several hundred years, because he wanted to give these people time to repent of their idolatrous ways. Three times God declared that the descendants of Ham were cursed and would be the servants of their brother Shem (Israel).<sup>71</sup> This was because Ham lustfully looked at his father's nakedness. **The descendants of Ham were known for their sexual and idolatrous perversions.**

### Philistines

The Philistines were descendants of Ham's son Mizraim, and they settled along the Mediterranean Sea. The first conflict between the Philistines and God's chosen people was with King Abimelech. He saw that God was with Abraham, so he asked him to make a peace covenant with him. Abraham and the king promised to not deal falsely with each other and to be kind to each other, for all generations. Abraham had dug some wells for his livestock, and some Philistines wanted these wells for themselves. Abimelech intervened and said they were Abraham's. Later Isaac wanted to use these wells but Abimelech stole them, **beginning a war and much conflict between the Philistines and God's people.** This conflict continued in the times of Moses. God did not lead His people by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was a closer route, because **there would be war.**<sup>72</sup> All throughout the time of the Judges and the Kings of Israel (except for King Solomon), there was constant war and conflict between the two nations. Even to the present day, the Palestinians are the descendants of the Philistines and are living in the Gaza Strip, constantly harassing and attacking Israel.

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<sup>69</sup> Judges 2:14-15

<sup>70</sup> Genesis 10:6-20

<sup>71</sup> Genesis 9:25-28

<sup>72</sup> Exodus 13:17

When you look at the **meanings of the names of the five Philistine cities**, we see the base nature of them was to harass and destroy God's people. These cities are still in existence today. These are a violent people who are steeped in idolatry. God's people were never able to destroy them, but we can know that one day, God will utterly destroy them.<sup>73</sup>

- Gaza – strong
- Ashdon – ravager
- Ashkelon -a weighing place as in a market
- Gath - crushing as in a wine press
- Ekron – eradication

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*Amos 1:8 "... and the remnant of the Philistines will perish, says the Lord God."*

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## “ITE” Brothers

The main enemies the sons of Israel faced in the Promised Land were the descendants of Canaan; primarily the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.<sup>74</sup> I call them the “ITE” brothers. These were great and mighty nations God's people were to clear out of the land. The majority of these ITE brothers were defeated in the first seven years under the leadership of Joshua; but a remnant of them stubbornly remained in the land. Some of them didn't seem to be so bad, certainly not as violent as the Philistines, so they tolerated them. The Hebrews disobeyed God and do not totally destroy them from the land. As a result they continued in compromise, which led them into blatant idolatry with the inhabitants of the land. Their false gods did become a snare for them.

One of the saddest statements during this time was that the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of the sons of Israel living in the Promised Land, “**did not know the Lord**”. The Hebrew word for **know** is **YADA**, and it means to know in an intimate way, as very close friends. Obviously their parents spent more time setting up their new homes and businesses, than they did raising their children to know and reverence the Lord. On top of that, they tolerated the ITE brothers in their midst, sometimes even allowing them to marry into their families.

When we read these stories in the Bible, we wonder how God's people could have gotten so off track. Why were these nations so hard to remove? Why were God's people drawn to them? Why did they allow themselves and their children to associate with them, instead of utterly destroying them? We tend to judge them, because God's promises were so black and white – God's presence and blessings for obedience, or God's pulling away and curses for disobedience. Before we get too judgmental, let's look at the meanings of the names of these nations.

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<sup>73</sup> Jeremiah 47:4, Ezekiel 25:6, Zephaniah 2:5, Zechariah 9:6

<sup>74</sup> Deuteronomy 7:1

## Riches of God's Word

- Hittites- fear
- Girgashites - rejection
- Amorites- worthlessness
- Canaanites- shame
- Perizzites- insecurity
- Hivites- defilement
- Jebusites- hopelessness

These are emotions! Very powerful emotions that war against our souls; our mind, will and emotions. They keep us from a close and abiding relationship with God and others. We have these very nations inside of us, fighting against our desire to know God. The battlefield is in our minds; which need to be renewed before we can be transformed into the people God desires us to be. Our old minds followed after the dictates of our flesh and the world, but now the Lord wants to transform our new mind to be set upon Him. We are in the midst of a fierce internal battle for the control of our souls!

God desires to bring us into a life of abundance in Christ; a place of unconditional love and acceptance; a place of peace and rest. But the wounds in our hearts keep that from happening. Our souls are wounded and tormented by the hurts from our sins, our iniquities (passed down sins from our ancestors), and the sins other people have committed against us.

When we accept Christ as our Savior, it is like He has brought us into the Promised Land. We see the goodness of being in His presence and the miraculous changes He has produced in our hearts. But we still have struggles in our minds and emotions. We tend to think it would much better for us if God would just make us perfect as soon as we asked Him to be our Savior. That all our fears would be gone, we would no longer feel the rejection and defilement from others, we would no longer struggle with insecurity and worthlessness, shame and hopelessness would disappear. But that is not the way God builds our faith in Him, which deepens our relationship with Him.

Little by little He draws us closer, teaching us His truths, and erasing the lies from our past. He allows us to go through hard times of testing and trials, all to defeat these emotional enemies. As these enemies are being defeated little by little, He is healing our wounded hearts, and bringing us into an abiding friendship with Father God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Each of these parts of God have different relationships with us; and if we allow them to be nurtured and developed, we will see incredible fruit in our lives. God wants this for all His people; those in the Promised Land thousands of years ago, and all His people living on the earth now.

## Hittite = Fear

Fear was the first enemy nation mentioned in Deuteronomy 7 that God's people were to defeat, and the **first emotion mentioned in the Bible**. Adam said that

he hid himself from God and was **afraid**, because he was naked.<sup>75</sup> We can attest in our own lives that fear seems to throw itself in front of us at every turn, making us want to run away and hide. **The lie that inspires fear is that we are all alone.** Fear is an emotion that has the ability to shatter us, freezing us in our tracks, or melting us into ineffective paralysis. Fear positions itself in front of us each and every time there is change in our lives, or when the Lord is leading us to a new place in Him.

Is it any wonder that **the Bible tells us over 350 times not to be afraid.** The Old Testament has twenty seven different words for fear, and almost every book in the New Testament deals with this emotion. The main New Testament word for **fear** is *phobos*, where we get the English word phobia. **How can we begin to overcome this enemy in our souls?** By understanding that God is always with us.

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*Psalm 118:6 "The Lord is for me, I will not fear!"*

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## Girgashite - Rejection

Rejection **causes us to feel we do not belong.** The word Girgashite has no none derivation, but the root word *ger* means sojourner or stranger. The Girgashites were outsiders who were not invited in. We all experience rejection simply because we are not good at everything. **Rejection is the result of imperfect or conditional love. This imperfect love leads to great fear of not being accepted by others.** Often this causes us to try as hard as we can to be perfect just to impress the people around us; or we tend to pull away to avoid being rejected again. With both of these we end of **ignoring who we truly were created to be**, so that eventually even our strengths get pushed aside. Rejection causes us to feel separated and left out, confused, nameless, worthless, angry, restless, and unsettled.

**We cannot allow the feelings associated with rejection to run free in our lives, because they hinder God's presence in our lives.** They must be utterly defeated! This starts when we understand that God accepts us and loves us unconditionally. We are very valuable to God, and He has great plans for all of our lives, kingdom plans. **We must know that we are defined and identified solely by our relationship with Him.** We are who He says we are, not what others say about us.

**With the security of God's acceptance, we can now risk the company of others who may or may not accept us.** Some may still reject us out of their hurts, insecurities, and selfishness. It will

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<sup>75</sup> Genesis 3:10

hurt, but it will not damage our heart as before. We must be quick to forgive, coming to God to heal and cleanse our wounded heart, so bitterness will not be able to take root.

## Canaanite = Shame

Shame is a **painful feeling of having done something wrong**. We feel shame by the things others have done or said to

us, sinful things we have done, or being caught doing something wrong or inappropriate. Shame comes when we compare ourselves with others, seeing our imperfections as so much greater than others. We can also feel shame by the imperfections and sins of members of our family.

With shame we compare ourselves with some kind of standard. We are always trying to hide our perceived imperfections. With that hiding, we tend to cut off relationships with family members, friends, and God. In our relationship with God, when we are under the influence of shame we often tell ourselves that we have gone too far, there is no forgiveness for me. But that is a lie. **We are but one word away from intimacy with God when we sin – repentance!** The love of God is the most powerful force in the universe. Nothing can separate us from his love - nothing!<sup>76</sup> And God's love is not limited by anything. He has no conditions or standards for His love. There is nothing we can do to earn His love – it is all grace and mercy!

Shame begins with sin – ours or someone else's. Shame then causes a lot of negative emotions like guilt, perfectionism, self-consciousness, hiding, fear and separation, and covering up. **When we are in the midst of shame, God desires to clean up our mess, calling us back to intimacy with Him. There is nothing that He cannot redeem!**

These were just three of the emotions associated with these enemy nations that God wants all mankind to destroy utterly, so we can all draw near to the One who loves us eternally and unconditionally! The ITE brothers come to keep us in bondage, but Jesus came to set us free. We must let the truth of who God is and what He truly thinks about us take over our minds and our emotions, so we can be set free. We must let God drive them out little by little, victory by victory.

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<sup>76</sup> Romans 8:38-39

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

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1. Name three instances in the Old Testament when God's people mixed with unrighteous people and were led away from God?

What was the name of a good king of Israel whom God greatly blessed; yet in the end of his life, he was led astray to worship other gods?

Who led him astray?

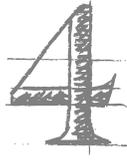
2. Give an example from your life where God used the trials in your life to bring you closer to Him.
3. Three times God promised to send hornets against the enemy in the Promised Land. List the three references (look up the word hornet or hornets).

God promised in these three references to not defeat the nations in Canaan in a rapid fashion, but that He would clear them out little by little. What do you think God's reasons were for destroying the enemy nations in this way?

4. What "ITE" brother nation has the most control over your emotions?

Where did it come from?

Spend some time talking to God, asking Him to defeat this hostile nation your heart, and showing you how to utterly destroy it and the idols it came with.



## Here Comes the Judge

### Please Read Judges 2:10-23

After the original Jewish settlers had died, **a new generation arose that did not know the Lord!** These new sons of Israel had grown up in the Promised Land, and helped their parents set up their homes and communities, yet they did not know the God who brought them to this land and gave them all they had. **How could that be?**

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*Judges 2:12 “and they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the Lord to anger.”*

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Their parents had followed the leadership of Moses, and then Joshua into the Promised Land. They had experienced many mighty miracles in defeating most of the enemies in the land. **They knew God first hand** because they had seen His Shekinah glory over the Tabernacle leading them, they had eaten His manna that He provided for the first 40 years of their lives, they had heard His voice speaking instructions and promises to them, and they had seen Him in the form of Jesus. They knew God. The Hebrew word for **knew** is **yada**. It means to know by seeing, using a great variety of senses; being acquainted with; and having respect for someone. When you **yada** someone, you have a personal relationship with him.

**It is so sad to see their children did not know God!** Were their parents too busy building up their little parts of the Promised Land that they neglected to teach their children about God? They had made a covenant with God promising to teach their children all about God and His commandments,<sup>1</sup> yet their children did not know God! We saw in our last chapter that their parents were disobedient in not destroying all the inhabitants of the land; and we will see in future chapters of Judges that they intermarried with the inhabitants of the land. **This forbidden mixture brought idol worship into the families of God’s people!** As a result, future generations forsook God! The Hebrew word

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 6:7-15

for **forsook** is *azab*. It means to leave, abandon, ignore, neglect, or leave behind. They abandoned Elohim, the Supreme God of the Universe, the God who created all things, who sustains all things, and who loved and called them to be a very special people for His own possession<sup>2</sup>.

## Burning Anger

**The anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of their enemies, who plundered them. The hand of God was no longer for them, but against them; so they could no longer stand against their enemies. When they forsook God, they lost the spiritual battle within, so they were no longer able to win the physical battles without.** This caused the people to be severely distressed, afflicted, and oppressed. When we turn away from following after the One true God, and seek our own way, following the idolatrous ways of the world, our flesh, and the devil; we too will become severely distressed, afflicted, and oppressed. The world wants to fill our minds with false ways of thinking, so we must be diligent to put on the mind of Christ. Our flesh wants us to walk in sin, so we must walk by the Spirit. The devil wants our soul and our life, but these are placed securely in God's powerful and loving hands when we ask Jesus to be our Lord and Savior.

**Yet the Lord, out of His love and mercy, raised up judges to deliver the sons of Israel from the harsh treatment of those who were against them.** God was with these heroic leaders, and they were able to do amazing things. Unfortunately, most times the people did not listen to these leaders, and they continued in their idolatrous ways! The book of Judges is a sad commentary on the continuing cycles of disobedience, repentance, and obedience by the sons of Israel.



<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 14:2

**We will see this cycle repeated over and over again throughout the 410 years covered in the book of Judges.** Unfortunately it was a **downward spiral**, with the future generations always being more corrupt than their forefathers.<sup>3</sup> As the sons of Israel tolerated more and more idolatry from the people they were supposed to completely destroy, and as they intermarried with them; their understanding of God became very watered down. The idolatrous traditions of their parents became so interwoven with the Word of God that it was almost impossible to know God.

We see this today all over the world. In some nations there is great persecution of God's people, causing many to fall away from Him. In the United States and Europe so many false teachings of the world have crept into the church, causing great divisions among the different denominations; and making it difficult for their members to really know the Lord. The apostasy (falling away) and the apathy (indifference) among God's people today is no different than in the times of Judges. **But God always preserves a remnant of His people who are separated from the idolatry of the world, who will arise and speak the truth. When the people get desperate enough to seek after the One True God, they will listen to the truth and turn to God.** This will get even more evident as the time for our precious Lord's return draws near.

### **Please read Judges 3-5**

The Lord brought powerful enemies into the lives of His people that they were no longer able to stand against. **God is the one who sent these tests to His people.** We too are being tested by the Lord so we might be taught how to engage in spiritual warfare. A victorious Christian life is not achieved apart from war! **Every test, every war, is designed to bring us to a greater obedience, faith, and love towards our God.** We go to higher ground through obedience, and lower ground through disobedience. When we taste of a sin, we may develop an appetite for it. When we are tempted to taste it again, we must see the temptation for what it is, and ask the Holy Spirit to come alongside us and help us in the battle against that temptation. We must stand on the promise that no temptation is more that we can handle, God always gives us a way of escape.<sup>4</sup> But when we are in the midst of temptation, will we look for it?

**Othniel** God brought a reckoning to His rebellious people; and sold them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim, a king from Mesopotamia. The sons of Israel were enslaved to him for eight years. The people finally cried out to the Lord, and He raised up a deliverer – a judge by the name of Othniel. **Judges were usually heroic leaders who were also entrusted with governing the people.** Sometimes they were mighty warriors, and sometimes they were not. Othniel was first mentioned in the first chapter of Judge as

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<sup>3</sup> Judges 2:19

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:13

the nephew and son-in-law of Caleb. He was a mighty warrior from the tribe of Judah. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him; and when he went out to war against Cushan-rishathaim, he prevailed.<sup>5</sup> For the next 40 years, during the lifetime of Othniel, the sons of Israel had rest from their enemies.

## Ehud

**But as soon as Othniel died, the sons of Israel began to do evil in the sight of the Lord;** so God strengthened Eglon, the king of Moab to come against Israel. Eglon gathered soldiers from Moab, Ammon, and Amalek and fought against the sons of Israel. They captured the city of Jericho and oppressed the sons of Israel for 18 years, forcing them to pay large sums of money to him every year. Finally the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord, and He raised up a deliverer; Ehud, from the tribe of Benjamin. He was described as being left-handed. The Hebrew word used here suggests that he was left-handed because something was wrong with his right hand, making it useless to him. God chose someone who was not considered a warrior because of his disability; but we will see that he actually was a valiant warrior.

The sons of Israel sent Ehud to deliver the tribute money each year to Eglon because he probably looked like he was no threat to the king. On his last trip to Eglon, he had an 18 inch double edge sword made which he strapped to his right thigh, under his cloak. When he visited the king, he paid the tribute and then whispered into his ear that he had a secret message for him. The king was intrigued and set everyone out of the room. Ehud said, *“I have a message from God for you”*, and then he stood up and pulled the sword with his left hand and thrust it all the way into the king’s fat belly. Ehud left the room and locked the door. When the king’s servants came by the locked room, they assumed the king was using the restroom, so they left him alone; giving Ehud even more time to get away. Once he got to the hill country of Ephraim, he blew a trumpet to gather the mighty men of war. These valiant warriors crossed over the Jordan River into Moab, and killed all 10,000 of their soldiers. The land of Israel was then at peace for 80 years.<sup>6</sup>

## Shamgar

Probably during the same time that Ehud was fighting against Israel’s enemies to the east, the Lord raised up Shamgar to fight against the plundering of the Philistines who lived to the west.<sup>7</sup> They had made the roads unsafe to travel.<sup>8</sup> During his lifetime, Shamgar killed over 600 Philistines with an oxgoad, an eight foot long stick used to herd oxen. On one end it had a six-inch shovel like structure, and on the other end it had a sharp spike used to prick the oxen to move – like a spur. Even though he didn’t look like a warrior in armor and a sword, he was quite effective with this unconventional weapon. God seems to delight in using the foolish things of this world to confound the wise.<sup>9</sup> He delivered Israel from the robbers and plunderers from doing further mischief in the land during his lifetime.

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<sup>5</sup> Judges 3:9-11

<sup>6</sup> Judges 3:12-30

<sup>7</sup> Judges 3:31

<sup>8</sup> Judges 5:6

<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:27

## Deborah

**The sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord after Ehud died**, so the Lord gave them into the hands of Jabin, the king of Canaan.

The commander of his army was named Sisera, and he had 900 iron chariots at his disposal. They oppressed the sons of Israel for 20 years. Towards the end of that time, Deborah arose to be a judge in Israel. She was married to Lappidoth, from the tribe of Ephraim. She was a prophetess, and people came to her to settle their disputes. The Lord had her appoint Barak to lead an army to defeat Sisera and his army. He was to take 10,000 warriors from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun, and go to Mt. Tabor. God would draw out Sisera and his chariots along the Kishon River, which was normally a dry river bed, and give them into Barak's hand. Barak listened to her words from God; and then said he would only go if she went with him. She said she would go with him, but the honor God wanted to give him for this victory would not go to him, but to a woman.

The Lord used Heber, a distant relative of Moses' father-in-law Hobab, to tell Sisera that Barak was amassing troops at Mt. Tabor.<sup>10</sup> Sisera gathered all 900 of his iron chariots and all his warriors, and they went to the Kishon River. The Lord routed Sisera's army that day, and all of his soldiers were killed. The Lord sent His angelic army to fight the battle, and He also sent a torrent of rain to flood the normally dry river bed, rendering the iron chariots useless.<sup>11</sup> Sisera ran away on foot, and ended up in Heber's camp. His wife, Jael, went out to meet Sisera and invited him to rest in her tent. She gave him milk to drink, and then covered him with a blanket. She said she would stay at the door of the tent and keep everyone away. Soon he was sound asleep. She took a tent stake and drove it through his head as he slept.<sup>12</sup> Barak finally passed by her camp, and she went out to meet him and led him to Sisera, lying dead in her tent.

After this great victory, the sons of Israel gathered together to fight against Jabin, the king of Canaan. The tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh, and Issachar joined their brothers from the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali.<sup>13</sup> (It is interesting to note that the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Dan, and Asher were listed as not coming to help, along with their excuses. The most southern tribes of Judah and Simeon were not listed, probably because they were not being oppressed by Jabin.) The six tribes fought against Jabin until he was destroyed; and the land was undisturbed for 40 years.

**Please read Judges 6-8**

## Gideon

Here we go again. **After 40 years of peace, the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of God**, and He gave them into the hands of the Midianites for seven years. God is very patient with His people. He will do all that is necessary to bring correction to us so we will turn from our sinful and wicked ways. God sent a

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<sup>10</sup> Judges 4:11-12

<sup>11</sup> Judges 5:19-22

<sup>12</sup> Judges 4:17-22; 5:24-27

<sup>13</sup> Judges 5:13-15,18

different type of enemy this time. One that devastated the land and disheartened the people. For seven years, the Midianites along with the Amalekites would come into Israel and destroy all the crops right before they were harvested, leaving no food for the sons of Israel. They did this by bringing all their livestock into the fields, where they would either eat the crops or trample them; destroying everything. The people cried out to the Lord for help, and this time **He sent a prophet to talk to them.** He reminded the sons of Israel who God is and what He had done to get them to the Promised Land. The Lord was their God, and they were not to go after other gods; *“But you have not obeyed Me!”*<sup>14</sup>

**The angel of the Lord (Jesus) came and sat down under an oak tree next to a man named Gideon, who was threshing wheat in a wine press.** He was desperate for food and was trying to hide what little he had from the Midianites. Jesus spoke to him and said, *“The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior.”* I find it strange that Gideon was so afraid of the Midianites, yet he didn’t seem to be afraid of Jesus; because he argued with Him. He said, *“If God is with us, why has all this bad stuff happened to us? And why don’t we experience the miracles our father’s told us about? Why has God abandoned us and put us in the hand of the Midianites?”*

I love Jesus’ response. He ignored all of Gideon’s whining and looked Gideon right in his eyes and said, *“Go in this your strength (what little faith that you have) and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?”* Gideon continued to whine, *“How shall I deliver anyone. I am a nobody, from one of the poorest families in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my family.”* The Lord said to him, *“Surely, I will be with you. You shall defeat all of Midian as if it were just one man.”*<sup>15</sup>

Gideon was warming up a little to this idea, but he was still a little unsure, so **he asked the Lord to show him a sign.** Gideon went and prepared an offering for the Lord. Jesus told him to place his offerings on a rock, and as He stretched out His staff to the meat and unleavened bread, fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the offering! And then Jesus vanished. Gideon finally realized that he had seen the Lord face to face and started to panic. Just then, Jesus returned and told him to settle down, he was not going to die. He gave him instructions to go out that night and tear down his father’s altar to baal, and to cut down the asherah next to it. He was then to build an altar to the Lord on top of that idolatrous stronghold, use the asherah as fire wood, and offer one of his father’s bulls to the Lord. The next day the men of the city were horrified that their pagan altar was destroyed. They found out that Gideon had done it, but incredibly his father came to his defense. He said, *“If baal is truly a god, let him take vengeance on whoever tore down his altar”.* His father then renamed Gideon Jerubbaal, which means “let baal contend against him”.

The Midianites and the Amalekites assembled themselves in the valley of Jezreel to again raid all the farm land. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon and he blew a trumpet to call the men in

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<sup>14</sup> Judges 6:8-10

<sup>15</sup> Judges 6:11-16

his town to war. He also sent messengers to the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali to come fight against their enemies. Gideon called on the Lord and asked him for another sign, to know that He would deliver Israel through him. He set out a fleece on a stone floor, and asked for the dew to only fall on the fleece that night. In the morning the ground was dry, but the fleece was full of water. Incredibly Gideon asked the Lord to repeat the same sign, but with opposite results. The Lord did as he asked, and this time the fleece was completely dry. Gideon now knew that the Lord was with him, and would work through him to deliver Israel.<sup>16</sup>

Gideon arose early with his 32,000 men and they camped near the Midian army of 135,000 soldiers. They waited there to receive instructions from the Lord. I know they didn't know what to expect, but what they heard was incredible. **The Lord told Gideon he had too many soldiers with him!** They were outnumbered more than 4 to 1, but to God that was too easy. He didn't want the sons of Israel in any way to think the victory came from them. God told Gideon to send home all those who were trembling and afraid of the huge army they were about to face. 22,000 men raised their hands and returned to their homes. God told Gideon the 10,000 men were still too many, and he dropped the number to 300 men. God said, "*Now I will deliver all of Israel with these 300 men.*"<sup>17</sup>

God instructed Gideon to sneak into the Midianite camp at night and listen to what was being said about them. **God knew it would strengthen his faith.** He overheard two men talking about a dream one of them had, and then the other man interpreted it, saying "*that is the sword of Gideon and God has given Midian into his hand.*" Gideon bowed in worship to God, and then quickly returned to camp and woke up his 300 men. Even though it was still night, Gideon told them to arise, for the Lord had given the camp of the Midianites into their hands. He divided the men into three companies, and gave each man a trumpet and an empty pitcher with a torch inside. Notice, they did not have any weapons. These three companies encircled the Midian camp. On Gideon's signal, they blew their trumpets and broke the pitchers so that the torches were suddenly ablaze. Then they all yelled, "*A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!*" This sent the enemy camp into great panic and confusion, and then the Lord caused the Midianite soldiers to fight against each other. Those who were not killed, ran away as fast as they could. Gideon sent messengers to the 31,700 men of war from Israel that were released, along with the men from Ephraim, and told them to chase after the enemy. The men of Ephraim captured and kill their leaders.<sup>18</sup>

**Gideon was raised in a pagan environment**, with his father building an altar to baal and an asherah, both of which the entire town used for the worship of their gods. Even though Gideon tore down these altars and lived a life trusting God and leading the sons of Israel; once there was peace, **he mixed in idolatry with the worship of God.** He asked all people of Israel to give him a donation of gold from the looted earrings of the Ishmaelites (about 50 pounds of pure gold), and with it he

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<sup>16</sup> Judges 6:33-40

<sup>17</sup> Judges 7:1-8

<sup>18</sup> Judges 7:9-25

fashioned a golden garment to resemble an ephod. This was a garment usually worn by the high priest; but he had it made to be displayed and worshipped as an idol in the land. Amazingly enough, God still allowed him to be a judge in Israel; and the land was at peace for 40 years, until he died.

**Every time a judge died, the people would turn away from the Lord.** Obviously the people were relying on the man and his relationship with God; instead of developing a personal relationship with God themselves. We saw that with Joshua and all the judges, and unfortunately we see this today in the church. People in our congregations get very comfortable being spoon fed the Word of God, and even consider themselves to be strong Christians, because their pastor is one. But when he dies, or even worse when his hidden sins are exposed, the church dissolves or splits. And all too often, many leave the church, never to return. Their foundation was built on a man, and not on God Himself.

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*Jeremiah 17:5-7 "...Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the Lord...Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord."*

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Two more men are mentioned as judges, **Tola and Jair**. Combined they judged Israel for 45 years, and **it is a sad commentary that nothing was said about their accomplishments.**<sup>19</sup> After them the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. They forsook God, and did not serve Him; but instead they served all the gods of the people around them. The anger of the Lord burned against them, and He gave them in to the hands of the Philistines and the sons of Ammon. These two nations afflicted and crushed Israel for 18 years. Finally the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord, admitting they had sinned against Him and forsaken Him in their idol worship. **God answered them by saying, "You turned away from Me to serve other gods. Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen, and let them deliver you in your distress!"** This response from God really shook them; so much so that they destroyed their idols, and truly repented and turned to serve the Lord. This moved the Lord to pity His people, and He could no longer bear their misery.

**Jephthah** God raised up another judge to deliver His people from the oppression of the Ammonites. The leaders of Gilead, who were getting the brunt of the attacks from Ammon, asked Jephthah, a valiant warrior, to lead them in war. Jephthah was skeptical of their offer, because he had been cast out of this tribe many years before this. He had been born to a harlot, and his step-brothers drove him out of their home. He moved to the land of Tob (east of Gilead) and surrounded himself with worthless men; probably being employed as mercenaries, soldiers for hire. He must have had quite a reputation as a warrior for the men of Gilead to beg him to come and be their judge.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Judges 10:1-5

<sup>20</sup> Judges 11:1-11

The king of Ammon sent Jephthah a message demanding Israel give them back the land their forefathers had stolen from them. Jephthah explained to the king of Ammon how Israel came into possession of the land east of the Jordan River;<sup>21</sup> but the king did not listen to the words of Jephthah, and came against the sons of Israel. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and He gave Ammon into his hands.

During the time of Jephthah, **the unity of the sons of Israel began to unravel.** After the victory, the men of Ephraim came to Jephthah in a rage; demanding to know why they were not called to fight with him; and they threatened to burn his house down on him!<sup>22</sup> The men of this tribe were notorious for showing up after successful battles demanding to know why they were excluded. They didn't mind missing the battle, but they did mind missing out on gathering the spoils of war! This had happened during the last war of Gideon, and he was able to diffuse it with flattery;<sup>23</sup> but Jephthah was not a man of tact. He said, *"I did call you to help, but you refused. Why are you here now to fight against me?"* And then Jephthah gathered his men of war and fought against his "brothers" from Ephraim. They killed 42,000 men, and took control of the shallow crossing spots in the Jordan River that the men of Ephraim once controlled.

Jephthah judged Israel for six years and then he died. After him there were three more men who judged Israel for very short times during the next 25 years.<sup>24</sup> Nothing much was said about them; but what was said leads us to infer **the morals of God's people were at an all-time low.** **Ibzan** had 60 sons and daughters, all of whom he married to people not from the tribes of Israel. This was such a bold-faced rebellion against God's commands to not intermarry with the pagans in the land! He had to have been very wealthy to have so many wives and children. The next judge, **Abdon** was also wealthy. The Bible tells us that his 70 sons and grandsons all rode donkeys. That doesn't impress us, but in that day when everyone walked everywhere, it was like they all drove luxury automobiles. What a tragic legacy, nothing was said about their character or their accomplishments as a judge.

**Today in Israel we can see a repeat of what happened in the Promised Land with the younger generation.** Their parents were so excited that God had brought them back to the Promised Land, and they experienced many mighty miracles in setting up their land, and defending themselves against many hostile and powerful enemy nations. Yet most of the younger generation in Israel today has forsaken God. They are proud of their land, Israel, but they have no relationship with the God who gave them that land. We see this too in the United States. Our country was founded on the truth of God's Word and a desire to worship Him freely. Yet now fewer and fewer people truly believe in God and His Word! They are following the desires of their flesh and the dictates of the world.

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<sup>21</sup> Judges 11:15-27

<sup>22</sup> Judges 12:1

<sup>23</sup> Judges 8:1-3

<sup>24</sup> Judges 12:7-15

THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL					
NAME	TRIBE	DESCRIPTION	YEARS AS A JUDGE	OPPRESSORS	LENGTH OF OPPRESSION
Othniel	Judah	Warrior Caleb's son-in-law	40 years	King Cushan-rishathaim Mesopotamia	8 years
Ehud	Benjamin	Left handed – disabled courier	80 years	King Eglon Moab-demanded tribute	18 years
Shamgar	Naphtali With pagan roots	Ox-herder Killed 600 with an oxgoad	During some of the time of Ehud	Philistines	
Deborah	Ephraim	Prophetess Arbitrated disputes Led Barak to defeat Sisera	40 years	King Jabin of Canaan	20 years
Gideon	Manasseh	Farmer	40 years	King Zebah & Zalmunna Midian	7 years
Tola	Issachar		23 years		
Jair	Gad	Wealthy – had 30 sons who lived in 30 cities	22 Years		
Jephthah	Gad (Giead)	mercenary	6 years	Ammon & Philistines	18 years
Ibzan	Judah	Wealthy -60 children, many wives married all children to pagans	7 Years	Ammon & Philistines	
Elon	Zebulun		10 years	Ammon & Philistines	
Abdon	Ephraim	Wealthy – had 70 sons and grandsons who each rode a donkey	8 years	Amalelites	
Samson	Dan	Nazarite	20 Years	Philistines	40 years

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

1. When you look at the people whom God called to be a judge, we see a very odd mix of people. Some were mighty warriors, men of wealth and influence, a fearful farmer, a prophetic woman, a disabled diplomat, an aggressive ox herder, a mercenary, and a womanizing Nazirite. We would never choose these people. Yet when God calls us to do something amazing for Him, it is never on the basis of our ability or courage, but rather His call is always a challenge to our faith. Do we truly believe God is with us and that He can do anything, even through us?

When has God asked you to do something and you said NO, because you did not have the ability, resources, or faith to do it?

When has God asked you to do something and you said YES, even though you knew you did not have the ability in yourself to do what He was asking?

2. Do you see that you have been on the same cycle of rebellion, oppression, repentance, restoration, and obedience as the people in Judges? Give an example of that cycle from your life, and where are you now?
3. In the church, there are differing opinions on laying out a "fleece" before the Lord, for Him to prove what He had spoken to someone. Some say it is not good to "test" the Lord, and others say it is good to make sure that what you heard was from God. But just from looking at the passage in Judges 6 about the tests Gideon asked of Jesus, and by Jesus' reactions to them, what do you think is the Biblical answer to asking for a "fleece"?
4. Read Judges 11 and 12. How can we know that Jephthah had a pagan upbringing? What did he do in his life that made that very evident?
5. Do you see God's mercy and love for His people, even in the midst of their idolatrous sin? Write out a thank you to God.

# 5

## Evil in God's Sight

**Please Read Judges 13-16**

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**Judges 13:1** *"Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, so that the Lord gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years."*

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Once again the sons of Israel turned away from the Lord, and went after the idols of the land. God gave them into the hands of the Philistines for 40 years in order to get them to return to Him. This was the longest time of oppression in the Promised Land, showing the hardness of the hearts of God's people. Reading through the chronicles of the time of the Judges can be very discouraging, with their downward spiral of rebellion, reckoning, repentance, restoration, rest, and then repeat! **But the encouragement comes when we lock our eyes upon the Lord and see His patient love and steadfast desire for His people.** He was actively involved in their lives answering their pleas for deliverance, forgiving their sins, raising up judges, and fighting their battles. In the story of the last judge in the book of Judges, we see that Jesus came down to earth to personally set apart this deliverer!

### Samson

This last judge in the book of Judges was named Samson, and he was from the tribe of Dan. Remember back to the time before Jacob died, and he gave a prophetic blessing over all of his sons and their descendants. He proclaimed that the tribe of Dan would "judge God's people and be a horned snake in the path of their enemies".<sup>1</sup> We have seen in our study of Judges, God had raised up deliverers (judges) from at least eight of the tribes in Israel. With this judge from the tribe of Dan, Jesus personally came down to earth to call Samson to be His deliverer; fulfilling Jacob's blessing over the tribe of Dan. God had great plans for Samson to be a righteous judge in the midst of Israel. The Lord wanted to lead him to deliver the sons of Israel from the Philistines, a small group of five lords who had never been conquered since the sons of Israel came into the Promised Land. Their conquest would begin with Samson, and end with King David!

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 49:16-17

Almost everyone in the world has heard about Samson. He is a favorite Bible character with children in Sunday school; and many fictional movies have been made about his life, because his real life, as told in four chapters of the Bible, was very dramatic. Physically he was the strongest man to ever live on the earth, and he did amazing feats of daring and strength. But his character portrayed him as one of the weakest men in the Bible, with the incredibly stupid choices he made in his life with women.

Samson's call to be a great judge to deliver the sons of Israel from the oppression of the Philistines began even before he was conceived! Jesus, in the form of an angel, appeared to Samson's future mother (and later to his father also) to give her strange yet very good news. The Lord told her that even though she had been barren for a very long time, she would conceive and bring forth a son, who would begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines. Jesus went on to tell her that **her son would be a Nazirite to God from the womb, to the day of his death.** In fact, even she was to live a life as a Nazirite when she was carrying and nursing her unborn son.<sup>2</sup>

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*Amos 2:11 "I raised up some of your sons to be prophets and some of your young men to be Nazirites..."*

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## Nazirite

**What is a Nazirite?** Nazirites are mentioned only a few times in the Bible, but always with great respect.<sup>3</sup> The word comes from the Hebrew word *Nazir* which means set apart for God, sanctified, consecrated to reflect God's glory, **to be removed from common standards in order to meet the standard of God.** The Levites were a people who were set apart for God, but God did not want to exclude any of His people from wanting to live extraordinary lives for Him. So when men or women were desperately hungry for more of God, they would make a Nazirite vow, separating themselves from the things of this world to be used by God in extraordinary ways to glorify God. Often with their pure and holy lifestyles, and the extraordinary power that came from the Holy Spirit within them, they were able to shake the people around them out of their complacency.

Most people make a Nazirite vow for a certain time frame, where others become Nazirites for life. Lifelong Nazirites are divinely set apart to be mightily used to shift the course of a nation. There are three examples of lifelong Nazirites in the Bible, who were vowed and dedicated to the Lord by their parents before they were born. Samuel was used as a mighty prophet to kings; Samson was given supernatural strength to deliver his nation from great oppression; and John the Baptist had a steadfast passion and an extraordinary ability to preach the Word of God, bringing people to repentance, paving the way for Jesus to come into their hearts.

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<sup>2</sup> Judges 13:3-7

<sup>3</sup> Lamentations 4:7

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**Numbers 6:2** *"Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When a man or woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to dedicate himself to the Lord'..."*

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The sixth chapter of Numbers gives detailed instructions for those desiring to undertake a Nazirite vow. First, **they were to abstain from wine and any intoxicating drink, and even from eating grapes or raisins.** This was to preserve perfect clearness of their mind, and also a denial of the sweetness of the things of the world, even though they (grapes and raisins) are not bad for us. We see this with Christians today in our times of **fasting.**

The second instruction was that no razor was to come upon their head. The free growth of the hair was a symbol of strength and abundant vitality that was gained with the vow. It was a sign that they belonged to the Lord, and were dedicated to His service. **This outward sign served as an open accountability of their inward abandonment to the Lord!** Throughout the ages, Nazirites have been called the long-haired ones. Often in battles, those leading the charge were those who took a Nazirite vow, and their long hair could be seen under their helmets. Their vow of purity and consecration to God was a strength and encouragement to those who followed behind them.

The third instruction was that they were **not to touch or be near a dead person;** and this meant they were not even to bury their family members if they died during the vow. Dead bodies were unclean under Jewish law, and touching a dead body caused defilement. There would be a lot of pressure from family members to attend their funerals, but the Nazirites were to stay away from all peer pressure and influences that would induce them to defile themselves. We too must be very careful to not touch anything that causes us to die spiritually!

**There is a great resurgence of men and women in this age, seeking to live pure and consecrated lives, set apart for God** - to take a Nazirite vow either for a season or for the rest of their lives. These Nazirites will position themselves to hear clearly from God and to obediently follow His commands. **They will be mighty in the Word and mighty in battle.**

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**Judges 13:5** *"For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines."*

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Jesus came and spoke to Samson's mother and father several times to let them know that their son was to be a Nazirite all the days of his life.<sup>4</sup> He was appointed by the Lord to bring deliverance to his people from the oppression of the Philistines. Jesus repeatedly told them Samson was not to

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<sup>4</sup> Judges 13:7

drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing, and that his hair was never to be cut. It is interesting that Jesus did not tell him to say away from dead bodies as Deuteronomy instructs. I feel that since he was to be a mighty warrior and deliverer, this was not a requirement for him.

The Lord blessed Samson as He grew up, and **the Spirit of the Lord began to give him incredible strength** that became evident throughout the tribe of Dan.<sup>5</sup> Over and over in the telling of Samson's story, we see that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily; and then he would do amazing feats of supernatural strength.

- He killed a lion with his bare hands.<sup>6</sup>
- He killed 30 Philistines singlehanded.<sup>7</sup>
- He broke the strong ropes that the men of Judah had bound him with, and then he killed 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey.<sup>8</sup>
- He escaped from a trap of the Philistines and walked away with their city gates on his shoulders.<sup>9</sup>
- Three times he was able to escape from the bounds of Delilah.<sup>10</sup>
- He was able to pull down the pillars of a large house killing 3000 Philistines.<sup>11</sup>

**Interwoven with these stories of supernatural strength were stories of Samson's lust for women.** Even though he was a Nazarite, used mightily by the Spirit of God to begin to break the hold of the Philistines on the sons of Israel, he had a real weakness for women and great anger issues. But God used these, "*for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines.*"<sup>12</sup> Samson spent a lot of time in the land of the Philistines, blending in and carousing with the men and women there; so that when his anger was aroused, he was able to do a lot of damage quickly to the Philistines.

God's perfect will for Samson was for him to be a Nazirite and a judge, who would lead the sons of Israel to live holy and consecrated lives. But Samson was carried away by his flesh and broke his vow to God. Samson's demise came at the hands of Delilah, the last woman he "loved". Repeatedly she begged him to tell her the source of his strength, and finally he revealed that "*he had been a Nazirite from his mother's womb, and if his head was shaved, his strength would leave him*".<sup>13</sup> She had his head shaved while he slept; and then suddenly woke him screaming that the Philistines were upon him. Delilah had awakened Samson with those same words several times; but this time when Samson stood up to fight them, he discovered he had no strength. He was taken to the Philistine city of Gaza, blinded, bound in chains, and thrown into prison.

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<sup>5</sup> Judges 13:25

<sup>6</sup> Judges 14:5-6

<sup>7</sup> Judges 14:19

<sup>8</sup> Judges 15:14-15

<sup>9</sup> Judges 16:3

<sup>10</sup> Judges 16:6-14

<sup>11</sup> Judges 16:25-30

<sup>12</sup> Judges 14:4

<sup>13</sup> Judges 16:17

And as time went on, Samson's hair began to grow. He was humbled by the tauntings of the Philistines who loved to bring him out of prison in chains to make fun of him. On one such occasion, he was taken to a large house where 3000 men and women gathered for a party. As they were making fun of Samson, he called to the Lord asking Him to *"Please remember me and strengthen me one more time, so I can take vengeance on the Philistines for taking away my eyes"*. Samson stood between the two middle pillars of the house and put a hand on each. He asked the Lord to ***"Let me die with the Philistines"***. He pushed with supernatural strength and the house fell, killing all who were assembled at the party. When God heard Samson repent, He forgave him; and even though he died physically, he was given eternal life! We can know this by Samson being listed in the "Faith Hall of Fame" in Hebrews.<sup>14</sup>

The Lord had chosen Samson to be an extraordinary man set apart for God, but his sins kept him from the fullness God had planned for him. His humble attitude at the end of his life was a delight to the Lord, allowing God to carry out his plans to begin to break the power of the Philistines through Samson. He killed more Philistines in his death, than he did in his life.

While Samson was more interested in women and himself, than in serving God and helping others turn to God; the Lord was still able to use Samson's weaknesses of lust and anger to accomplish His purposes. God does not delight in our sins, but He is not averse to using imperfect people to bring about His will! If we find ourselves out of God's will led by our sins and iniquities, we must humble ourselves before the Lord and repent for our evil and selfish ways, asking the Lord to forgive us and to strengthen us for His good purposes. God's will for our lives is sanctification – separating ourselves from sin and dedicating our lives to living according to His righteousness.<sup>15</sup>

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**Judges 17:6** *"In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes."*

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## Worsening Idolatry

The rest of the book of Judges gives frightening glimpses of the low religious, moral, and political state that the sons of Israel had fallen into during the time of the Judges. Everyone did what they thought was best for them, whatever they saw that looked good, they desired. This is illustrated by the story of a man from the tribe of Ephraim named Micah. He stole 1100 pieces of silver from his mother, and when he confessed this to her, she was elated and said, "Blessed be my son by the Lord". This sounded like a heartfelt time of confession and forgiveness; until she spoke again, saying she was dedicating the entire amount of silver to her son so he could make an idol with it for his household! (It is interesting to note that Delilah was paid 1100 pieces of silver to betray Samson to the

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<sup>14</sup> Hebrews 11:32

<sup>15</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

Philistines, causing some to speculate that Micah was Delilah's son.) Micah built a shrine for this silver idol, and his other idols. He also had a high priest's ephod made which he gave to one of his sons whom he appointed as his priest.

Sometime later, a "traveling" Levite who had been living in Judah came and offered his priestly services to Micah. Micah paid him for his services and took care of all his needs. He was very excited to have his own Levite, thinking this would ensure that God would prosper him.<sup>16</sup> After the Levite had been in Micah's house for some time, a band of 600 soldiers from the tribe of Dan came to Micah's house and stole his idols. The Levite tried to stop them, but instead was convinced it would be better to be a Levite to an entire tribe, instead of to one family.<sup>17</sup> The Levite took the idols and set them up for the tribe of Dan to worship!

**There is so much that goes against God in this last paragraph of Israel's history!** The Levites were supposed to be consecrated to God, to minister to Him and to the people who came to offer sacrifices at the Tabernacle. They were not given salaries, because all their needs were taken care of. So what was this Levite doing traveling around the different tribes, offering his services to the highest bidder? And why were the sons of Israel and the Levite worshipping idols? And who said it was okay to steal?

## Moral Corruption

But things got so much worse! Another "traveling" Levite from a remote part of Ephraim, took a woman as his concubine. She was unfaithful to him and left him, moving back in with her father for four months. The Levite decided he wanted her back, so he went to get her. After her father stalled him for almost a week, the Levite arose and took his wife and left. No one would take them into their homes for the night, so they sat down in the town square. An old man saw them there, and invited them to stay at his house, for it was too dangerous to stay in the open at night.

That night several drunken homosexual men from the tribe of Benjamin demanded the Levite come out to them. The old man offered his virgin daughter and the Levite's concubine. They said no, but the Levite shoved his "wife" out to them and locked the door. She was raped all night, and somehow managed to crawl to the doorstep of the house her "husband" was in, where she died. Not knowing that she was dead, he told her to get up so they could leave. She did not answer so he threw her on the donkey and went home. I don't know how long it took him to realize she was dead. Once he got to his home, he cut her body into twelve pieces, and sent one to each of the tribes.<sup>18</sup>

I think the Levite did this to say, "What has happened to us"? But instead it brought civil war to the land of Israel. Men from all the tribes assembled in Mizpah, in front of the Tabernacle to discuss

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<sup>16</sup> Judges 17

<sup>17</sup> Judges 18:19-20

<sup>18</sup> Judges 19

what had happened. The Levite told his version of the story, which incited everyone against the tribe of Benjamin. They were determined to punish them for the disgraceful acts they committed in Israel. They asked the Lord if they should fight against Benjamin, and He said, "Yes". They assembled their soldiers against Benjamin and fought against them for three days, and basically destroyed the tribe of Benjamin.<sup>19</sup> Of the men who were left, the sons of Israel vowed to not give their daughters in marriage to them.

After some time passed, the sons of Israel realized that one of the 12 tribes was cut off from Israel. They felt sorry for them and tried to think of a way to help them, without going against their vow. They realized that the men from Jabesh-Gileah had not assembled at Mizpah, so their daughters could marry the remaining men of Benjamin. Instead of asking them if they would marry the men of Benjamin, they sons of Israel killed all the people of Jabesh-Gileah, except the virgin girls. They gave these grieving girls to the men of Benjamin, but there were more men than girls. So the sons of Israel came up with another scheme, this time giving the men of Benjamin permission to steal girls from Shiloh each year when the people gathered for a feast to the Lord. They were able to get enough wives this way.<sup>20</sup> Why would their minds even think these solutions were acceptable to the Lord?

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*Judges 21:25 "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."*

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**Please read the Book of Ruth.**

## Godly Remnant

Before we leave the time of the Judges, one of the darkest times in Jewish history, let's look at a ray of light in the lives of a godly remnant in the book of Ruth, which took place during the time of Judges. In the midst of all the various times of rebellion we have seen so far in the history of God's people, God has always preserved a remnant of righteous people who faithfully love Him.<sup>21</sup> In the coming darkness, we must never forget this truth about God – He always has a remnant of people who have remained faithful to Him!

The Bible tells us that the events in the book of Ruth took place during the time that the judges governed the land, and when there was a famine in the land of Israel. The only mention of a famine was during the time of the oppression of the Midianites; when for seven years they would come into the land of Israel at harvest time and either steal or destroy all their crops, causing a man-made

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<sup>19</sup> Judges 20

<sup>20</sup> Judges 21

<sup>21</sup> Romans 11:5

famine. It is only conjecture as to the exact timing of the book of Ruth, but I am inclined to place it during the time of Gideon.

The book of Ruth opens with a man named Elimelech from the tribe of Judah, and the city of Bethlehem. He had a wife named Naomi and two sons. When the famine came, they left the Promised Land and traveled east, across the Jordan River, to the land of Moab. The Bible said **they remained there, meaning they put down roots, with no intentions of going back to the Promised Land.** Elimelech died, and Naomi was left a widow in a foreign land with her two sons. Her sons eventually married Moabite women, named Orpah and Ruth. These women were a real comfort and delight to Naomi.

After ten years, tragedy struck Naomi's family again when both of her sons died. She decided to go back to the Promised Land, and told her two daughters-in-law they were free to go back to their families. Both wanted to stay with Naomi, but finally Orpah agreed to leave. Ruth refused to leave Naomi's side. She told her that "*Wherever you go, I will go; your people shall be my people; and your God shall be My God!*"<sup>22</sup> Ruth had learned about Naomi's God and accepted Him as her One and only God! She accepted the precepts and commandments of God as a way of life. Naomi realized the genuineness of Ruth's love for God and for her; so she stopped trying to convince her go back to her people, and they set out for Bethlehem.

People recognized Naomi when she returned and were glad to see her. Ruth got Naomi settled in her old home, and then set out to find them some food. She knew that in Israel, the grain fields were not totally reaped – the edges and corners were left for the poor.<sup>23</sup> She happened to glean grain from the field of one of Naomi's kinsman, a man named Boaz. His mother was Rahab, from Jericho. She had married a man from the tribe of Judah named Salmon. Boaz was an older man who was wealthy and known by all in Bethlehem to be a righteous man. He saw Ruth gleaning in his field and asked who she was. When he found out she was with Naomi, he became very protective of her. He told her she could glean as much as she wanted every day, and he wanted her to only glean out of his fields. He warned her to stay close to the women working in the field. Ruth was stunned by the favor he was showing to a foreign woman, and asked him why he was being so nice to her. Boaz told her he was impressed by her love and devotion to Naomi. Ruth gleaned in Boaz's barley and wheat fields until the end of their harvest.

When the harvest was complete, Naomi gave Ruth advice that sounds strange to us, until we see the meaning behind it. Naomi told Ruth to sneak into the threshing floor of Boaz, where he would be spending the night to guard his harvest. After he fell asleep, Ruth was to lay down next to him. When he woke, she was to ask him to cover her with his cloak; asking him to be her kinsman redeemer (to take care of her as his wife). He was touched that someone so lovely and so young

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<sup>22</sup> Ruth 1:16

<sup>23</sup> Leviticus 19:9-10

would choose him; especially since he had also fallen in love with Ruth during the harvest season. Boaz realized that there was a relative that was more closely related to Naomi, so he had the first right to marry Ruth, and inherit all of Naomi's property. Boaz went to him, and was thrilled when he quickly realized his relative was not able to marry Ruth. Boaz married Ruth and became a redeemer to Naomi and to Ruth.

The Lord blessed Boaz and Ruth with a son, whom they named Obed; who became the father of Jesse, who became the father of David. Our Lord Jesus Christ is in the lineage of King David, making Him a distant relative of two Gentile women, Rahab and Ruth. These women were raised worshipping idols, turned to the worship of the One True God when they were adults, and then became part of the lineage of Jesus Christ! God is truly a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him!<sup>24</sup>

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***Proverbs 8:17*** "I love those who love Me; and those who diligently seek Me will find Me."

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<sup>24</sup> Hebrews 11:6

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

1. Recount the interaction between Jesus and Samson's parents in Judges 13.

Which parent seemed to have a stronger faith?

When did they realize the "angel" was the Lord?

2. In which ways did Samson break the Nazarite vow?

Which commandments did he break?

3. It is interesting to note that the one thing that caused Samson to sin time and time again were his eyes, looking upon women he should not have been with; and they were taken away from him when he was captured by the Philistines.

Do you think God allowed Samson to be blinded for his own good?

Please read Matthew 18:9 before you answer?

Has God ever removed something from your life that was a snare to get you to fall into sin time after time?

4. God desires His people to live lives separate from the people of the world, yet still live in their midst. What are ways that we can do that successfully?

# 6

## Last of the Judges

### Please Read 1 Samuel 1-7

The lives of the **last two known judges** for the sons of Israel are recorded in the first seven chapters of 1 Samuel, and their names are **Eli and Samuel**. They lived in a very dark and idolatrous time for Israel, during the lifetime of Samson, when the Philistines were terrorizing God's people. Eli, in addition to being a judge<sup>1</sup>, served as the High Priest for 40 years in Shiloh, where the Tabernacle was located. He has two sons, Phinehas and Hophni, who served alongside their father as priests, **even though they did not know the Lord**.<sup>2</sup> Reading through the first few chapters of 1 Samuel shows us just how far the priesthood had strayed from the commands and statutes of God.

**Eli**

**Repeatedly the Bible described Eli spending his days sitting in his seat at the doorpost of the tabernacle.** Nowhere in God's ordinances and instructions were the priests told to sit down. They were to actively offer up continual sacrifices to God on the Bronze Altar which the people brought to worship God. The priests were also to minister to God by going into the Holy Place to tend to the Lampstand and the Table of Showbread, along with offering up prayers, mixed with incense on the Golden Altar. The book of Hebrews talks about the Jewish priesthood, saying that "**every priest stands daily ministering and presenting offerings**, time after time the same sacrifice, which can never take away our sins".<sup>3</sup> Yet Eli sat and let others do his work.

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*Hebrews 3:1-2 "... consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house."*

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Jesus is our faithful High Priest whom God appointed over the house of God; and He knew the work His Father had chosen exclusively for Him to do. He did not delegate His High Priestly task to others, but He gave Himself to be the perfect sacrifice for all people for all times. That is why right before

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 4:18

<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 1:3, 2:12

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 10:11

He died Jesus said, "It is finished". **When Jesus ascended into heaven, the Bible said that He sat down at the right hand of God!** His work as High Priest was done.<sup>4</sup> But not so with Eli.

## Phinehas & Hophni

Not only did Eli let others do his duties, he even allowed his sons' servants (who were NOT priests, and probably not even Hebrews) to steal the offerings from the people before they were given to God. They then gave the best cuts of meat to Phinehas, Hophni, and Eli to eat. The servants would stick a 3-pronged fork into the pot of boiled meat and take out a huge portion, or they would demand raw meat before the fat was offered up to God, because they preferred roasted meat to boiled meat. God had ordained that a part of the burnt offerings were to be given to the priests, but not the way these "priests" were stealing meat from the people and from God. **Their actions showed they despised the offerings of the Lord.**<sup>5</sup>

It was widely known among the sons of Israel that Phinehas and Hophni would have sexual relationships with the women who assembled at the doorway to the tabernacle.<sup>6</sup> There is only one entrance into the Tabernacle, so these prostitutes gathered at the same location that Eli sat every day, all day long. **Eli knew all about the sins of his sons, but he did nothing about it.** God called Phinehas and Hophni worthless men.<sup>7</sup>

**A prophet from God came to speak to Eli,** because Eli did not hear from God; for it was common knowledge that **the word of God was rare in those days.**<sup>8</sup> The unnamed prophet said to Eli: *"I chose you and the Levites out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priests, and go up to My altar and burn incense on the golden altar; to carry the ephod before Me; and to take the burnt offerings from the people and offer them up to Me. Why do you and your sons dishonor Me? You take the choicest parts of the offerings for yourself, making yourselves fat. Since you despise Me, I will not honor you! I will curse your family and not one of them will serve before Me again! My sign to you of this curse is that your two sons will die on the same day! But I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do all that is on My heart!"*<sup>9</sup> Nothing was ever recorded of Eli's response to this prophecy. It's like it didn't even register as something that would happen. Remember the Word of the Lord was rare in those days.

**One of the High Priest's duties was to carry the Ephod before God.** This is something we have not yet discussed. An Ephod was part of the High Priest's clothing. It was a golden breastplate with 12 jewels on it, representing the 12 tribes; signifying that God's people were to be kept close to the

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<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 10:12-14

<sup>5</sup> 1 Samuel 2:13-17

<sup>6</sup> 1 Samuel 2:22-24

<sup>7</sup> 1 Samuel 2:12

<sup>8</sup> 1 Samuel 3:1

<sup>9</sup> 1 Samuel 2:27-36

heart of the High Priest in prayer. Inside this breastplate was a pocket for the Urim and Thummim, which are believed to be two cubed-shaped objects, like dice, that God would use as a way to talk to the High Priest. It is believed they would ask God a question and then throw out the Urim and Thummim<sup>10</sup>, and receive the answer from the symbols that faced them. **God was angry that Eli was not using all that the Lord had put at his disposal to talk to God for His people.** Utilizing the ephod would have made Eli a very wise judge!

God's people would come to Shiloh one time a year to celebrate a feast to the Lord. This was a time of offering sacrifices and gathering with friends and family for a time of feasting. **This was another glaring act of disobedience. God had made it very clear to His people that He wanted them to corporately gather three times a year to worship Him,<sup>11</sup> not one!** They were to come to the current location of the tabernacle to celebrate Passover, Pentecost, and the Fall Feasts.

## Hannah

A man from the tribe of Ephraim named Elkanah, faithfully brought his family to the Tabernacle in Shiloh every year to celebrate a feast to the Lord. He had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah, and he would give each of them a portion of the offering to give to God, and a portion to eat during the feast. He always gave his wife Hannah a double portion because she was barren, and bitterly harassed by Peninnah who had many sons and daughters.

During one of these feast times, Hannah was especially distraught over being barren and would not eat at all during the feast. She spent a lot of time in the court of the tabernacle praying to the Lord. She repeatedly asked the Lord to give her a son. If God answered her cries and gave her a son, she vowed to give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor would touch his head – meaning she dedicated him from birth to be a Nazirite for his entire lifetime.<sup>12</sup>

Eli saw her fervent prayer and thought she was drunk –talking into the air, or silently praying while moving her lips. He obviously was not a praying man, and he had not seen too many people offering up prayers like she had done. Most of the women he saw were the prostitutes that gathered around his seat. When Eli confronted Hannah, she insisted she was praying to God about a matter that was very heavy on her heart. He gave her a very generic “may God grant your wish” type of response.<sup>13</sup>

## Samuel

But God heard her prayer, and shortly after Hannah and her husband returned home, she became pregnant. They had a son whom she called **Samuel, who would grow up to be the faithful priest and judge that was prophesied to Eli.** Hannah told her husband that she had promised to give this son back to

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<sup>10</sup> Exodus 28:30, Leviticus 8:8, Numbers 27:21, 1 Samuel 28:6

<sup>11</sup> Exodus 23:14,17; 34:23-24; Deuteronomy 16:16

<sup>12</sup> 1 Samuel 1:10-11

<sup>13</sup> 1 Samuel 1:12-17

God. Remember when we studied the seriousness of making vows to God, a wife could be released from a vow if her husband was opposed to it; but Elkanah left it up to her to follow through on her vow to God.<sup>14</sup> Hannah did not travel to Shiloh for her family's yearly feast for several years (most likely three). But after Samuel was weaned, Hannah and Elkanah brought him to Eli and left him there to be trained as a priest. Hannah reminded Eli of the time she had prayed and he had talked to her, and then she told Eli about her vow. She left Samuel with Eli, and only saw him once a year, when they came to offer their yearly sacrifice. She always brought Samuel a new robe.<sup>15</sup>

Samuel grew up ministering to the Lord, and **Eli let Samuel sleep in the Holy Place, with him.**<sup>16</sup> Remember this was the covered part of the Tabernacle that housed the Golden Lampstand, the Table of Showbread, and the Golden Altar of Incense. The priests were to have their own tents outside the Tabernacle walls. **Sleeping and taking up residence inside of God's House showed great disrespect to God.** I am in awe of the patience of God in His dealings with Eli and his sons. But since Samuel was to be God's chosen faithful priest, Eli had to be around until Samuel was a little older, so he could learn more about God.

One night while Samuel and Eli were sleeping in the Holy Place, the Lord called out to Samuel. He thought Eli was calling him, and kept waking him up. Finally after several times of having his sleep disturbed by Samuel, Eli finally realized that it might be God who was calling out to Samuel. Eli told him if he heard the voice again, to say, "*Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.*" God did speak to him again that night, and Samuel told God he was listening to Him. Even though Samuel had no personal knowledge of God before that night, he knew that it was God who had spoken to him. I am sure if he had had a choice, he would have wanted his first vision from God to be much different. What Samuel heard was very difficult to handle, and more so for someone of his young age. **God told Samuel that He was about to bring to pass the prophecy that was spoken years before to Eli.** His family would soon be brought to an end because of their unrepentant sins and iniquities.<sup>17</sup>

Samuel laid awake for the rest of the night; and when the sun finally came up, he went about his duties of preparing the tabernacle for the day. I am sure he tried to avoid Eli, because he was afraid to tell Eli what he heard from God. But since words from God were very rare in that time, Eli was curious to hear what God said. Samuel tried to put him off, but then Eli cursed him by saying "*If you don't tell me, may God do to you all the words that He spoke to you!*" Nice mentor! Samuel told Eli everything God spoke, and I am amazed at Eli's comment. He didn't tear his clothes and repent, he didn't cry out in agony; he just said, "*Let God do what seems good to Him.*"<sup>18</sup> As Samuel grew into a man, it was evident to all of Israel that he had a strong relationship with God. He accurately handled

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<sup>14</sup> Numbers 30:3-8

<sup>15</sup> 1 Samuel 2:19

<sup>16</sup> 1 Samuel 3:2-3

<sup>17</sup> 1 Samuel 3:4-14

<sup>18</sup> 1 Samuel 3:15-18

all of God's Words, whether they were written in the Torah, or spoken to him in a vision. Samuel was considered to be a prophet of Almighty God, and also a judge.<sup>19</sup>

## Glory Departs

During this time, the Philistines drew up in battle array against Israel. Without asking God for His help and His leading, the sons of Israel met the Philistines in battle at Ebenezer, about an hour walk from Shiloh. They were soundly defeated, and 4,000 men were killed. The sons of Israel went back to their camp and talked over their defeat with the elders. They asked, "*Why has God defeated us today?*" Their solution was not to talk to God, not to call for Samuel; but to have Hophni and Phinehas bring the Ark of the Covenant onto the battle field. As soon as the Ark came into the camp, the sons of Israel shouted so loudly the ground shook. The Philistines were quickly disheartened and afraid. I think they understood the power of Almighty God much more than the sons of Israel!

But someone in the Philistine camp spoke up and said, "*We must stand up like men and fight, or else we will become slaves to these people just like everyone else in Canaan.*" And that was exactly what they did. The Philistines killed over 30,000 Hebrews, and the rest ran to their homes. The Philistines also killed Hophni and Phinehas (along with the other priests who were carrying the ark), and **they took the Ark of the Covenant!**<sup>20</sup>

One of the men who had run away from the battle came to Shiloh and told Eli and the men of the city that Hophni and Phinehas had both been killed, and the Ark of the Covenant was taken by the Philistines! **Eli had been sitting on his seat, and fell off backwards and broke his neck and died.**<sup>21</sup> When Phinehas' pregnant wife heard the news, she went into labor. Things went horribly wrong and she died. Right before she died she named her son, Ichabod, saying "*God's glory had departed from Israel*".<sup>22</sup>

## Ark Fights Back

The Philistines took the Ark of the Covenant to one of their capital cities named **Ashdod**, which is located along the Mediterranean Sea. The people in this city worshipped dagon, who was considered to be the son of baal. His shape was half man and half fish. They placed the Ark of God in the house of dagon. The next morning they found the statue of dagon fallen over with its face to the ground before the Ark of God! The pagan priests set him up again, and the next day they found him again face down on the ground in front of the Ark of God, but this time his head and hands were cut off. God then struck the inhabitants of Ashdod

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<sup>19</sup> 1 Samuel 3:19-21; 7:15-17

<sup>20</sup> 1 Samuel 4:11

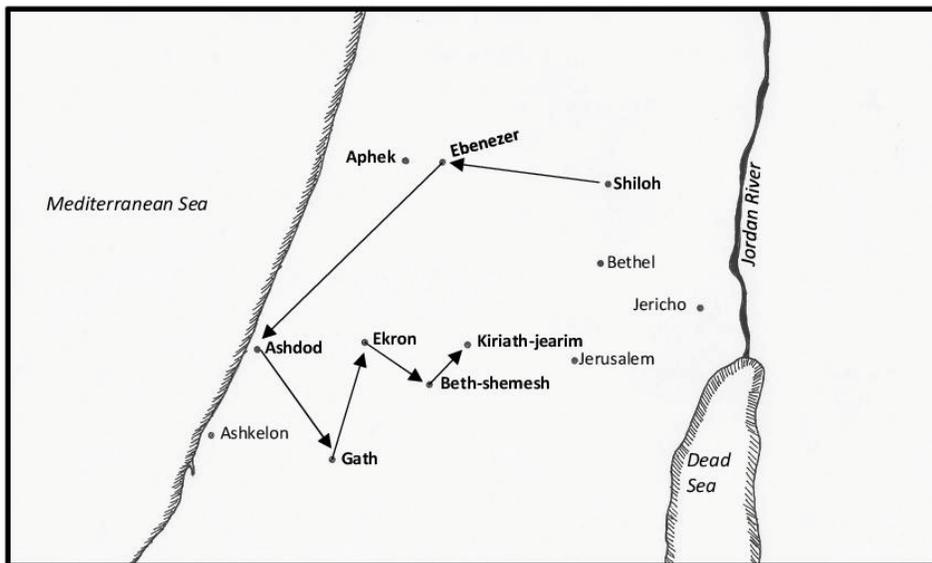
<sup>21</sup> 1 Samuel 4:18

<sup>22</sup> 1 Samuel 4:19-22

with tumors all over their bodies. The men of Ashdod wanted the Ark out of their city because they knew God's hand was severe on them and their god."<sup>23</sup>

The men of Ashdod called the five Philistine lords to come to their city to figure out what could be done about the Ark of the God of Israel. They said to take it to the town of **Gath**. But as soon as the Ark arrived, the Lord sent great confusion to the city, and then struck all the men with tumors. The men of Gath got rid of the Ark by sending it to **Ekron**. The men of that city had heard about the troubles in Ashdod and Gath and cried out, "You are sending the Ark to kill us!" They immediately asked the five Philistine lords to resolve this situation; but in the meantime, confusion and tumors broke out in Ekron too.<sup>24</sup>

### JOURNEY OF THE ARK OF THE COVENANT



**After seven months, the Philistines decided to send the Ark back to Israel**, along with a guilt offering of five golden mice and five golden tumors; signifying what God had done to them. A plague of mice had never been mentioned in this account, but I feel the "great confusion" was an infestation of mice. The Philistines put the Ark on a cart, with a box of the golden objects next to it.

In order to test God one more time, they decided to hitch up two female milk cows to pull the cart. These cows had just had calves, and they had never pulled a cart before. The Philistines took the calves away from their mamas, with all four complaining loudly. They then let the cows go. Logic would say that the cows would go to the barn where their calves were; but no, they walked for about

<sup>23</sup> 1 Samuel 5:1-7

<sup>24</sup> 1 Samuel 5:8-12

ten miles straight towards Israel. These cows lowed (complained) the whole way, but they did not waver to the right or the left, but kept going straight until they stopped in a field in Beth-shemesh. The men of that city were so excited to see the Ark. The Levites in the area took the ark down from the cart, broke apart the cart for fire wood, and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord. The five Philistine lords had been watching this unbelievable journey the entire way and were amazed.<sup>25</sup>

This sounds like a happy ending to this story, but unfortunately one more thing happened. The men of Beth-shemesh looked to see what was inside the ark. As soon as they opened the lid, the Lord struck the men who had gathered, killing 50,070 men! When King Solomon built Temple for the Ark and the other items in the Tabernacle, it was recorded that the only thing in the Ark were the two stone tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them.<sup>26</sup> The Philistines must have taken the golden pot containing Manna and probably threw away the rod of Aaron. After the men were killed opening up the Ark and looking in, those who were left in Beth-shemesh sent a message to the town of Kiriath-jearim that the Ark of the Lord was in their city, and to come and get it.<sup>27</sup> The men of Kiriath-jearim took the Ark to the house of Abinadab, and consecrated his son Eleazar to keep the Ark.<sup>28</sup> The ark stayed with this family about 70 years, until the reign of King David.<sup>29</sup> It is curious **why the Ark was not taken to the Tabernacle** and put in the Holy of Holies where it belonged. This probably reflects the chaos the Priesthood was in with the deaths of Eli and his sons, and the compromise of the Levites.

## Repentance

Twenty years after the Ark was returned to the land of Israel, all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.<sup>30</sup> They acknowledged their neglect of God and their idolatry with the gods of the land of Canaan. They acknowledged that their lives were empty and aimless without God. They longed for the victories and peace their ancestors had experienced with God. **Samuel told all the house of Israel that if they would return to the Lord with all of their hearts, remove the idols from the land, and direct their hearts to serve God alone; then the Lord would deliver them from the hand of the Philistines.** The people repented and removed all their idols, and served the Lord alone! Samuel asked them to corporately gather at Mizpah, to fast and confess their sins before him, as he prayed to God for them.<sup>31</sup>

## Attacks Follow

When the Philistines heard that all the men had gathered at Mizpah, they decided to attack them there. This caused great fear among God's people.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> 1 Samuel 6:1-16

<sup>26</sup> 2 Chronicles 5:10

<sup>27</sup> 1 Samuel 6:19-21

<sup>28</sup> 1 Samuel 7:1

<sup>29</sup> 2 Samuel 6:3

<sup>30</sup> 1 Samuel 7:2

<sup>31</sup> 1 Samuel 7:2-6

<sup>32</sup> 1 Samuel 7:7

## Riches of God's Word

The Philistines had been an undefeatable foe for more than 350 years, so it was ingrained into the sons of Israel to fear this enemy. Haven't you seen this in your own life? You make a major decision to turn from your sins, and be more devoted to God, and then suddenly the enemy shows up stronger than ever! We must know that **the enemy will always attack when we turn back to God**. When the enemy loses his grasp on us, he will come against us stronger and fiercer than ever before. He knows we are vulnerable in our new confession, and wants to shake us before we get rooted in God's love! We must not be fearful, or feel defeated even before the battle begins. We must stand firm and let God fight our battle, knowing that great victory will come!

The people in the midst of their time of repentance tried to turn their eyes off of the enemy and onto God. They pleaded with Samuel to cry out to God on their behalf. Samuel prepared a lamb to be given as a whole burnt offering to the Lord – **He offered up worship to God**. This took some time to do, showing that Samuel was not panicked by the Philistines coming nearer in their battle array; for he had his eyes upon the Lord. **Suddenly God thundered with a great voice, shaking the Philistines**, causing them to run away from Mizpah in great confusion. The sons of Israel were able to defeat them, chasing them as far as Beth-car. As a result of this great defeat, the Philistines did not come into the land of Israel any more during the days of Samuel.<sup>33</sup> God honored the sincere repentance of the sons of Israel, and blessed them with peace in the Promised Land.

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<sup>33</sup> 1 Samuel 7:8-14

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

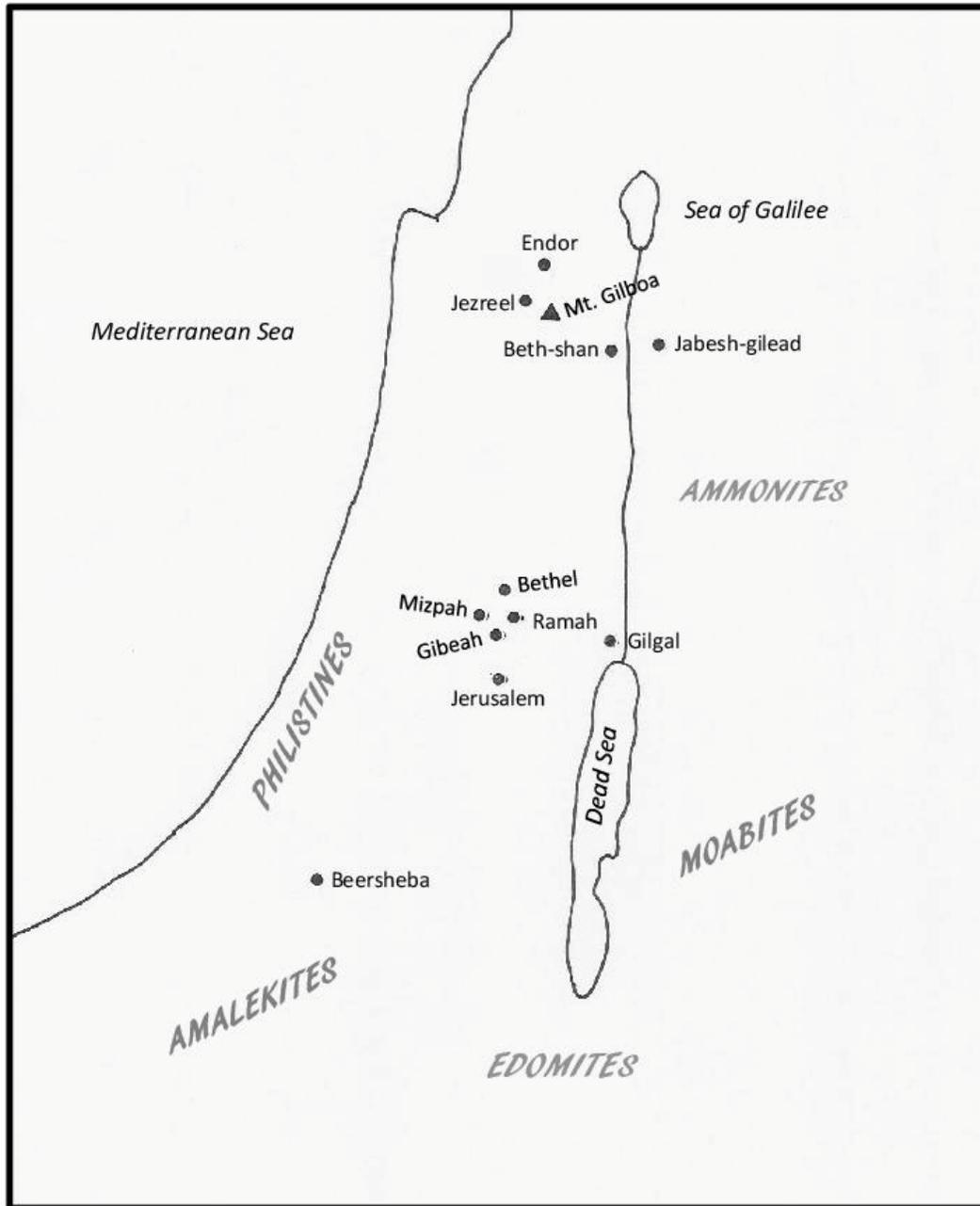
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1. We saw in this chapter the great disobedience of the priests and the people towards God and His commands. List at least 10 of the ways they showed their disregard and disobedience to God.

Which of these have been evident in your life?

2. What reasons do you think Eli had for not doing anything about the sins of his sons?
3. List ten ways Christians today show their disregard and disobedience to God.
4. Why do you think God did not kill the Philistines who touched the Ark, put it on a cart, and probably even opened it; when He did kill the men of Kiriath-jearim who looked into the Ark, and Uzzah when he put the Ark on a cart and then steadied it when it hit a bump in the road (2 Samuel 6)?

## Map of Israel in Times of King Saul



# 7

## Give Us a King

### Please Read 1 Samuel 8-10

Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. His home was in Ramah, where he had built an altar to the Lord. Annually he would travel between the cities of Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah;<sup>1</sup> which were in the land of the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin. When Samuel got older, he appointed his two sons, Joel (Jehovah is his God) and Abijah (worshipper of God) to judge Israel. They judged from Beersheba, which is between the tribes of Simeon and Judah. As you can see from the map, they did not live close to their father, nor did they walk closely with the Lord like Samuel. They used their position as judges for dishonest gain, taking bribes to pervert justice. It is such a tragedy when a righteous man, who follows the Lord all his life, has sons and daughters who do not know the Lord; or who think they can do whatever they want in God's presence or service without any consequences. We have seen this already with Cain (Adam's son), Nadab & Abihu (Aaron's sons), Abimelech (Gideon's son), and Hophni & Phinehas (Eli's sons).

The elders of the 12 tribes came to Samuel's home in Ramah to talk about a better successor for Samuel, since he was so old and his sons were not good leaders.<sup>2</sup> They demanded that Samuel appoint a king for them. **They no longer wanted judges, but they wanted a king like all the other nations in the world.** Samuel was very hurt and offended by their request. Samuel immediately talked with God and poured out his feelings about on their request. I am sure he was expecting God to tell him to say, "*No, that is not how I do things.*" But God said to give the people what they asked for. Even though Samuel felt like the people were rejecting him; in reality, they were rejecting God! He was supposed to be their King to reign over them, but they do not want that. God instructed Samuel to give them what they asked for; but to warn them what they were getting into with an earthly king.

## Trouble with Kings

Samuel went back to the elders and again told them that kings were not a good thing. He solemnly warned them that a king would take what was theirs and use it for himself. This would be a great hardship to the

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 7:15-17

<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 8:4-5

people, greatly outweighing their foolish notions of the benefit of a king. Samuel said that a king would:

- Take their sons away from them and make them be his soldiers
- Force other men to do all his farming, and make all his chariots and weapons
- Take their daughters to cook and bake for him, and to make all his perfume, incense, oils, and ointments
- Take their best farm lands, vineyards, and olive groves for his servants to tend for his pleasure
- Take a 10<sup>th</sup> of their produce to feed his officers and servants
- Take their best male and female servants to work for him
- Take their donkeys, sheep, and goats
- Make the people his servants<sup>3</sup>

Samuel went on to warn the people that when this happens, and you cry out to the Lord to deliver you from the king's oppression, **the Lord will not answer you.**<sup>4</sup> This would have convinced me that this was a foolish request, but not so the wise elders. They all agreed they wanted a king just like everyone else; one who would judge them and to fight their battles. **God told Samuel to get them a king!**

## King Saul

Samuel told all the elders to go home and he would find them a man to be their king. That man's name was Saul, and **his name means "demanded"**. Saul was the most handsome man in Israel, and he was much taller than most men. He fit the visual image of what a king should look like! Saul's family was from the tribe of Benjamin. If you remember the history of this tribe, it was almost extinguished by the other 11 tribes, because of their sinful homosexual ways. They were eventually able to get wives to repopulate their tribe by the murder of every person in a town, except the virgin girls; and then also by stealing them during the times families gathered at the tabernacle for the feasts. It is very odd that God chose a man from this tribe!

Saul's father was named Kish and he could not find his donkeys. He sent Saul to find them. He traveled from Benjamin into the hill country of Ephraim and back to Benjamin, but he could not find them. After a few days, as he was about to go home fearing his father would become worried that he too was lost, his servant told him about a prophet who was in the nearby town of Zuph. At the same time, God spoke to Samuel and said He was sending a man to him from the tribe of Benjamin to be king. When Saul came to Samuel, God said, *"This is the one who will rule over My people"*.<sup>5</sup> Samuel invited Saul to dine with him, along with thirty other men. When Samuel placed him in the

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Samuel 8:10-17

<sup>4</sup> 1 Samuel 8:18

<sup>5</sup> 1 Samuel 9:15-17

seat of honor and gave him the best portions of food, Saul said he didn't deserve to be treated this way.

**The next day Samuel walked with Saul to the edge of the city, and anointed Him as king.** To confirm to Saul that he was speaking for God, Samuel told Saul about some strange meetings he would have in the next few days that would be a sign from God. First he would find two men next to Rachel's tomb, who would tell him that his father's donkeys had been found, and his father was concerned about him. Next he was to go to the Oak of Tabor, where he would meet three men who were going to the Tabernacle in Bethel. One man would be carrying three lambs, another would be carrying three loaves of bread, and the third would have a jug of wine. These men would greet Saul, and give him two loaves of their bread. After that he would go to Gibeath-haelohim and meet a group of prophets who would be worshiping God with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre. **As they were prophesying, the Spirit of the Lord would come upon Saul and he would be changed into another man.**<sup>6</sup> These things happened that day, and Saul's heart was indeed changed. He started prophesying with the prophets, and everyone who knew Saul realized that he had been radically changed. When Saul returned home, his uncle asked him where he had been. He told him he had been looking for his father's donkeys, and had asked Samuel to help locate them. His uncle was curious to hear what Samuel said, but Saul did not tell him that Samuel had anointed him king.

## King Revealed

Seven days later, Samuel called all the people to gather before the Lord at Mizpah. Samuel reminded them that they had rejected God by demanding a king, and now that king would be revealed. Samuel cast lots for the tribe the king would come from, and that tribe was Benjamin. Then Saul, the son of Kish was selected. Samuel asked him to step forward, but he was not present. They found him hiding behind the piles of baggage. **The people ran to him and shouted, "Long live the king!"**<sup>7</sup> Not much of a grand entrance for the first king of Israel. Saul was very insecure, which will get out of control later on in his life.

God knew that His people would eventually demand a king; so when He gave the law to Moses, He set up requirements for a Jewish king. If he followed these commands, it would go well for him and his sons would succeed him. Samuel sat down with Saul and went over the following commands for a king of Israel.

- God was to choose the king, and he must be from one of the tribes of Israel
- He was not to obtain large quantities of horses for war, and never buy Egyptian horses
- He was not to have more than one wife; because if he did, they will lead him away from God
- He was not to hoard great amounts of silver and gold for himself

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Samuel 10:2-6

<sup>7</sup> 1 Samuel 10:17-24

- As soon as he became king, he was to handwrite a copy of the law in the presence of a priest. He was to read this scroll every day, to learn how to fear the Lord his God, and to carefully observe all of God's commands
- He must not lift himself above his countrymen, but instead serve them<sup>8</sup>

### Please Read 1 Samuel 11-15

Saul left Gilgal and returned to his home in Gibeah, and the Lord sent many valiant men to accompany him. These warriors were mighty soldiers who were devoted to God; and now to Saul, their king.<sup>9</sup> Saul did not go home to pack his belongings and then move into a palace to be king. Instead he went home and continued his life as a farmer.<sup>10</sup> He did not understand who he was!

## Ammonites Attack

The people of Ammon lived east of the Jordan River. Their leader Nahash, crossed over into the land of Manasseh and came against the town of Jabesh-gilead. This town had been decimated by Israel, when they were looking for wives for the men of Benjamin, and killed all the men. Now as the men of Jabesh-gilead were facing annihilation again, they begged the Ammonites to make a peace covenant with them and they would agree to be their servants. Nahash, whose name means snake, agreed to make a treaty, but with one condition. He wanted the right eye of every man gouged out to make the men of Jabesh-gilead a reproach in all Israel.

The people of Ammon lived east of the Jordan River. Their leader Nahash, crossed over into the land of Manasseh and came

The elders of Jabesh-gilead asked Nahash to give them seven days to think this over, and to ask for help from the other tribes of Israel. Now that Israel had a king, they sent their plea for help to Saul. The messengers found him plowing his field. Saul was moved by the trouble they were facing, and the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily, and he became very angry. Saul killed his oxen and cut them into 12 pieces and sent them to all the tribes, threatening to do the same to their oxen if they did not immediately gather at Jabesh-gilead to fight against the Ammonites. The dread of the Lord fell on all the men of Israel and 330,000 came and fought against Nahash, and soundly defeated the Ammonites.

After this great victory, Samuel called everyone to gather at Gilgal to renew their commitment to the kingdom of Israel, and to **make Saul the King of Israel before the Lord**. They offered many peace offerings to the Lord, and rejoiced greatly that they had a king! Samuel once again introduced Saul as the King of Israel, reminding the people that God had been their righteous and faithful King, but they wanted an earthly king. He warned them to be obedient to God and follow Him, so they would be blessed; but if they rebelled, the hand of the Lord would be against them. Samuel asked

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<sup>8</sup> Deuteronomy 17:14-20

<sup>9</sup> 1 Samuel 10:26

<sup>10</sup> 1 Samuel 11:5

God to send thunder and rain as a sign of the seriousness of His call to the people, and God immediately answered with thunder and rain. **The people once again repented of their sins; even of the sin of asking for a king.**<sup>11</sup> They asked Samuel to pray for them.

## King Saul Tested

Saul was 40 when **he began to act as the king of Israel**, and he reigned for 32 years.<sup>12</sup>

Saul kept a standing army of 3000 mighty warriors – 2000 were under his command and 1000 were under the command of his son Jonathan. Jonathan went and attacked a Philistine Fort in Geba. This provoked the Philistines to anger, and they came against Saul with 30,000 chariots, 6000 horsemen, and an innumerable amount of foot soldiers. Saul summoned the men of Israel to gather at Gilgal to face this enemy. When the men in Israel heard about the Philistine army, they shook with fear. Many ignored the king's call to gather and ran away, some even went across the Jordan River to hide.<sup>13</sup>

**Samuel told Saul to meet him at Gilgal in seven days with his soldiers, and he would offer sacrifices to God for their victory.**<sup>14</sup> Each day Saul's soldiers shook with fear, and more and more of them ran away, until there were only 600 left. Saul was greatly disturbed by his shrinking army, causing him to be very fearful. By the time the 7<sup>th</sup> day came, Saul was at a point of desperation and took matters into his own hands. **He went into the court of the Tabernacle and offered burnt offerings for the people of Israel himself.** As soon as Saul did this, Samuel showed up, and said, *"What have you done?"*<sup>15</sup>

**Saul immediately blamed everyone but himself.** He told Samuel the Philistines were assembling nearby in Michmash, all the people were deserting him, and you were late (even though Samuel showed up on the 7<sup>th</sup> day as he promised). Saul said he had to force himself to offer the burnt offering to ask the favor of God. Samuel told Saul he had acted foolishly by breaking God's commandment, and there would be consequences for his disobedience. **Samuel told Saul his kingdom would not endure; and Israel's next king would be a man who would follow God with all his heart.**<sup>16</sup>

## Jonathan Tests God

This news from Samuel put Saul into a depressed state. Even though the enraged Philistines camped nearby,

Saul spent his time sitting in the shade of a pomegranate tree with the high priest Ahijah (Eli's great-grandson). Saul's son Jonathan decided someone had to do something, so he and his armor bearer

<sup>11</sup> 1 Samuel 12:19

<sup>12</sup> 1 Samuel 13:1

<sup>13</sup> 1 Samuel 13:6-7

<sup>14</sup> 1 Samuel 13:8

<sup>15</sup> 1 Samuel 13:11

<sup>16</sup> 1 Samuel 13:13-14

went out into the rugged land to spy on the Philistine camp. They walked through a mountain pass that was very steep and covered in rough broken rocks. This was a difficult journey, but they were willing to take it. **Jonathan displayed great faith in God as he told his armor bearer that he wanted to see what God would do through the two of them to defeat this huge enemy.** He said, let's go up to their camp and introduce ourselves to them. If they say, "*Wait where you are until we come to you*", we will stay where we are. But if they say, "***Come on into our camp***", then we will know that the Lord has given them into our hands.

As Jonathan and his servant neared the fort, the men called down, "*Come on in, we have something to tell you*". **Jonathan instantly knew that God was with them**, and they were able to kill the first twenty men they saw. Suddenly the land started to shake with a large earthquake, causing the Philistines to tremble in fear. Great confusion came upon the Philistines and they started to kill each other. The loud sounds from the earthquake and ensuing confusion was heard for miles around; including Saul and his 600 remaining soldiers, and the Hebrew soldiers who were hiding in nearby caves. Soon thousands of Hebrews rushed to join in the battle with Jonathan. Even some of the fearful sons of Israel who had sided with the Philistines, changed sides again, and fought alongside Jonathan to kill their enemies.

After this great victory, Saul fought against all the enemies that came against Israel: Moab, Ammon, Edom, Zobah, the Philistines, and Amalek. **During his entire reign, Saul fought wars** and inflicted punishment on those who came against him. He no longer kept a small army by his side, but whenever he would see a man who was either a mighty man or a valiant man, Saul would take him for his army.<sup>17</sup> Do you remember Samuel told the people that was what a king would do?

## Saul's Rebellion

**God spoke to Samuel to tell Saul to utterly destroy Amalek.** God wanted Saul to punish that nation because of what they had done to the

sons of Israel as they were coming out of Egypt. Let's look back and see who this nation was. Amalek was the grandson of Esau,<sup>18</sup> Isaac's great-grandson, who settled in the land of Edom (southeast of the Promised Land). Amalek was a nation before Israel, but even in the beginning God spoke of its utter destruction.<sup>19</sup> When Moses was leading the sons of Israel out of Egypt, a few days after they had crossed through the parted Red Sea, Amalek came against them at Rephidim. Joshua led the men in battle, and they were able to prevail as long as Moses held up his staff. When his arms got tired, Aaron and Hur held them up.<sup>20</sup> Throughout the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, the men of Amalek would attack the weaker families of the sons of Israel at the rear of

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<sup>17</sup> 1 Samuel 8:11; 14:52

<sup>18</sup> Genesis 36:12

<sup>19</sup> Numbers 24:20

<sup>20</sup> Exodus 17:8-16

the procession.<sup>21</sup> In each of these occurrences, the Lord would declare that He would utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven!

**King Saul was the one who was ordered to carry out the punishment of Amalek.** God ordered him to strike Agag, the king of the Amalek's, and all he owned. Saul was to put to death every person and animal in his nation.<sup>22</sup> Up until now, Saul had no trouble inflicting punishment on his enemies.<sup>23</sup> Saul gathered 210,000 men from the sons of Israel to carry out this war. They easily defeated the Amalekites with the Lord's help. Saul captured King Agag, and utterly killed all the people in the land. They killed all the animals in the land, except for the best livestock. Anything that had value, Saul and his soldiers spared. On his way back to Gilgal, **Saul stopped to build a victory monument to himself.** It was probably some type of pillar that had a hand carved in it, signifying Saul's strength and dominion over Amalek.

**Immediately God spoke to Samuel and said, "I REGRET THAT I MADE SAUL KING! He has turned away from Me and has not carried out My commands!"** This greatly distressed Samuel, and he cried out to the Lord all night.<sup>24</sup> When Saul finally arrived in Gilgal, he was so excited to tell Samuel what he had done. He said, *"I have carried out the command of the Lord!"* Instead of congratulating King Saul, Samuel asked him about all the animal sounds he was hearing. **Immediately King Saul proudly said his soldiers spared the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the Lord, but we utterly destroyed the rest.**

When Saul realized this was the wrong answer, he told Samuel it was his soldiers' idea to keep some of the animals, not his! Samuel would not listen to anymore of Saul's lies; and he said, *"Let me tell you what the Lord told me last night. God sent you on a mission and you did not obey His orders."* Saul said he did obey the Lord, it was the people who did not. Saul proudly said that he killed all the people and **brought back their king.** What about ALL, did King Saul not understand?

Samuel made four things very clear to Saul:

- God values obedience much more than sacrifice
- God equates rebellion with the sin of witchcraft
- God sees stubbornness as idolatry
- Because Saul rejected the word of the Lord, God has rejected Saul from being king<sup>25</sup>

After these very intense accusations of wrong doing, **Saul confessed that he had sinned; but then he made excuses for his sins, trying to trivialize them.** He said he feared the people and obeyed

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<sup>21</sup> Deuteronomy 25:17-19

<sup>22</sup> 1 Samuel 15:2-3

<sup>23</sup> 1 Samuel 14:47

<sup>24</sup> 1 Samuel 15:11

<sup>25</sup> 1 Samuel 15:22-23

their voices; so he did what they asked. It was more important to Saul to please the people than to please God. Saul asked Samuel to pardon his sin, and make it all go away.

**Samuel had to tell Saul two more times that God had rejected him from being king over Israel because of his rebellion before Saul finally understood the seriousness of God's judgment against him.** But instead of truly repenting of his sins, he asked Samuel to make him look good in front of the elders of Israel; and begged him to accompany him to the Tabernacle where he would present an offering to Samuel's God. **Saul had totally turned his back on God, and would not even acknowledge Yahweh as his God!**<sup>26</sup>

Samuel has King Agag brought to him. Agag was pleased to be in front of Samuel, thinking he would be okay now, since he was no longer in the custody of the soldiers. But as soon as Samuel spoke, I am sure he realized his first impressions of this old prophet were wrong. Samuel told him, *"Just as your sword has made many women childless, so shall your mother be"*. Samuel picked up a sword, and hacked King Agag to pieces. Samuel left Gilgal and went to his home in Ramah, and he never saw Saul again. **He grieved over what had happened to Saul, and that the Lord regretted making him king over Israel.**

All throughout his time as the first king of Israel, King Saul was disobedient and rebelled against God. We will see in the next chapter Saul's insecurity turned to the jealousy of David, and that turned to attempted murder over and over again. Even Saul's son Jonathan could not get him to see reason. **In one of the oddest chapters in the Bible, 1 Samuel 28, we see one last act of rebellion by Saul.** Even though Saul had not seen Samuel for a while, he had drawn comfort in knowing he was still a prophet for Israel. But after Samuel had died<sup>27</sup>, Saul missed the comfort of His prophecies. The Philistines again came against Saul in battle, and King Saul was very afraid. He prayed to God, but God did not answer him. God no longer spoke to him in his dreams, by the Urim, or prophecy. God had cut off all forms of communication with Saul.

**Out of desperation, Saul commanded a servant to take him to a witch or medium, someone who spoke to the dead.** Earlier in his reign Saul had removed all the mediums and spiritists from Israel, but his servant knew of a witch from Endor. Saul disguised himself as a normal man, not wanting her to know that he was the king. As soon as he asked her to conjure up Samuel, she knew he was King Saul. She was afraid this was a trap, but after some reassurances, she agreed to summon Samuel. Saul bowed before the form of Samuel, and Samuel said to him, *"Why have you brought me here?"* Saul started to whine: *"The Philistines are waging war against me; God won't talk to me anymore; and I need you to tell me what to do!"* **Samuel reminded him that God was no longer with him because of his rebellion; and it was even worse than he thought, because now God was his adversary.** Samuel told Saul that David was to be the next king. Samuel went on

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<sup>26</sup> 1 Samuel 15:24-31

<sup>27</sup> 1 Samuel 25:1; 28:3

to tell Saul that **he and his sons would die the next day in battle.**<sup>28</sup> Saul was overtaken by fear; he fainted, and fell to the floor.

**Please read 1 Samuel 31.**

## End of Saul

The next day, Saul and three of his sons led the army of Israel in war against the Philistines at Jezreel. Saul's soldiers soon realized they were not going to win this battle, and started to run away from the battlefield. Most were overtaken by the Philistines on Mount Gilboa, and killed. This left Saul and his sons Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchi-shua unprotected. The Philistines captured and killed Saul's three sons; and Saul was badly wounded by an arrow. He asked his armor bearer to kill him so the Philistines could not torture him. The armor bearer was afraid to kill his king; so **Saul killed himself.** This was too much for the armor bearer to handle, and he killed himself also. When the Philistines found King Saul's body, they cut off his head and took his armor and weapons; and sent them all over the land of the Philistines to show their superior power over Israel. They then took Saul's headless body, and the bodies of his sons; and fastened them to the city walls of Beth-shan. All the valiant men from Jabesh-gilead walked all night to Beth-shan and took their bodies off the city walls. They burned their bodies and buried their bones under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh. They mourned their king's death for seven days with fasting.

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<sup>28</sup> 1 Samuel 28:15-19

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

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1. Why did the sons of Israel demand a king? Do you think their lives were better or worse than when they had elders or judges over them?
2. In 1 Samuel 14:4, Jonathan and his armor bearer snuck over to the garrison of the Philistines to see how God could use them to defeat the Philistines. The land they had to go through was not an easy stroll in the park. Look up the meaning of the Hebrew word used crag, and the names of the 2 crags they had to go through- Bozez and Seneh, to get a better understanding of the difficulties they faced.
3. Jonathan's faith in God was quite impressive, especially with all the insecurities his father had. What can we learn from Jonathan's example when we are in the midst of impossible circumstances?

4. Summarize what happened in 1 Samuel 14:24-45.

Why do you think Saul made that vow?

What does this say about the power of the words we speak?

Why are we careless about the words we speak?

5. King Saul rebelled against the commandments of God many times in his life. Name FIVE of those times, and list why each one was so detestable to God?
6. Why do you think God equates rebellion with witchcraft?
7. Why do you think Saul's rebellion was mourned so greatly by Samuel?

Why do you think Saul's death was mourned so greatly by the people of Israel?

# 8

## Man after God's Heart

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*Acts 13:22 "After He (God) had removed him (Saul), He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.'"*

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The lives of Saul and David were intricately entwined with one another. In this chapter we will go back and fill in the history of the first 30 years of David's life; and in the following chapter we will go over the remaining 40 years, when he was the 2<sup>nd</sup> king of Israel.<sup>1</sup> David was the youngest of eight sons born to Jesse from the tribe of Judah. David's great-grandparents were Boaz and Ruth.<sup>2</sup> His family lived in Bethlehem and raised sheep. David, being the youngest, was given the task of tending the sheep. He would take them from one pasture to the next to provide fresh grazing land for them. He would fearlessly protect them from wild animals<sup>3</sup> and find still waters for them to drink from. It was during these lonely times that David developed a close relationship with God. We can see in the Psalms that David saw the Lord as his shepherd, taking care of all his needs.<sup>4</sup>

**Please read 1 Samuel 16-17**

### David Anointed King

After Saul's rebellion and disobedience, God told Samuel that He regretted making Saul

king. Even though Samuel knew that Saul had sinned time and time again against God, he still grieved over God's rejection of Saul. **God told Samuel to stop weeping over Saul, and go to Bethlehem to anoint the next king.** God told Samuel to go to the house of Jesse in Bethlehem, for one of his sons would be the next king. Samuel was concerned about his safety in carrying out this treasonous duty; since Saul was still alive, and probably bad-tempered now that God had rejected him. Samuel was well known as a prophet of God throughout Israel, and he was not always welcome because of some of the hard, but truthful messages God had given him to deliver to the

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Samuel 5:4

<sup>2</sup> Ruth 4:21-22

<sup>3</sup> 1 Samuel 17:34-35

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 23

people.<sup>5</sup> But since Samuel was a prophet and a priest, God told him to go to Bethlehem as a priest; and offer a heifer as a sacrifice to God. He was to invite Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice.

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**1 Samuel 16:7** *"... God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."*

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Samuel saw Eliab, Jesse's oldest son and thought this man looked like a king; but God made it very clear to Samuel that He was going to pick the next king based on his heart, not his appearance. Samuel then looked at Abinadab, Shammah, and four other sons; but the Lord did not choose any of them. He asked Jesse if he had any other sons, and he said his youngest son was out tending the sheep. Samuel told Jesse they would wait to present the sacrifice to God until his 15-year old son was brought to him. As soon as Samuel saw David, **the Lord told him to arise and anoint David, for he would be the next king!** In the presence of his father and seven brothers, Samuel took a horn of oil and anointed David. Immediately the Spirit of God came mightily upon David, and stayed with him his entire life. **Even though God chose David to be the next king, it would be another 15 years before David became king.** God was preparing him during those years to be the leader He needed him to be. Do you remember how we saw God do that in the life of Joseph and Moses?

At the same time that David received the Holy Spirit, It departed from Saul. The Lord allowed an evil spirit to torment him; which filled him with fear, rage, and depression. The only thing that helped soothe him was music. David was known as a skillful musician on the harp, so Saul sent messengers to Jesse to send his son David to live in the palace with him. Whenever the evil spirit would come upon Saul, David would sing and play his harp; and the evil spirit would leave, and Saul would be well and feel refreshed. **It's very easy to see why Saul grew very fond of David.** David's love of worshipping God started at an early age, and continued throughout his life. He wrote many Psalms about the majesty of God, some of which I am sure he sang to Saul. We will also see that he introduced corporate worship in the Temple, by employing singers and musicians to continually worship the Lord.

## Goliath

Shortly after David came to live in the king's palace, the Philistines gathered their armies at the valley of Elah, southwest of Jerusalem, to fight against Israel. Saul took his army and went out to meet the Philistines in battle. Instead of fighting a traditional battle, one of the Philistines challenged the sons of Israel to send their best warrior to fight him. Their warrior yelled out across the valley between the two camps: *"If your champion is able to kill me, then we will become your servants; but if I kill him, then you shall become our servants and serve us."* **The Philistine warrior who made that challenge was named Goliath.** He was a terrifying opponent who stood nine feet tall, and probably weighed between 600 and 750 pounds. He was covered in bronze armor that weighed over 200 pounds. He

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<sup>5</sup> 2 Samuel 16:4

carried a sword by his side, a very long javelin in one hand, and a very large spear in the other hand. The head of the spear weighed 60 pounds. He taunted the sons of Israel for 40 days; and understandably, **they were greatly afraid of him.**

After King Saul left his palace to fight the Philistines, David went home to help his father with the sheep, since his three older brothers were soldiers in Saul's army.<sup>6</sup> From time to time Jesse, David's father, would send David to their camp to bring them food, and to check on how they were doing.<sup>7</sup> One day, shortly after David arrived at their camp, he heard Goliath challenging the sons of Israel to fight him. **David saw that King Saul and his soldiers were terrified of Goliath, and NO ONE was going forth to challenge this giant!** David yelled out, "*Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?*" His brothers got angry with him and told him to be quiet; but when Saul heard his words, he summoned David to come to him. **David told Saul that he would fight Goliath with the help of the Lord.** King Saul questioned his ability to fight such a formidable opponent. David told him that many times he had fought against lions and bears when looking after his father's sheep, and he always won with the help of the Lord.

Saul agreed to let the determined David fight Goliath. He gave David his armor, but the armor of a tall grown man would not fit the frame of a teenage boy. David took off the cumbersome armor, and took out his sling. As he approached Goliath he bent down to pick up five smooth stones. Goliath could not believe that a small youth stood before him to do battle. As David stood still before him, Goliath mocked, cursed, and threatened David. But David was not moved. He spoke in a very loud voice for all to hear:

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**1 Samuel 17:45-47** *Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. This day the Lord will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the Lord's and He will give you into our hands."*

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As soon as he finished speaking, David quickly ran towards Goliath putting a stone in his sling. He slung the stone and hit Goliath on his forehead, knocking him out; which caused him to fall face down. Can you imagine how hard the ground shook when 1000 pounds (Goliath and all his gear) suddenly fell to the ground? Not to mention the loud gasps on both sides as Goliath instantly fell at the feet of a teenage boy armed only with a sling! David quickly took the sword at Goliath's side, and cut off his head to kill him before he regained consciousness. Once the Philistines got over the

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Samuel 17:14

<sup>7</sup> 1 Samuel 17:17-18

shock of their champion losing, they ran for their lives. The sons of Israel, no longer paralyzed with fear, chased the Philistines all the way back to the gates of their cities; killing many along the way.

**Please read 1 Samuel 18-20**

## Mighty Warrior

David went back to the palace with Saul, where he continued to play the harp for the king, when he became "distressed". While David was in the palace, **he became best friends with Saul's oldest son Jonathan**. They loved each other more than themselves. They promised to always be close friends, and to treat each other's children with great love and respect. They made a covenant of friendship that was sealed with the exchange of robes and armor.

Saul put both Jonathan and David in charge of some of the companies of soldiers who were in constant war with the Philistines. They went out wherever the king sent them. **David always had great success against the Philistines, and it became very evident to all that God was with David**. The women sang victory songs when the men would come back from war, saying: "*Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.*"<sup>8</sup> This did not sit well with King Saul. Fueled by jealousy, Saul became very angry with David. He feared David would take the kingdom from him.

**Saul's rage drew him to attempt to kill David several times**. Twice while sitting in his house while David was playing his harp to sooth Saul, the king hurled his spear at David. Saul even sent David out on more frequent and dangerous missions against the Philistines, hoping he would be killed. But Saul soon saw that David just had more success, and was wining the hearts of the people more and more with each victory.<sup>9</sup> **Saul became even more distraught when he realized that God was with David in a mighty way, whereas He was not with Saul at all!**

Saul had promised to give his daughter, Merab, to the one who slew Goliath. David humbly told Saul he was not worthy to be the king's son-in-law. But Saul renewed his promise to David that they would be married, but then gave her in marriage to someone else. **Saul's youngest daughter, Michal, seemed to have a crush on David, and told her father she would like to marry David**. Saul agreed, thinking she would bring him down, or else the conditions for the dowry would cause his death. David again said he was not worthy to marry the King's daughter, adding that he had not money to offer for a dowry. Saul told him the only dowry he would accept from David was 100 foreskins of the Philistines. David was pleased with this arrangement and got excited about becoming the king's son-in-law. David went out and killed 200 Philistines, and brought their foreskins to Saul.

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<sup>8</sup> 1 Samuel 18:7

<sup>9</sup> 1 Samuel 18:16

## Saul's Enemy

Saul had to give Michal to David for a wife, since he had made such a public declaration of the dowry he would accept for his daughter. When Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that his daughter loved David, he became even more enraged and afraid. Saul convinced himself that David was his enemy, and he made more attempts to kill him!

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**1 Samuel 19:4** *Then Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Do not let the king sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds have been very beneficial to you."*

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Saul told his son, Jonathan, and his servants to kill David. They refused because they all loved David. Jonathan told David about his father's desire to kill him, and asked him to be careful and to hide from Saul. He said he would talk to his father the next day and see if he changed his mind. Evidently Saul was known to have irrational fits of rage, and then moments of sanity. Jonathan convinced his father not to shed innocent blood, and Saul agreed not to put him to death. Jonathan brought David to Saul, and they were reconciled.

But the next time David returned from war, victorious once more; the spirit of jealousy strongly came over Saul. He took a nearby spear and threw it at David, but missed. David ran out of the palace and hid in his own house. Saul ordered his men to kill David in his house the next morning. David's wife, Michal, let him down through a window to escape.<sup>10</sup> He went directly to Samuel at Ramah, and told him that Saul wanted to kill him, and had even tried several times. When Saul heard David was with Samuel, he sent several messenger to get bring David back to him, but the Lord protected David every time. Saul even went to kill David himself, but the Lord would not allow that.

David ran back to Jonathan, desperately seeking to know why Saul was so furious. He asked Jonathan: **"What have I done? What is my iniquity? What is my sin before your father that he is seeking my life?"**<sup>11</sup> David asked Jonathan to find out if his father was still angry and seeking his death. Before Jonathan left, they renewed their covenant of friendship, promising each other:

- The Lord would be at the center of their relationship
- They would be loyal to one another and their families, putting them before themselves
- They would be honest with each other in good and bad times
- Their strong love for one another would endure<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> 1 Samuel 19:12

<sup>11</sup> 1 Samuel 20:1

<sup>12</sup> 1 Samuel 20:8,14-17, 23

Jonathan went to the palace for the three day celebration of the new moon. Saul did not say anything the first day about David being absent. But on the second night, he became irate when he realized David had not been there. His raging anger turned towards Jonathan. He yelled: "Don't you know that as long as David lives, neither you nor your kingdom will be established! You must send him to me so I can kill him!" Jonathan asked him why he should be killed. **This sent Saul's rage over the top, and he hurled a spear at him, seeking to kill his own son!** From that time on, Jonathan knew that his Father would never change his mind about killing David. The next morning, Jonathan met David at a place they had agreed on. **Jonathan and David both wept over the words Jonathan spoke about Saul.**<sup>13</sup> They knew they would probably never see each other again.

**David wrote Psalm 116 during this turbulent time of his life.** He was angry and distressed over his unfair treatment, but he came to realize that his hope was the Lord! Even in the midst of leaving his family and dear friend, he was able to give praise to the Lord!

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***Psalm 116** "I love the Lord, because He hears My voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live. The cords of death encompassed me and the terrors of sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the Lord: 'O Lord, I beseech You, save my life!' Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate. The Lord preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me. Return to your rest, O my soul, For the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. For You have rescued my soul from death, My eyes from tears, My feet from stumbling. I shall walk before the Lord In the land of the living. I believed when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted.' I said in my alarm, 'All men are liars.' What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I shall lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. I shall pay my vows to the Lord, oh may it be in the presence of all His people. Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His godly ones. O Lord, surely I am Your servant, I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid, You have loosed my bonds. To You I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and call upon the name of the Lord. I shall pay my vows to the Lord, oh may it be in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord!"*

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**Please read 1 Samuel 21-23**

## Running from Saul

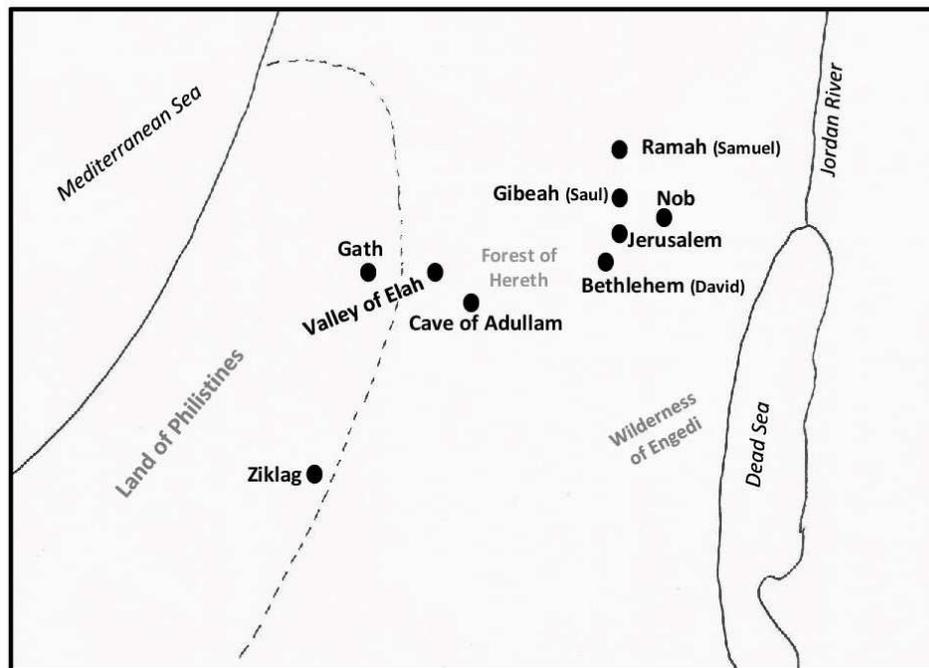
Instead of running home to his family in Bethlehem, **David sought the help of the high priest Abimelech**, who was in

Nob. David lied and told Abimelech that he was on a secret mission for the king, and to tell no one that he had been there. David asked him for food and weapons. Abimelech gave him bread that had just been taken off the Table of Showbread, and Goliath's sword.

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<sup>13</sup> 1 Samuel 20:41-42

David reasoned he could not safely stay in Israel any longer. He decided to flee to the land of the Philistines, to Achish, the king of Gath, which happened to be Goliath's hometown. David quickly realized it was not a good idea to stay there, so **he fled to the cave of Adullam, in the land of Judah, just southwest of Bethlehem.** He would have been very familiar with this area. **David's parents and all of his brothers and their families joined David there.** I don't know if they left Bethlehem to escape the residual wrath of Saul that might come upon them by being related to David, or if they understood that David was to be the next king, and they wanted to be on his side. Whatever reasons they had, they did come alongside their brother to assist him in this difficult time of his life. **Also everyone in Israel who was either in distress, debt, or discontented with Saul gathered to follow David.** David soon had 400 men and their families under his leadership.<sup>14</sup> With David's godly leadership, these 400 men soon became skilled fighters and mighty men of valor. 1 Chronicles 11 and 12 record some of their mighty deeds, along with the deeds of other men who joined with David over the years.



David took his parents to Moab, asking the King of Moab to look after them until he knew how the Lord would resolve his current situation with Saul. Even though Moab was an enemy of Israel, David's great-grandmother was Ruth, who was from Moab.<sup>15</sup> David mistakenly thought his elderly parents would be safer in Moab, than on the run with him. Jewish tradition tells us the Moabites killed David's parents.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Samuel 22:2

<sup>15</sup> Ruth 4:17

David returned to his stronghold in the cave of Adullam, where the prophet Gad was waiting to talk to him. He warned David that he and the people with him were no longer safe in their stronghold. Gad told him to go into the land of Judah, where they hid in the forests of Hereth.<sup>16</sup> While they were changing locations, King Saul was in his town of Gibeah loudly complaining about David and also his son Jonathan. He was indignant that his son had made a covenant with David, and even helped him escape. **He accused everyone around him of conspiring against him, since no one would tell him where David was!**

One of the men with Saul by the name of Doeg was one of Saul's' head shepherds. He told Saul that when he was in Nob, he saw David asking the High Priest, Ahimelech for provisions. He said that the priest gave him bread and Goliath's sword. King Saul quickly summoned Ahimelech and the other priests in Nob to appear before him. Saul accused them of conspiring with David against him. Ahimelech didn't know what Saul was talking about, and praised David for being a faithful subject and son-in-law to the king.

**His words incited Saul's wrath, and he ordered the guards around him to kill Ahimelech and all the priests with him.** They refused to kill the priests of God, but Doeg had no qualms about murdering these men. He killed the 85 priests whom Saul had summoned; and then he went back to the city of Nob and killed every man, woman, child, and animal with his sword! **One son of Ahimelech, named Abiathar, escaped and fled to David.** David was greatly grieved by these murders, and apologized for being the cause of their deaths. He welcomed Abiathar to stay with him, and promised to keep him safe. Abiathar was now the High Priest and kept that position during David's lifetime. Isn't it interesting that even though Saul had a hard time discovering the location of David, Abiathar had no trouble whatsoever? Jonathan was also able to pay a visit to David to encourage him.<sup>17</sup>

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*1 Samuel 23:14 "... Saul sought him (David) every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand."*

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**David and his men didn't stay long in any location because Saul was determined to kill them.** He had spies all over his kingdom telling him where David had been seen. But the Lord was with David, and Saul never caught up with him. One time, Saul and his men were on one side of a mountain, while David and his men were on the other side. It looked like Saul was about to capture David, when a messenger came to tell Saul that the Philistines had just made a raid on their land. Saul and all his men immediately left the mountain, and went after the Philistines.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> 1 Samuel 22:5

<sup>17</sup> 1 Samuel 23:16-18

<sup>18</sup> 1 Samuel 23:24-28

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**1 Samuel 26:23** "... for the Lord delivered you (Saul) into my hand today, but I (David) refused to stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed."

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**Please read 1 Samuel 24 and 26.**

## No Harm to Saul

Even though Saul sought to kill David every day, David did not want to kill Saul. David knew that he was to be the next king of Israel; but he put his trust in God's timing, and did not want to take matters into his own hands. Two times David had an opportunity to easily kill Saul with no risk to himself, but he refused to stretch out his hand against God's anointed. David still considered Saul to be his King.

The first time was recorded in 1 Samuel 24. Saul heard that David was in the wilderness of Engedi, so he took 3000 soldiers with him to kill David. On the way there, Saul needed to use the restroom, so he went into a cave for some privacy. It just so happened that David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the same cave. David's men got so excited, thinking that God had given their enemy into their hands. David snuck up to Saul's outer cloak that was on the ground, and cut off its edge. But as soon as he tiptoed back to his men, he realized he had dishonored Saul, and that was not pleasing to God. David's men did not like his remorse, and were determined to kill Saul themselves. David had to forcibly restrain them.

After Saul had left the cave, David went to the opening of the cave and called to Saul. David asked Saul why he wanted to kill him. David held up the cut-off piece of Saul's robe and said, "*I just had an opportunity to kill you, but I didn't! My hand is not against you.*" Saul was touched by David's words and **realized that David was not his enemy. He acknowledged that David would be the next king, and asked David to promise to not harm his descendants.** Saul did not know that David had already made the same covenant promise with Jonathan, but he told Saul that he would not harm his family. Saul went back to his palace in Gibeah, and David stayed in the wilderness.

Not long after this, the Ziphites came to Saul and told him where David could be found. **Saul once again took 3000 soldiers to pursue David.** Saul truly was unstable in all his ways! When David saw that Saul was pursuing him again, he sent spies out to see where they camped. **That night, David and Abishai snuck into the camp, and found Saul sleeping inside a circle of his guards.** His spear was stuck in the ground near head. Abishai wanted to kill Saul, but David stopped him. He told him that the Lord knew the days of Saul, and He would bring them to an end, not David.<sup>19</sup> **They took Saul's spear and his jug of water and left the camp, with no one hearing or seeing**

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<sup>19</sup> 1 Samuel 26:8-11

**them, because the Lord had caused a deep sleep to fall over the entire camp.**<sup>20</sup> When they returned back to the safety of their camp, David called out to the soldiers with Saul, especially Abner, the king's bodyguard. David showed him the King's spear and water jug, and accused him of not doing his job. David then asked Saul, "*Why are you still seeking to kill me?*" "*What evil have I done to you?*" **Saul repented for his actions and asked David to return home with him.** Saul said he had acted like a fool and had been seriously mistaken about David. David again told Saul that he highly valued Saul's life, and he would not kill him! He then asked Saul to send over someone to retrieve Saul's spear and water jug. Saul left David with a blessing, "*Blessed are you, my son David; you will both accomplish much and surely prevail.*"<sup>21</sup>

**Please read 1 Samuel 27, 29, 31**

## With the Philistines

Even though Saul had repented to David, and given him a blessing when they last saw each other, David knew

that Saul could not be trusted. In his weariness from the constant pressure of always being pursued by Saul, David decided that it would be best for himself and those with him if he would live in the land of the Philistines until Saul died. David knew Saul was afraid of the Philistines and would not venture into their land to pursue him.<sup>22</sup> Even though God had kept him safe all his life, David took matters into his own hands and fled to the land of Israel's enemy.

I am sure the pressure of keeping his family and all the people traveling with him safe was getting to him also. David now had 600 men and their families with him. When David left the palace, Saul gave his wife, Michal, to another man. While David was in the wilderness, he took two wives, Ahinoam from Jezreel, and Abigail, the widow of Nabal. Nothing is said of how David met and married Ahinoam, but there is an interesting account of how David met the wise Abigail in 1 Samuel 25. I encourage you to read it.

**David went to Gath and asked King Achish for asylum.** It was well known that David was hiding from the king of Israel; yet for whatever reason, King Achish took a liking to David, and invited him and his men to live in his palace. After a little while, David humbly asked the king if he and his men could live in another city, for they were not worthy to live in the royal city with the king. **Achish gave them the city of Ziklag to live in.**

**David and his men lived in the land of the Philistines for 16 months.**<sup>23</sup> During that time David and his men would raid the cities of some of the remaining enemies of Israel: the Geshurites, Girzites, and the Amalekites. They would kill all the inhabitants of the land and then take the

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<sup>20</sup> 1 Samuel 26:12

<sup>21</sup> 1 Samuel 26:25

<sup>22</sup> 1 Samuel 27:1

<sup>23</sup> 1 Samuel 27:7

livestock and treasures of the city back to king Achish. He would ask David where he raided, and he would say the country to the south, making the king assume it was the southern part of Israel. Thinking that David was raiding Israel, he was confident that David would never be able to return there. Achish loved how David was such a great warrior for him.

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**1 Samuel 28:1** *"Now it came about in those days that the Philistines gathered their armed camps for war, to fight against Israel. And Achish said to David, 'Know assuredly that you will go out with me in the camp, you and your men'."*

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The next spring, the Philistines gathered their troops once again to fight against Israel. Achish totally trusted David to fight with him, and made David his bodyguard for life. As they gathered with the entire Philistine army, the other Philistine kings refused to allow David to fight with them, because they did not trust him. Achish apologized to David for their lack of trust. David and his men went back to Ziklag. **The Lord spared them from fighting against Saul and Israel!**

## Mourning for Saul

**It was in this battle that Saul and three of his sons, including Jonathan, were killed.** Three days after the battle, an

Amalekite came to David at Ziklag to tell David about their deaths. He obviously thought that David would be very grateful to hear of Saul's death, and would give him a handsome reward. He made up a story that he happened upon King Saul and saw that he was badly wounded. He said that King Saul asked him to end his life because he was in so much pain; so he did. He then took Saul's crown and bracelet and showed them to David.

Instead of hearing David thank him for killing his enemy, **David tore his clothes and cried out in deep mourning.** He and all the people with him fasted and mourned that day for Saul and Jonathan. When David was finally able to compose himself, he asked the man why he was not afraid to kill the Lord's anointed king; and then ordered that he be killed. **David then chanted a lamentation over Saul and Jonathan.**<sup>24</sup>

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**2 Samuel 1:23** *"Saul and Jonathan, beloved and pleasant in their life, and in their death they were not parted; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions."*

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<sup>24</sup> 2 Samuel 1:19-27

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

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1. After David killed Goliath, King Saul asked "whose son is this young man?" Why did he want to know who David's father was, if he already knew David? Look at the promised rewards for the person who killed Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:25 for a clue.

2. David kept telling Saul he was not worthy to marry into Saul's family. Why do you think David didn't think he was good enough?

What was Saul's family background and what job did Saul have before he was anointed King? Read 1 Samuel 9; and 11:5.

3. David wrote Psalm 34 during the time when he fled to Nob and sought help from the high Priest Abimelech. Please read this Psalm and write out the emotions that David was feeling at this time in his life.

4. Read 1 Chronicles 11 and 12. These are the listings of the mighty men of valor that accompanied David in the wilderness to escape Saul's wrath. They were poor men with no education or training; yet David was able to transform their lives. List what was said about these men and their mighty deeds.

5. Read 1 Samuel 25. Why was Nabal considered a fool?

What did Abigail's treatment of David show about her character?

Why do you think David made Abigail his wife?

6. We saw at the end of our study that David sang a lamentation over Saul and Jonathan. Please read 2 Samuel 1: 17-27, and summarize what David lamented over them.

# 9

## God's Anointed King

Please read 2 Samuel 2-5.

### King David

**David's life radically changed after Saul died.** He was no longer a fugitive, running for his life; and he no longer had to live in the land of the Philistines, pretending to be on their side.

David was now 30 years old, and about 15 years had passed since Samuel had anointed him to be the next king of Israel. **But David wasn't sure how to actually go about becoming king.** Did he go up to the elders and say, "*Here I am, your next king*"? Did he have to face challengers, or did he have to prove himself to the people of Israel? Or did God still want him to be king? I am sure he had many thoughts like these running through his mind. But instead of acting on the one that seemed the best to him, **David went before the Lord and asked him what he should do and where he should go.**<sup>25</sup> The Lord told him to leave the land of the Philistines and move to the city of Hebron in Judah. When he got there, **the men of Judah anointed David as their king.** The first thing David did as king was to thank the men of Jabesh-gilead for honoring King Saul by burying his body.<sup>26</sup>

While the men in the tribe of Judah made David their king, Abner, the commander of Saul's army, in a move to keep his position, appointed Ish-bosheth, Saul's 40-year old son, as the King of the rest of Israel. **David and Ish-bosheth did not have animosity against each other, but those under them did, especially Abner.** He kept things stirred up, causing wars between the people of Judah and Israel for over seven years; which weakened Ish-bosheth's kingdom. Abner tried several schemes to gain total power, but they all failed. Then **Joab, the commander of David's army, killed Abner** in retaliation for killing his brother in one of the wars. **When things looked really bad for Ish-bosheth, two of his commanders, Rechab and Baanah, killed him.** They went to David to tell him that they had killed the king of Israel to prove their loyalty to David. **David was furious at the murders Joab, Rechab, and Baanah committed; and he had them all put to death!**

Now that Ish-bosheth and Abner were dead, there was no one to challenge David for the throne of all of Israel. **All the elders of Israel came to Hebron and asked David to be their king.** They

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<sup>25</sup> 2 Samuel 2:1

<sup>26</sup> 1 Samuel 31:8-13

made a covenant with him, and then officially anointed him as their king. David had been the king of Judah for 7 ½ years; and now at 37, he became the king of Israel.<sup>27</sup> Remember God selected David to be the king to follow after Saul when he was just a teenager, but the Lord knew he was not ready for the responsibilities he would face as king. David matured a lot through the challenges the Lord placed before him. First and foremost, he developed a deeply personal relationship with God, and truly became a man after God's own heart. He respected God and His ways. Even though he was a man of war, David hated injustice and would not tolerate murder. We will soon see that David had many more challenges to face, some of which he failed.

### Jerusalem

**King David desired to make Jerusalem his capital city.** The Bible doesn't tell us why he chose that location, but my guess is because he knew the significance of this land to God. This was the same location that Abraham proved his loyalty to God by offering his son Isaac to God. The mountain Abraham and Isaac walked up was Mt. Moriah which is in Jerusalem. Abraham showed God he trusted and valued Him more than he loved his son; and God showed His pleasure on top of that barren mountain by providing a lamb to use as a substitute sacrifice. Our Lord Jesus Christ would be crucified as a sacrificial lamb on that same mountain, taking the punishment for our sins.

In the 400 years since coming into the Promised Land, the sons of Israel were never able to totally defeat the Jebusites who lived in the stronghold of Jerusalem. King David and his army went up to the city walls and the inhabitants laughed at them, confident they were safe. They taunted David saying the blind and the lame would be able to win the battle against him. **But the Lord was with David, and they were able to totally destroy the Jebusites and take Jerusalem for Israel. He made Jerusalem his capital city, and even to this day it is called the City of David.** David had the city built up to be even stronger and safer. To show his allegiance to King David, King Hiram of Tyre sent David cedar trees, carpenters, and stonemasons to build a palace in Jerusalem for David and his expanding family.

### David's Wives

**David had at least eight wives, and many unnamed concubines.** His first wife was King Saul's daughter, Michal. She had agreed to marry him after her father gave David's promised wife (for killing Goliath) to another man. After she helped David escape from her father, Saul gave Michal to another man. After King Saul died and David became the king of Judah, David asked for her back. Her brother, King Ish-bosheth took her away from her very upset husband, and sent her to David.<sup>28</sup> Michal and David had no children.

During the eight years David was hiding from King Saul, he took two women as wives: Ahinoam and Abigail. They each gave him a son after they had settled in Hebron. When David became the King

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<sup>27</sup> 2 Samuel 5:1-5

<sup>28</sup> 2 Samuel 3:12-16

of Judah he married four more wives: Maacah, Haggith, Abital, and Eglah. They gave him four sons and one daughter. Maacah was the daughter of a foreign king. **God made it very clear in His Word that kings of Israel were not to take more than one wife, and that wife was to be from Israel.**<sup>29</sup> Even though David was a man after God's own heart, **he had a problem with lust.** Shortly we will see the many consequences of this sin in his life and family.

King David married at least one more wife after he became King of Israel. Her name was Bathsheba, **and she gave David four sons: Solomon, Shimea, Shobab, and Nathan.** David had nine more sons by unnamed concubines: **Ibhar, Elishama, Eliphelet, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.**<sup>30</sup> David also invited **Mephibosheth**, the crippled son of Jonathan, to be a part of his family. He took time to explain to him that he had made a covenant with his father many years before he was born, so he could trust David's motives for inviting him into his home.<sup>31</sup> David must have had a very large house.

David's Wives	David's Children
Michal	---
Ahinoam	Amnon
Abigail	Chileab (also called Daniel)
Maacah	Absalom and Tamar
Haggith	Adonijah
Abital	Shephatiah
Eglah	Ithream
Bathsheba	Solomon, Shimea, Shobab, and Nathan
(unnamed concubines)	Ibhar, Elishama, Eliphelet, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada and Eliphelet

**Please read 2 Samuel 6 and 1 Chronicles 13 & 15.**

## Tabernacle Restored

David loved God with all his heart, and he had a very special relationship with his Lord. This is very evident through the many psalms he wrote. Early on in his reign as King of Israel, as an act of worship to the God he loved, **David wanted to restore the Tabernacle** that had long been ignored by Saul and the previous leaders of Israel. His ultimate goal was to build a permanent home, a Temple, for God in Jerusalem. **Most of the Tabernacle of Moses was in Gibeon, but the Ark of**

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<sup>29</sup> Deuteronomy 7:1-3; Deuteronomy 17:17

<sup>30</sup> 1 Chronicles 3:5-8

<sup>31</sup> 2 Samuel 9

**the Covenant was at the house of Abinadab in Kiriath-jearim, where it had been for around 70 years.** Remember during the time of the Judges, the Ark had been taken captive by the Philistines. They gave it back after many strange and awful things happened in every Philistine city it was in. It supernaturally returned to the land of Israel on a driverless cart pulled by two cows. The men of Beth-shemesh looked inside the Ark, and 50,700 of them instantly died! The remaining inhabitants told the people of Kiriath-jearim to come and get the Ark. They took it to the house of Abinadab, and sanctified his son Eleazar to keep it.

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*1 Chronicles 13:3 "and let us bring back the Ark of our God to us, for we did not seek it in the days of Saul."*

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David talked with his commanders, leaders, and priests about going to get the Ark. They thought it was a good idea, and they invited everyone who was interested in coming to join them for the 10 mile journey. Kiriath-jearim is a hilly city, and Abinadab's house was at the top of the hill. **They placed the Ark on a new cart with Abinadab's two sons, Uzzah (Uzza) and Ahio, driving the cart.** David and all the people who came to witness the move of the Ark were singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments, worshipping the Lord. When they came to another hilltop, which was the threshing floor of Chidon, the cart became unsteady. **Uzzah put out his hand to steady the Ark, which greatly angered the Lord; and he was instantly killed.** David became very angry at God, and also very afraid. He didn't understand why God was so upset. All he wanted to do was bring the Ark to Jerusalem, and now he didn't know what to do. David took the Ark to the nearby house of Obed-edom the Gittite. God greatly blessed Obed-edom and his family.

**Three months later, after receiving instruction on how to move the Ark properly,** King David assembled all the people to celebrate the Ark coming into Jerusalem, starting with the Priests and Levites. He instructed them to consecrate themselves and their families before they participated in bringing the Ark to Jerusalem.<sup>32</sup> David appointed the Levites, specifically the descendants of Kohath, to insert poles through the golden rings on the sides of the Ark, and carry it on their shoulders.<sup>33</sup> David appointed many musicians and singers to joyously worship the Lord all along the route to Jerusalem. David put aside his royal robes, and humbly dressed himself in a white linen garment, like the priests. **There was much singing and dancing as the Ark made it to the tent David had prepared for the Ark of the Covenant.** Most likely this tent was made to the same specifications as the Tabernacle of Moses. They offering seven bulls and seven rams as burnt offerings and peace offerings to the Lord on the Bronze Altar. There was great joy in the celebration among the inhabitants of Israel that day<sup>34</sup>. Only David's first wife, Michal, did not join in the festivities, because she thought David was not behaving as a king should. The Bible gives the

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<sup>32</sup> 1 Chronicles 15:11-12

<sup>33</sup> Numbers 4:1-15; 1 Chronicles 15:15

<sup>34</sup> 2 Samuel 6:1-19; 1 Chronicles 15

impression that God closed her womb because of her attitude towards David and his joyous celebration to the Lord.<sup>35</sup>

**David instructed all the priests and Levites to restart the duties of the Tabernacle in Jerusalem and in Gibeon,** and to offer continual prayers and offerings to the Lord.<sup>36</sup> He assigned each group of Levites and priests specific duties in the Tabernacle, along with gatekeepers and trumpeters. David was a true worshipper of God, so he assigned singers and musicians to continually worship God. **David had Asaph and his brothers write and sing songs of great worship to the Lord.** We see one in 1 Chronicles 16:7-36; and there are many others in the Book of Psalms. If you look at the headings of the Psalms, very often you will see Asaph's name.<sup>37</sup>

If you look at the meanings of the names of the ten chief musicians in 1 Chronicles 16:5, there is a **great hidden message of worship to our Lord.** *As we gather for a purpose, to remember who God is, He will carry us away to a place of authority and honor. God will restore our lives and reward us with gifts. Our Father has built us up to serve Him so we can be carried away by Him.*

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*1 Chronicles 16:28-29 "Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come before Him; worship the Lord in holy array."*

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**Please read 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17.**

## House of God

One day as David was walking around admiring the beautiful house that was built for him, **the desire to build an even nicer house for God became strong again.** He thought it was wrong for him to live in a house with beautiful wood paneled walls, while the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord was in a tent! David shared his thoughts with the prophet Nathan, who thought it was a good idea to build a permanent dwelling place for the Lord. But later that night, the Lord spoke to Nathan. **God told him to go back to the King and tell him he was NOT to build a house for the Lord.** God had always dwelt in a tent and He was not asking for a house of stone to be built for His presence.

The Lord reminded David that He had selected him from the pasture to be the next king of His people. God would lead him through many wars and great victories, so His people would live in peace; and He would make David's name great among the earth. God didn't explain to David why he was not to build a Temple; instead He made a covenant with him. God made many incredible

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<sup>35</sup> 2 Samuel 6:20-23

<sup>36</sup> 1 Chronicles 16:37-42

<sup>37</sup> Psalm 50, 73, 74

promises to David that have glorious ramifications for all mankind. His promises are also called the **Davidic Covenant**. God said:

- David would have a child, yet to be born, who would succeed him and establish his kingdom
- That son (Solomon) would build the Temple, instead of David
- God would be a Father to Solomon, correcting him when he committed iniquity
- God's lovingkindness would be with Solomon
- David's house (descendants), kingdom (Israel), and throne would be established forever.  
**Jesus Christ is from the lineage of David, and one day He will rule the entire world forever!**

After hearing these words from the Lord through Nathan, **David then went into the Tabernacle to personally talk to God**. He could not believe the way God was honoring him and his family. He magnified God and His name, and told God he was not worthy of the honor. He ended his prayer by thanking God for the good things He promised to David and his descendants.<sup>38</sup> Of course David had no idea that God would send His own Son Jesus Christ, through his lineage to be the Savior of the world; and that He would be the fulfillment of this covenant; but he does now that he is in heaven with Jesus!

**Please Read 2 Samuel 5, 8, 10; and 1 Chronicles 12, 18-20**

### Warrior King

David was always able to get men to join him for battle. He was a great leader because he relied upon the Lord and not on himself. Day by day, **over 340,000 valiant warriors from all of the tribes joyfully came and joined David's army to help him in the many wars he had to fight as king.**<sup>39</sup> The nations God told his people to utterly destroy were still in the Promised Land, and nations around them were constant thorns in their side.

When the Philistines heard that David had become the king of all Israel, they gathered for war against him. **Twice David asked the Lord if he should fight against them**, and both times the Lord said yes; promising to give the Philistines into his hands. In the second battle, the Lord even gave David a signal for the perfect time to attack. He had great success in both battles. The sons of Israel had never been able to totally defeat the Philistines in the 400 years they had been in the Promised Land, until these battles with David as their king. **Israel finally possessed the Philistine cities from Geba to Gezer.**<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> 2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17

<sup>39</sup> 1 Chronicles 12

<sup>40</sup> 2 Samuel 5:17-25

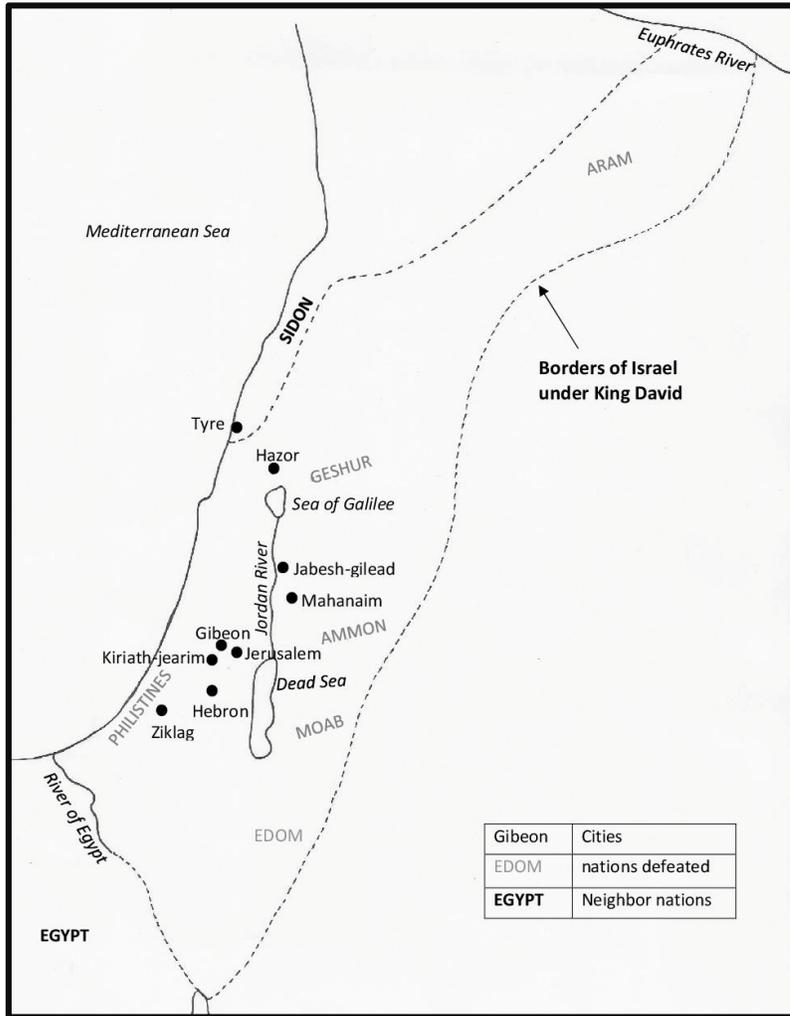
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**2 Samuel 8:6** "...And the Lord helped David wherever he went. "

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**David waged war with many other nations, and with the help of the Lord he was always victorious. He defeated Moab, Hadadezer of Zobah, Aram, Edom, and Ammon.** He erected

garrisons (forts) throughout these captured lands, to keep the peace. He had the foreigners pledge their loyalty to him, demonstrated by paying Israel tribute (taxes). The land he got from Hadadezer extended to the Euphrates River.<sup>41</sup> When God told Abraham about the land God gave him as a perpetual inheritance, the Euphrates River was one of the boundaries of the Promised Land. This was a fulfilled promise of God.



Toi, king of Joram sent David large amounts of silver, bronze, and gold to thank him for defeating his enemy Hadadezer. David added it t all the metals he had gotten as spoils from all the wars he had ever fought. **He dedicated all the silver, bronze, and gold to the Lord to be used in the future to build the Temple.**<sup>42</sup>

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**1 Chronicles 14:17** "Then the fame of David went out into all the lands; and the Lord brought the fear of him on all the nations."

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<sup>41</sup> 1 Chronicles 18:3

<sup>42</sup> 2 Samuel 8:11-12; 1 Chronicles 18:8

**King David's enemies experienced his wrath in war; while his people delighted in his righteousness and justice.** David put very capable men in charge of running the nation of Israel. He put Joab in charge of the army, Jehoshaphat wrote down detailed chronicles of the king, Zadok and Ahimelech were in charge of the priests and the Tabernacle, Seraiah was his scribe, Benaiah was in charge of the men who guarded David, and his sons were his chief rulers (princes) over various parts of Israel.<sup>43</sup>

**Please read 2 Samuel 11-12**

## Bathsheba

**After 10 years of successfully fighting Israel's enemies, King David who was 47 decided one spring not to join his army in battle.** In David's time, armies would always wage war in the springtime because at that time of year there was plenty of grass for their horses to eat. But for whatever reasons, David did not go out that spring. This led to a horrible chain of events that brought dire consequences to David's life and his family.

Being a man of war who had been leading his men for the last 22 years, I am sure David soon became bored sitting home away from the constant action of war. The Bible tells us that when evening came he arose from his bed and decided to take a stroll on his roof. He had probably been napping in the afternoon to combat his boredom. That same evening as he was strolling on the roof of his house, he saw a very beautiful woman bathing in her house. He asked who she was; and was told that **she was Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.** Both of these men had been valiant warriors in David's army for many years<sup>44</sup>. Hearing that she was married, and that her husband and father were both respected members of his army, should have stopped his next request. Unfortunately he ignored their words, and had her brought to his bedchamber for the evening.

Bathsheba returned home, but soon found out **she was pregnant; and sent word to King David.** David knew he was responsible for this child, yet he wanted to conceal what happened for his honor and their safety. God's law says the punishment for adultery was death.<sup>45</sup> David called Uriah back from the battle field for a few days, thinking he would have sexual relationships with his wife. But Uriah took up his normal post of guarding the king, and slept at the door of his house. David told him to go home and be with his wife, but he refused. David got him drunk one evening thinking he would go home afterwards, but he did not. **All of David's plans were thwarted.**

**The next morning King David commanded Uriah to take a letter to Joab,** the commander of his army. In that letter David told Joab to place Uriah on the front line of the fiercest battle, and then

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<sup>43</sup> 2 Samuel 8: 15-18

<sup>44</sup> 2 Samuel 23:34, 39

<sup>45</sup> Leviticus 20:10

withdraw from him so that he would die!<sup>46</sup> Joab did as his king asked, and placed Uriah very close to the city walls of their enemy. **Uriah was shot by archers and died.** Joab sent a messenger back to King David to tell him of the death of several men in battle, including Uriah. Bathsheba mourned for her husband's death; but when the normal time of mourning was over, **she married King David.** She bore him a son out of their adulterous affair. I am sure David thought he had successfully covered up his sins, but the things that David had done was evil in God's sight.<sup>47</sup>

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***Psalm 32:3-4** "When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer."*

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You can see in Psalm 32 above and also in Psalm 51, both of which were written after his time with Bathsheba, **the torment David went through being separated from God.** It is generally believed that the Lord allowed David to go through this spiritual struggle for a year, before he sent **His prophet Nathan to speak with David.** Nathan spoke a parable to David about a rich man who had many flocks of lambs, and a poor man who only had one little female lamb. A traveler came to stay with the rich man; and instead of taking one of his lambs to prepare a meal for his guest, he took the poor man's only lamb. David was furious at the rich man, and said he surely deserved to die for what he had done. Nathan looked into the eyes of the king and said, **"You are that man!"** The Lord spoke through Nathan reminding David that *"I have placed you as king and given you many things. But you have done evil in My sight by killing Uriah and taking his wife."*

The consequences for his sins would be played out with great bloodshed in his family; and some of his wives would be publically raped. These were intense consequences for David, but they brought him to his knees. **David repented of his sins; and asked the Lord to forgive him, and cleanse him from his sins.**

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***Psalm 51:1-4** "Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge."*

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**The Lord forgave David's sins, but said his son by Bathsheba would die.** Instantly his son became very sick. David fasted and prayed for seven days, praying that God would be gracious to

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<sup>46</sup> 2 Samuel 11:15

<sup>47</sup> 2 Samuel 11:27

him and spare his child. But on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, he died. David went to Bathsheba and comforted her after their son died. **God gave them four more sons, the eldest being Solomon.**

**Please read 2 Samuel 13-14**

## David's Children

As we have already seen, David had at least eight wives, and many concubines. They gave him nineteen sons and at least one daughter, but I would guess he had several daughters. The names of daughters are rarely mentioned in the Bible, unless their lives had a lasting impact in the lives of their families. Unfortunately that was the case with David's only mentioned daughter, Tamar.

**Tamar was a beautiful young woman who had kept herself pure. Her older half-brother Amnon lusted after her,** but was frustrated because he could not figure out how to get her alone. His cousin Jonadab devised a scheme to get her into his bedroom. He had Amnon pretend he was very sick. When his father David came to check on him, he was to ask if his sister Tamar could make some food for him to eat, and feed it to him personally. David told Tamar her brother was not feeling well, and he requested she take him some food. When she got to this chambers, **Amnon told everyone to leave; and then he raped his sister.** As soon as he was finished with her, he told her he hated her and she was to leave his sight! She was devastated by his actions and his words. She begged him to not dishonor her this way, but his lust had turned to hate; and he had her thrown out of his chambers.<sup>48</sup>

As Tamar was running away from Amnon, she tore the sleeves off her dress to signify she was no longer a virgin. She put ashes on her head as a sign of mourning, and she cried hysterically. Her brother Absalom was the first to see her, and immediately understood what had happened to her. Even though he was furious with his half-brother, he told Tamar not to tell anyone what happened to her. He took his sister to his home, and she lived there for the rest of her life. **When King David heard that his oldest son Amnon had raped his daughter Tamar, he was very angry; but he did nothing about it!** Even though David was a strong warrior and king, **he was a very weak father!** According to God's law, Amnon should have either married his sister as she had suggested, or been killed for raping her,<sup>49</sup> but David did nothing. I don't know if this was because David thought of Amnon as his likely successor since he was his first-born son, or that he remembered the words the Lord spoke about the consequences of his sins with Bathsheba that would affect his family.

But things were about to get much worse in David's family. Two years after Amnon raped Tamar, Absalom invited all his brothers to a feast in in Baal-hazor to celebrate the sheep shearing. He instructed his servants to watch for Amnon to get drunk, and then **Absalom would give then a**

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<sup>48</sup> 2 Samuel 13:15-17

<sup>49</sup> Deuteronomy 22:25-29

**signal to kill him.** They carried out his orders, and mass chaos broke out among his brothers. Everyone scattered and travelled back to Jerusalem as fast as they could. I am sure they were appalled by what just happened, and possibly wondering if they might also be killed. King David started getting frantic messages about what happened. Some said all his sons had been killed, and others said just Amnon was killed. But when Absalom did not return, but fled to his grandfather in Geshur, David knew what had happened.

**Yet David did nothing about this murder.** I am sure if someone outside of his family had killed his son, he would have mobilized his entire army, and gone into Geshur to kill the murderer. But instead, David mourned over missing his son Absalom. After three years, Joab began to notice the intensity of David's longing to see his son again. Joab arranged for an old woman to appear before King David, asking for his help in a situation very similar to his. He finally saw through her ruse, and realized Joab was behind it. **David ordered Joab to go and bring Absalom back to Jerusalem.**<sup>50</sup> But David refused to see his son for two years. Eventually Absalom sent a message to his father asking him why he wanted him to return to Jerusalem, if he would not see him. David relented and their relationship was restored.

**Please Read 2 Samuel 15-20.**

## Rebellion

Absalom was a very crafty man, and he set his sights on being the next king. Now that he had been restored to his father's good graces, **he started trying to win over the hearts of the people of Israel.** Every day he would go and sit at the gates of Jerusalem, making conversation with all who were traveling from other parts of Israel to seek help from King David. Absalom would lament with them over the fact that no one in the court would listen to their concerns; but when he was their king, he would give them justice.

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*2 Samuel 15:6 "In this manner Absalom dealt with all Israel who came to the king for judgment; so Absalom stole away the hearts of the men of Israel."*

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After Absalom had been back in Jerusalem for four years, he asked his father if he could go to Hebron. He said he had made a vow while he was in Geshur that if he was ever able to get back to Jerusalem, he would serve the Lord. David was so pleased with this request, not realizing it was a lie. **Absalom conspired with many leaders in Israel to have himself named king when he got to Hebron.** David was 60 years old at this time, and he had heard the people in Jerusalem murmuring about how wonderful Absalom was; so the news that Absalom had been declared king was too much for David to handle. **Instead of standing up to his son, David took himself into exile; trusting that the Lord would bring him back to Jerusalem as King.** David wrote Psalm 3

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<sup>50</sup> 2 Samuel 14:21

during this time of his life. It gives us insight into what was going on in Israel at that time, what the people were saying, and what David was feeling. Even in his distress, David always knew God was his shield, and deliverance only came from Him! I love how King David ended the Psalm, asking God to bless the people of Israel.

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**Psalm 3** *“O Lord, how my adversaries have increased! Many are rising up against me. Many are saying of my soul, ‘There is no deliverance for him in God.’ But You, O Lord, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head. I was crying to the Lord with my voice, and He answered me from His holy mountain. I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustains me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God! For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek; You have shattered the teeth of the wicked. Salvation belongs to the Lord; Your blessings be upon your people.”*

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**When David realized that the hearts of the men of Israel were with his son Absalom, he quickly gathered up his household and left Jerusalem.** King David was afraid if he stayed, there would be a large battle in Jerusalem; and he didn't want to cause the people in his city to die. David took his family, the people in his court, his servants, his personal force of guards that had been with him from his days of running from Saul, and several people from Jerusalem who wanted to go with him. But he left ten of his concubines behind to look after his house.

As David was crossing over the Brook Kidron leaving Jerusalem, several high officials came to David wanting to be with him. **Zadok came with all the Levites carrying the Ark of the Covenant.** David talked to Zadok and the high priest, Abiathar, and convinced them to return the Ark of the Covenant back to the Tabernacle in Jerusalem. He told them that if he finds favor in God's eyes, he would return and see that Tabernacle again. **He also told them to go back and keep an eye on what was going on, and send their sons as couriers of any prophetic words from God, or any news of Absalom.**<sup>51</sup>

After they left, David took some time to be alone with God on the Mount of Olives (just outside of Jerusalem) to grieve over what had happened. He had been told that Ahithophel, Bathsheba's grandfather, was among those who were behind Absalom's betrayal. **David asked God to “make the counsel of Ahithophel foolishness”.** As David was returning from praying and worshipping God, he saw one of his respected counselors, **Hushai**. From the look of his clothes, he had quickly gotten dressed hoping to catch up with David to join his king in exile. David convinced him to go back and humbly offer his services to Absalom, **to counter the bad advice he would receive from Ahithophel.** David told him to send any news through the two sons of Zadok and Abiathar. Hushai travelled back to Jerusalem, and arrived there a little before Absalom did.<sup>52</sup> Hushai walked up to

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<sup>51</sup> 2 Samuel 15:24-29

<sup>52</sup> 2 Samuel 15: 30-37

Absalom and bowed before him, acknowledging that he was the king. He told Absalom that he had faithfully served his father, and he would faithfully serve him now.

Now that he was in Jerusalem, the city of David, Absalom asked his main advisor, Ahithophel, what he should do. Obviously Absalom didn't think past his rebellion, to look to what being the King of Israel would entail. **Ahithophel's first piece of advice was for Absalom to take the ten concubines of his father, and rape them on the roof of David's palace, for all to see.** This would show everyone that he was not afraid of his father. Absalom followed his advice, which fulfilled another of the prophetic consequences of David's sin with Bathsheba.<sup>53</sup>

Ahithophel's second piece of advice was to ask for 12,000 soldiers to quickly chase after David and overtake him while he was exhausted and tired. This would terrify all the people with him, and then David would be left alone to be killed. Amazingly enough, **Absalom asked for a second opinion from Hushai. Hushai told him Ahithophel's advice was not good.** He reminded Absalom that David and his mighty men were fierce and skillful warriors. He and his men were probably hiding safely in caves, and when Ahithophel and the soldiers passed by, they would be attacked and killed. Hushai said it would be better if they took the time to scout out where David and his followers were, and then devise the best plan of attack. Hushai told Absalom it would look much better if he led this battle as king. Why should Ahithophel get all the glory for the victory? Absalom and all the men of Israel liked the advice of Hushai, which devastated Ahithophel. He went home and killed himself.<sup>54</sup>

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**2 Samuel 17:14** *"Then Absalom and all the men of Israel said, 'The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel.' For the Lord had ordained to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the Lord might bring calamity on Absalom."*

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The Lord was behind the advice Hushai gave to Absalom, to bring an end this hostile takeover of Israel. Hushai sent a message to David through the priest's sons, and they were able to warn David and his men of what was coming. Absalom was told David was in Mahanaim, and led his army to meet him there. Many people loyal to David came and provided food and supplies for David and all who were with him in their travels in the wilderness and in the city of Mahanaim. They brought beds, basins, pottery, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans, lentils, parched seeds, honey, curds, sheep, donkeys, cheese, bread, raisins, fruit, and wine.<sup>55</sup> In a short time, thousands of soldiers gathered to protect King David. He divided them into three companies, under the command of Joab, Abishai (Joab's brother) and Ittai the Gittite. David wanted to participate in the battle, but the people convinced him to stay with them and lead them if they had to suddenly flee from Mahanaim.

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<sup>53</sup> 2 Samuel 12:11-12

<sup>54</sup> 2 Samuel 17:1-23

<sup>55</sup> 2 Samuel 16:1-2; 2 Samuel 17:28-29

**David stood at the city gates, sending out his soldiers. He gave them one last order, “deal gently with the young man Absalom”.** It is amazing that even though Absalom wanted his father killed, David did not want his son to be harmed. The two sides met for battle in the forest of Ephraim where 20,000 men died in a single day. As the battle was winding down, someone reported to Joab that they had seen Absalom in the forest. He had ridden his mule into the forest to hide, and his long flowing locks of hair got caught in the branches of a tree. His mule kept going, but Absalom didn't. **Joab found Absalom swinging in the air, hanging by his hair.** He threw his spear at Absalom, and then the ten men with him finished him off. Joab sounded his trumpet that the battle was over. He and his men threw Absalom's body into a ravine and covered it with a lot of rocks, before heading back to David.

Messengers came to David to tell him the news of the battle, and the fate of Absalom. David was glad that the battle was over, but **he excessively wept over the death of his son, saying he wished he had died instead of Absalom!** As the victorious soldiers returned, their victory turned into mourning. They quietly spread the word to the rest of the soldiers that King David was not rejoicing over their victory, but that he was in the throes of grief! **Joab was furious at David's excessive mourning; and gave David a verbal slab in the face to get him to see the truth of their situation.** He told David that he had covered the faces of all the men who had fought valiantly for him with SHAME. They had saved the king's life, and the lives of his wives, concubines, sons, and daughters. Joab told David to get up, and speak kindly to his army; and he did!

**When news of Absalom's death reached the elders of Israel, they panicked.** They had supported Absalom, and not David. What would he do to them? King David realized there was a problem with the elders when they did not come and welcome him back into Jerusalem as their king, so he asked Zadok and Abiathar to speak to them. The elders were so touched with his forgiveness, that they immediately came and welcomed David back as their king! **David forgave all who had turned against him, and bestowed great blessing on all who had helped him.**

**Please Read 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21.**

## Numbering Israel

**King David moved by pride, ordered a counting of all the people in his kingdom.** Joab thought this was a bad idea, so he dragged his feet, and it took him nine months to finish this census. But when it was completed, David realized that God was not pleased with him. **Although David humbled himself and repented, God said there would be consequences for his actions.** David was to choose between three years of famine, three months of defeat by foreign nations, or three days of the Lord sending pestilence to the land at the hand of His destroying angel. David was greatly distressed by his choices. He chose the third option, because it was done by the Lord and it seemed the least damaging to the people; but 70,000 men died.

David saw the destroying angel standing on Mt. Moriah, the highest place in Jerusalem, poised to destroy Jerusalem and all within it. **David fell on his face before the angel, and cried out to God to spare Jerusalem.** He said, *"I am the one who sinned, not these people."* The angel told the prophet Gad to **build an altar on the threshing floor of this mountain, to offer burnt offerings to God to stop the plague.** David immediately talked to Ornan (Araunah) the Jebusite who owned the top of this mountain. This is the same mountain that God instructed Abraham to go and sacrifice his son Isaac. This is a very special place to God. Ornan wanted to give the land to the king, but **David said that he would not offer burnt offerings to God that cost him nothing!** He bought the threshing floor and an ox for 50 shekels of gold<sup>56</sup>, and he gave an additions 550 shekels of gold for the rest of the top of the mountain. David offered the ox as a burnt offering, and the plague was stopped.

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*1 Chronicles 22:5 "David said, 'My son Solomon is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the Lord shall be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all lands. Therefore now I will make preparation for it.' So David made ample preparations before his death."*

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## Plans & Preparations

Offering a burnt offering on the land God wanted His Temple to be built, got David excited. David was about 65 by this time, and he knew he would not have the honor of building the Temple, but his 15-year old son Solomon would. As David neared the last five years of his life, God reminded David that **He chose Solomon, who would be a man of peace, to build His house; and not David, who was a man of war.**<sup>57</sup> He repeated the covenant He made with David and his descendants, promising his kingdom would last forever.<sup>58</sup> Maybe because David had always longed to build a grand house for the Lord, God very graciously let him do all the planning and preparations for the construction of the Temple. He knew Solomon was still too young and inexperienced to direct this large of a project.

**God spoke with David, and gave him detailed plans for Solomon to use,** just like God had given plans to Moses for the Tabernacle. He was given the building plans for the sanctuary, porches, courts, storehouses, upper rooms, inner rooms, and the most holy place for the Ark. He was also shown how to make all the golden lampstands, tables, altars, bowls, plates, and altars. God finished his instructions to David with the duties He wanted the Priests and Levites to carry out every day.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> 2 Samuel 24:24

<sup>57</sup> 1 Chronicles 22:8-10

<sup>58</sup> 1 Chronicles 28:5-7

<sup>59</sup> 1 Chronicles 28:11-21

## Riches of God's Word

Over the years, even before David was king, he began collecting gold, silver, bronze, and iron from the nations he and his army had defeated, saving them for the building of the future Temple. He had collected 100,000 talents of gold, 1,000,000 talents of silver, and bronze and iron in quantities too large to count. David arranged with the king of Tyre stones to be cut to order and sent to Jerusalem, along with huge quantities of cedar logs. He ordered large quantities of iron for nails and clamps. He hired skilled workmen to work in all of these materials. David also commanded all the leaders of Israel to help Solomon in this huge undertaking for the Lord.<sup>60</sup>

**David loved the Lord with all of his heart, and he did all he could to see Him glorified.** Yes, in his life he made some very bad mistakes with horrible consequences, but he always immediately repented when the Holy Spirit convicted him of his sins. He was an incredible worshipper, probably the greatest worshipper we have seen in the Old Testament. He had a deep and abiding relationship with God, and leaned on God for help in his many times of need. **There is much we can learn about how to live a life pleasing to God in the life of David, a man after God's own heart!**

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*Psalm 105:1-5 "Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples. Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; speak of all His wonders. Glory in His holy name; let the heart of those who seek the Lord be glad. Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face continually. Remember His wonders which He has done, His marvels and the judgments uttered by His mouth."*

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KING DAVID'S LIFE	Age	Estimated year
Born		1040 BC
Anointed king by Samuel & killed Goliath	15	1025 BC
Stayed with Saul in his palace for 7 years	22	1028 BC
Saul & Jonathan died, & became king of Judah	30	1010 BC
Became king of Israel	37	1003 BC
Sinned with Bathsheba	47	993 BC
Exiled by Absalom	60	980 BC
Given plans for the temple	65	975 BC
Died	70	970 BC

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<sup>60</sup> 1 Chronicles 22:1-4, 14-19

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

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1. What does it mean to be a man after God's own heart?
2. What did you learn about David's character that could be helpful in your life?
3. In the story of David counting the men of Israel, why was this such so displeasing to God?
4. Why do you think Joab disregarded King David's order not to harm his son Absalom?

# 10

## Wise King Solomon

Please read 1 Kings 1

### Power Struggle

Towards the end of King David's life, there arose a power struggle for his throne. **David knew that God wanted Solomon, his son by Bathsheba, to be his successor.** When he had asked the Lord if he could build a temple for Him, God said no; but his son Solomon would get that honor.<sup>61</sup> David had been a man of war, and God wanted a man of peace to build His temple. So God chose Solomon to be the next king of Israel.<sup>62</sup>

King David shared who his successor would be with Solomon, his closest advisors, and Bathsheba<sup>63</sup>. But it seems that King David did not make this known to most people, including his other sons. **David's oldest living son, Adonijah, decided he wanted to be the next king.** He talked with Joab, one of his father's generals, and Abiathar the high priest; and got them on his side. They invited all of Adonijah's brothers (except Solomon), all the men of the tribe of Judah, and all the king's servants to a large feast, for the sole purpose of naming him king. They were having quite a time eating and drinking, and saying, "Long live king Adonijah!"

That was until the prophet Nathan heard about this rebellious gathering. He went directly to Bathsheba to enlist her help. He had her go to David and ask him **why Adonijah was being made king, and not their son, Solomon.** Then Nathan came in after her and confirmed what was going on. This spurred King David to action. He called Bathsheba back into his room and reassured her that he would keep his vow to her that Solomon would be the next king.<sup>64</sup> While Adonijah was feasting, King David called his trusted advisors: Nathan the prophet, Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the leader of David's mighty men. He ordered them to get Solomon, and put him on the king's donkey. Nathan and Zadok were to anoint him as king over Israel, and then lead him through the city streets blowing trumpets and proclaiming Solomon as the next king of Israel. When the people in Jerusalem saw that Solomon was being displayed as their next king, they greatly rejoiced and followed him singing and dancing and playing their flutes.

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<sup>61</sup> 1 Chronicles 22:5-11; 1 Chronicles 28:2-3

<sup>62</sup> 1 Chronicles 28:5-6

<sup>63</sup> 1 Kings 1:13

<sup>64</sup> 1 Kings 1:28-30

The people at Adonijah's party could hear the people of the city rejoicing. When Jonathan, the high priest's son came in, Adonijah asked him if the people were excited that he was about to be their king. Jonathan quickly corrected Adonijah, and told him that King David had just made Solomon king! Not just in name, but he was sitting on King David's throne and even David had bowed down to Solomon.<sup>65</sup> All the guests at Adonijah's party left as fast as they could, hoping Solomon would not know they had been with Adonijah. Adonijah was afraid of Solomon and ran to the tabernacle and grabbed on to the horns of the altar, begging for his life. King Solomon said if he proved to be a worthy man, his life will be spared; but if he proved to be a wicked man, he would be killed. Adonijah was brought to King Solomon and he bowed low to the ground to his brother, the king.

## King Solomon

David called all the people of Israel to assemble in Jerusalem<sup>66</sup>. He told them that God had chosen his son Solomon to be the next king<sup>67</sup>, and that he was going to build a permanent resting place for God's Ark in Jerusalem. David wanted all the people to help Solomon build the temple, and to pledge their allegiance to him. The people said they would help their new king build the temple, and they would serve King Solomon. They offered many sacrifices to the Lord, and then celebrated their new king with a joyous feast. This was the second time Solomon was made King of Israel.<sup>68</sup>

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**1 Chronicles 29:25** *"The Lord highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him royal majesty which had not been on any king before him in Israel."*

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Right before David died, he challenged his son Solomon to walk in God's ways at all times, keeping His statutes, commandments, ordinances, and testimonies. He shared with him the promise God had given him, that if he and his sons walked right before the Lord with all of their heart and soul, they would always reign over Israel.<sup>69</sup> I am sure he shared with him the special commands that God made for all the kings of Israel;<sup>70</sup> especially the one about making a handwritten copy of the law in the presence of the priests. He was to read it every day to learn how to reverence and obey the Lord his God by carefully observing all of God's commands. We will see later on that even though Solomon was a wise and great king, he was disobedient in three of the special commands for kings, and one especially led to his downfall.

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<sup>65</sup> 1 Kings 1:43-48

<sup>66</sup> 1 Chronicles 28:1-10

<sup>67</sup> 1 Chronicles 29:1

<sup>68</sup> 1 Chronicles 29:20-24

<sup>69</sup> 1 Kings 2:1-4

<sup>70</sup> Deuteronomy 17:14-20

## Riches of God's Word

- Do not amass a huge amount of horses for war, and certainly never go to Egypt to purchase their horses
- Do not hoard great treasures of silver and gold for yourself
- Do not have more than one wife; because if you do, they will lead your heart away from God

The life of King Solomon is told in 1 Kings 1-11, and in 2 Chronicles 1-9. These are compilations of the writings of the prophets and seers around Solomon, like Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo.<sup>71</sup> We will go back and forth between the two accounts.

**Please read 1 Kings 5-8 & 2 Chronicles 2-7**

### Building the Temple

**Four years after Solomon became king, and 480 years after Moses and the sons of Israel left**

**Egypt, work began on the house of the Lord, the Temple.**<sup>72</sup> Hiram, the king of Tyre supplied the stones and the timbers; all of which were cut to size before they came to Jerusalem. The walls and floors of God's house were constructed of stone, and then covered on the inside with planks of cedar, which were then covered in gold. This building was 105 feet from front to back, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high. There were carvings everywhere, making this a magnificently beautiful building. Solomon had two bronze pillars made to flank the entrance of the temple. It took Solomon's team of skilled builders and craftsmen **seven years to build this temple.**<sup>73</sup>

As soon as the building was finished, Solomon instructed the craftsmen to build the following items that would be placed inside the temple, and used by the priests to minister to God and to the people.

- Bronze Altar for burnt offerings- 30 feet square and 15 feet high
- Bronze Lavers – one 45 feet in diameter placed on 12 cast Bronze oxen. This Laver was for the priests to wash in. Ten smaller lavers (6 feet in diameter) were placed in rolling bronze carts to rinse things for the burnt offering.
- Ten Golden Lampstands
- Ten golden tables for the Showbread
- The Golden Altar of Incense
- Polished bronze and golden bowls, shovels, and utensils
- A veil of blue, purple, and red fine linen, embroidered with golden cherubim

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<sup>71</sup> 2 Chronicles 9:29

<sup>72</sup> 1 Kings 6:1

<sup>73</sup> 1 Kings 6:38

As we can see from this list, the Temple was an even more majestic place of worship than the Tabernacle. When we read the descriptions of the work done in 1 Kings 6-7, and 2 Chronicles 3-4 we might think Solomon went overboard with the duplication of some of the pieces. But we must remember, God is the One who gave the plans for the temple and all that was in it to David, for Solomon to use.

**One item from the Tabernacle that was not remade was the Ark of the Covenant.** Once all the work was finished on the Temple building and all that went into it, King Solomon assembled the elders and leaders of the 12 tribes. **Solomon instructed the priests to carry the original Ark of the Covenant to the Temple.** It was exactly as it was in Moses' day, except it only contained the two tablets of the Ten Commandments. The Philistines must have taken the golden pot of Manna and Aaron's walking stick, out of the Ark. The Ark was placed in the Most Holy place, underneath the wings of the two huge golden cherubim that Solomon ordered to be sculpted.<sup>74</sup> Their wings spanned the entire width of the Most Holy Place – 30 feet.

On the day that the Ark was brought to the Temple, the priests sacrificed so many animals to the Lord, they could not be counted. Worship broke out with the Levitical singers and their families, along with the musicians playing their various instruments. **As they were praising God, the Temple filled with the Shekinah cloud of the Lord, and His glory filled the house of God!**<sup>75</sup>

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*2 Chronicles 6:2 "I have built You a lofty house, and a place for Your dwelling forever."*

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King Solomon stood on a large platform that was located next to the Bronze Altar, to address all the people. He explained that his father, King David, was the one who had wanted to build this Temple for a dwelling place for God. Solomon knelt before the people and prayed. Over and over again He asked God to be attentive to the prayers that were offered in this place; and to forgive the sins of all who repented.<sup>76</sup> **As soon as Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven** and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices on the Bronze Altar. As the Glory of the Lord filled the entire Temple area, inside and out, the people bowed to the ground in praise and worship of their God!<sup>77</sup>

Solomon and all the people offered over 142,000 animals for sacrifice to dedicate the temple, which was followed by more praise and worship! They then celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles for the next seven days. Afterwards the people went back to their homes, rejoicing and praising God.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> 2 Chronicles 5:7-10

<sup>75</sup> 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chronicles 5:12-14

<sup>76</sup> 2 Chronicles 6:39-40

<sup>77</sup> 2 Chronicles 7:1-3

<sup>78</sup> 1 Kings 8:2; 2 Chronicles 7:8-10

**That night the Lord appeared to Solomon and charged him to walk with Him in integrity and uprightness in his heart, doing everything God had commanded him to do.** God wanted Solomon to be a humble man of prayer that would lead his people to honor Him in their lives. God promised Solomon great blessings if he and his descendants would keep all of Gods statutes and ordinances. But if they turned aside after false gods, He would uproot them from the land and bring them into captivity.<sup>79</sup> Unfortunately this came to pass 373 years later with God using the Babylonian Empire to carry out His judgment.

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*1 Kings 8:61 "Let your heart therefore be wholly devoted to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as at this day."*

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## Building Projects

King Solomon had dominion over everything in the land from the Euphrates River, to the Mediterranean Sea, and to the border of Egypt. He had peace on all sides, and all Israel lived in safety during his reign. As a deterrent to nearby kings, Solomon kept a large army, including 40,000 horses for his chariots and 12,000 horsemen. He had each of the 12 tribes provide food for the soldiers and horses, spreading out the burden for their provision.

Since Solomon did not have to fight the battles of the previous kings, he was able to turn his attention to building up the land. He had a **fleet of ships** built, mostly for trade, which he anchored in the Red Sea. He **built a house for himself and his many wives**, which took 13 years to build. He also built a **separate house for one of his wives, Pharaoh's daughter**. He did not want her in the same city as the temple of God. Her pagan idolatry must have been too much for Solomon.<sup>80</sup>

There were **several cities on the outskirts of his kingdom that Solomon had rebuilt**, for his people to occupy comfortably and be safe. One of these, Gezer, had been a Canaanite city which the Egyptian Pharaoh had destroyed, and then given to Solomon for a dowry for his daughter. Maybe that is where her house was built. Solomon **built many cities to store excess grain and supplies** for the people and livestock of the land. He **strengthened the walls of Jerusalem** by closing in the gaps. He built the Millo, a strong tower, making Jerusalem a strong and fortified city.

## Wisdom

In the beginning of Solomon's reign, as he was offering sacrifices to God at the Tabernacle in Gibeon, the Lord appeared to him in a dream. He asked Solomon what He would like God to give him now that he was king. Solomon knew this was not a trick question, because he had seen God dealt faithfully with his father with great lovingkindness. Solomon admitted that he was still very young, and **the thing he**

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<sup>79</sup> 2 Chronicles 7:12-22

<sup>80</sup> 2 Chronicles 8:11

**desired the most from God was wisdom.** He wanted to have the understanding heart of a judge to discern between good and evil. This greatly pleased the Lord, and He gave Solomon a wise and discerning heart.<sup>81</sup> Solomon returned to Jerusalem and stood before the Ark of the Covenant and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings there. He then gave a feast for those around him. Two harlots came up to him during the feast with a dilemma. They had both recently given birth to a child, but one of them had died, due to the negligence of the mother. Both women claimed to be the mother of the living child. The king immediately asked for a sword and said, "Let's divide the child so you both can have part of it". The mother of the living child, said, "No, give her the whole child, and by no means kill him". But the other woman liked the idea of dividing the child. Solomon knew immediately who the real mother was, and gave her the child. This story spread through his kingdom, and the people saw that **the wisdom of God rested on Solomon to administer justice.**<sup>82</sup>

Solomon's wisdom and knowledge surpassed that of all known wise men in all the nations surrounding Israel. He was not just wise in his conversations with men, but he had a great interest and knowledge in botany and biology. He was also a wise writer of over 3000 proverbs, and a great worshipper who wrote over 1000 songs. On every side, Solomon was a truly amazing man, and people came from all over the world to hear his wisdom.<sup>83</sup>

One ruler who heard about this amazing king, but did not believe what was being said about him, decided to come and see for herself. After spending time with King Solomon, the **Queen of Sheba** confessed that he surpassed what she had been told about him. She had come to satisfy her curiosity and to try to trick him with difficult questions, to show him up. He answered all her questions and then showed her around his house. She was amazed at the beauty of Jerusalem and with the respect Solomon's servants and leaders gave to him, and how well Solomon took care of them. She commented about how blessed they were to be around him all the time to hear his wisdom.<sup>84</sup> Before she left she lavished Solomon with great gifts of gold, spices, and precious stones. He gave her extravagant gifts in return, which led to trade between their two countries. Often gold and exotic timbers were shipped to Solomon from the Queen of Sheba. It is said he used the wood to build staircases in the Temple, and in his house, along with musical instruments used for worship in the Temple.

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**2 Chronicles 9:22** *"So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom."*

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<sup>81</sup> 1 Kings 3:5-12

<sup>82</sup> 1 Kings 3:16-28

<sup>83</sup> 1 Kings 4:29-34

<sup>84</sup> 2 Chronicles 9:1-8

## Wealth

When Solomon asked for wisdom, **the Lord decided to bless him with riches and honor**, more so than any king in his time.<sup>85</sup> As the kings of the earth heard that Solomon was the greatest of all the kings of the earth, they either visited him or sent envoys to hear the wisdom that God had put in his heart. Each one did what the Queen of Sheba did, and brought him huge quantities of silver, gold, ivory, garments, weapons, spices, horses, mules, apes, and peacocks, year after year.<sup>86</sup> Gold was so abundant in Israel that silver was not even considered to be valuable. Solomon made all his drinking vessels out of gold in all his houses. He had craftsmen make 200 large decorative shields out of beaten gold, and 300 smaller ones as decorations in his houses. He also had a **huge throne made out of ivory and gold**. It had two large lions on either side of his seat, and then two lions on each side of the six steps leading up to his throne.<sup>87</sup>

The amount of riches that poured into Israel on account of God's favor on King Solomon was amazing. God had said He would bless Solomon with riches, and He certainly did. God had told Solomon not to hoard great treasuries of silver and gold for himself. Even though he did build some extravagant things for his personal use, he was generous to share the wealth with the people. He built many things to help the people, and often it was said that Solomon made gold and silver as plentiful as stones.

But there was one type of gift that was very displeasing to God. **God made it very clear that kings in Israel were NOT to amass huge amounts of horses for war and they were NEVER to purchase horses from Egypt!** Horses were mentioned over 20 times in the passages on Solomon's life. Kings frequently brought him horses as gifts, probably because they had heard of his love for them. He bought horses and chariots regularly from Egypt, and even sold them to the kings around him.<sup>88</sup> **This was the beginning of Solomon's slide into rebellion.**

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*Deuteronomy 17:17 "He (a king) shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away..."*

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**Please read 1 Kings 11**

## Foreign Wives

Solomon personally knew God and was devoted to Him, as we have seen in his dedication to build a magnificent temple for God, and in the prayers that he prayed. When God asked him how He could bless Solomon, he asked for wisdom to correctly rule

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<sup>85</sup> 1 Kings 3:13

<sup>86</sup> 1 Kings 10:23-25; 2 Chronicles 9:21

<sup>87</sup> 2 Chronicles 9:13-20

<sup>88</sup> 1 Kings 4:26; 2 Chronicles 1:14-17

God's people. That so pleased God that in addition to being given incredible wisdom and knowledge about many different things, God also blessed him with incredible wealth and honor. The nation of Israel enjoyed peace for the first time in their history, and probably since. **Solomon was the most sought after man in the world.** Kings, queens, merchants, and wise men all travelled from far distances to speak with King Solomon. They lavished incredible gifts on him and he in turn lavished them with gifts. **The world was in awe of Solomon and His God!**

You would think that Solomon would have been satisfied with his great relationship with God and his subjects, and with the abundant gifts God had lavished on him. But that was not the case. Solomon, like Sampson, had a dangerous weakness for women; and this led to his downfall and the downfall of Israel! 1 Kings 11:1 states that **King Solomon loved many foreign women.** Not only did he "love" them, but he married them.

Solomon married women who were Egyptians, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites. Some of these foreign wives were most likely the daughters of foreign kings, who were seeking to make a strong alliance with Solomon and Israel. But God made it very clear in His Word that the **sons of Israel were NOT to marry women from outside of the land of Israel.** They were not to associate with them, and certainly not to marry them.<sup>89</sup> In God's special laws for kings, He also made it very clear **the king was to only have ONE wife.** Solomon knew what God required of him as a king, but he ignored the ones that had to do with his wives. He chose to disregard God, and held fast to all his wives in "love".

God gave these laws to His people because He knew foreign wives, and multiple wives, would turn the king's heart away from God. These wives would get their husband to play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to them. **Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines, and they did turn his heart from God.** He actively participated in the worship of their pagan gods and idols, so that his heart was no longer wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of his father, David had been. To please his wives, Solomon:

- Burned incense to their gods
- Went after ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians
- Went after milcon the detestable idol of the Ammonites
- Built a high place for chermosh, the detestable idol of Moab
- Built a high place for molech, the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon

**Solomon knew the laws of God,** he knew what God expected of him, and he knew the consequences for not serving God with his whole heart. **His father, King David, had repeatedly warned him to carefully serve the Lord his God, just as he had done.** David had told him of God's promise to bequeath the Promised Land to his sons forever, if they would be men after God's

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<sup>89</sup> Exodus 34:12-16, Deuteronomy 7:1-4

Own heart.<sup>90</sup> **God even appeared twice to Solomon to warn him to walk in integrity and uprightness as his father had;** by obeying His commandments, statutes, and ordinances. **God had given Solomon wisdom greater than anyone** in his time, and he was esteemed by the whole world because of it.

With all these declarations and warnings, Solomon still did not heed all the words of God! **Solomon was led into disobedience and brought down by his flesh!** Solomon's flesh was stronger than his devotion to God, and stronger than the wisdom God had given him. This must be a warning to all of us. We must understand we have a very strong enemy that is trying to destroy us, and it lives very close to us – our flesh! Our flesh is always going to have enmity with God. Enmity means to have a mutual hatred for one another. **Our flesh hates God and is trying to keep us from having a close relationship with Him; and God is constantly encouraging us to die to the desires of our flesh.**

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***1Kings 11:11** So the Lord said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant."*

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## Consequences

**God was angry with Solomon** for breaking the covenant promises he had made with God.<sup>91</sup> As much as it grieved God's heart to punish Solomon and the nation of Israel; God is always faithful to His Word. He promised great blessing for obedience, and dire consequences for disobedience. The Lord told King Solomon that **He would tear his kingdom away from him and give it to one of his servants.** Then God thought about his relationship with David and the promises He made him about his son. God told Solomon the kingdom would not be torn apart while he was king, but it would when his son was king. His son Rehoboam would end up ruling over only two of the tribes, Judah and Benjamin, so that Jerusalem, God's holy city, and His temple would remain in the lineage of David. He promised David would always have a lamp before Him in Jerusalem.<sup>92</sup>

## Adversaries

**God told Solomon that if he adopted foreign gods and served and worshiped them, He would bring adversity on Solomon.**<sup>93</sup> Adversity means to state of continued difficulty. **The Lord removed His hand of favor and protection over Solomon and the nation of Israel.** The Hebrew word for adversary is pronounced "satan". God gave Solomon over to his sins, and

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<sup>90</sup> 1 Chronicles 28:7-9

<sup>91</sup> 1 Kings 8:61

<sup>92</sup> 1 Kings 11:13,36

<sup>93</sup> 1 Kings 9:4-9; 2 Chronicles 7:17-22

allowed him to be tormented by men whom satan could stir up to come against Solomon's kingdom. We need to understand that satan is our adversary, who is always looking for ways to get us to sin, so he can come against the sons and daughters of God.

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**1Peter 5:8** *“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”*

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**God raised up three adversaries against Solomon: Hadad, Rezon, and Jeroboam.** **Hadad** was the son of the king of Edom, and he hated Solomon's father, King David. When Hadad was a young boy, Joab, David's general, ordered and carried out the execution of all the men in Edom. Hadad and some of his father's servants escaped to Egypt. He gained the favor of the Egyptian Pharaoh, and even married the sister of Pharaoh's wife, making him an uncle to Solomon's Egyptian wife. Over the years he gathered men who had issues against Israel, and started raiding the southern border of Israel.<sup>94</sup>

**Rezon** grew up among the Philistines in Zobah. When David destroyed his town, he fled north to Damascus. He gathered worthless men around him and during the latter part of Solomon's reign, they began plundering the cities on the northern border of Israel.<sup>95</sup>

The third adversary personally knew Solomon. **Jeroboam was the son of one of Solomon's servants, Nebat.** He was known to be a valiant man and a hard worker. Solomon put him in charge of the slave labor that built the Millo (strong watch tower) in Jerusalem. He rebelled against this assignment. When he was leaving Jerusalem, the **prophet Ahijah** met him and told him that **God was going to tear the kingdom of Israel into twelve pieces and he would be given ten of them to rule over.** He was doing this because of the idolatrous rebellion of Solomon. When King Solomon heard of this prophecy, he tried to have Jeroboam killed; but he fled to Egypt for safety. Jeroboam stayed there until Solomon died.<sup>96</sup>

Solomon wrote the book of **Proverbs**, a book of great saying about wisdom and the fear of the Lord. He wrote some of the book of **Psalms**, worship songs to his God. He also wrote **Songs of Solomon**, an allegory of the loving relationship between Jesus, our bridegroom, and the church, His bride. Probably towards the end of his life, he wrote a very reflective book called **Ecclesiastes**. In this book he came to realize that all he had strived after during his life was pointless, compared to a relationship with God! It is good to know he realized the error of his ways.

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<sup>94</sup> 1 Kings 11:14-22

<sup>95</sup> 1 Kings 11:23-25

<sup>96</sup> 1 Kings 11:26-40

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

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1. King David knew that God had chosen Solomon to be the next King, but David put off telling his sons and the rest of Israel. In not making God's plan plain and official, David brought unnecessary confusion and rebellion into his family and kingdom.

Why do you think David put off telling others about his successor?

When have you put off telling people something God had told you to do, and it didn't go as well as it should have?

2. List the major points that King Solomon made in his prayer to God in front of all the people at the dedication of the new Temple in 1 Kings 8 and 2 Chronicles 6.

3. Why do you think God talked privately with Solomon in 1 Kings 9 and 2 Chronicles 7:11-22?

4. Read 2 Chronicles 7:13-15. How can we be assured that God will be attentive to our prayers?

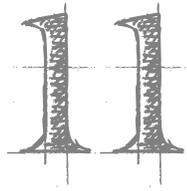
5. Kings were told not to hoard riches. What does the word **hoard** mean?

Solomon had a lot of silver and gold, and other things, but do you think he was guilty of hoarding?

What is a verse that speaks to the futility of hoarding what we treasure?

6. When has your flesh been stronger in your life than your devotion to the Lord?

7. When we read the book of Ecclesiastes, we can sense that Solomon regretted so many things in his life. Read through Ecclesiastes and note what Solomon learned in each chapter.



# Kingdom Divided

**Please read 1 Kings 12-15, 2 Chronicles 10-13**

Solomon ruled as the king of the nation of Israel for 40 years. When he died in 931 BC, his 41 year old son, Rehoboam, became king.<sup>1</sup> I do not know why Solomon chose him to be king. His mother had been from Ammon, one of Solomon's foreign wives. God had made it very clear in Deuteronomy that no foreigner was to be on the throne of Israel.<sup>2</sup> This might have just been one more act of disobedience on the part of Solomon. Rehoboam's reign was nothing like that of his father or grandfather. **God's hand of favor had been removed from Solomon, and the consequences for his pagan worship could be fully seen in Rehoboam's reign**, as Ahijah had prophesied. Remember he told Jeroboam that God would tear the Kingdom of Israel apart during the reign of Solomon's son.

## Rehoboam

Shortly after the death of his father, Rehoboam called all of Israel to gather at Shechem for his coronation as king. Jeroboam had heard of Solomon's death and left Egypt where he had been hiding. He and several leaders of the twelve tribes met with Rehoboam in Shechem. **They pledged their loyalty to Rehoboam, if he would lighten the heavy work load Solomon had put on the people with all of his building projects.** Rehoboam said he would think about their request, and would give them an answer in three days.

**Rehoboam first met with his father's old advisors.** They wisely counseled him to lighten the load on the people, saying this would cause the people to be loyal to him forever. **Rehoboam then went to the guys he grew up with and who hung around with him at the palace - his friends.** These prideful men foolishly counseled Rehoboam to make a strong show of force by promising to make the men of Israel work much harder for him, and any punishment he gave out would be much more severe. His friend's advice appealed to the king's pride, thinking this hard stance would make the people fear him and serve him. His friends said he needed to prove to the people that he would be a strong king. **Rehoboam liked the "show of power" advice, and responded to the people**

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 11:42-43

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 17:15

**harshly.** Rehoboam arrogantly told them, *"My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to it; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions."*<sup>3</sup>

**The people were very upset with Rehoboam's response as they went back to their homes.** They were mad that the king did not want to help them, so they decided they were not going to help the king with his building projects. They determined in their hearts to look after their own interests, and not the interests of the king and his kingdom. I am sure all they did as they travelled back to their homes was murmur and grumble about Rehoboam, imagining all kinds of plots to get back at their king.

Meanwhile Rehoboam appointed Adoram (or Hadoram) to be in charge of getting the people to work on the king's building projects. This is the job Jeroboam once performed for Solomon. **When Adoram came to the people to give them their assignments, they rose up in anger against him and stoned him to death.** Rehoboam had accompanied Adoram, and when he learned what happened to Adoram, instead of sending troops to force the people to do what he wanted; in fear he got in his chariot and quickly rode back to the safety of his palace in Jerusalem. This once again showed his weak character<sup>4</sup>

Messages of rebellion were sent all over the land of Israel, plotting against Rehoboam. **Ten of the tribes of Israel decided to send their elders to meet with Jeroboam, to ask him to be their king instead of Rehoboam!** He agreed to their request, which was the fulfillment of the judgment God spoke against Solomon for his disobedience to God's Word about taking foreign wives. The Kingdom of Israel was torn out of the hand of Solomon's son, just leaving a remnant of the kingdom with Jeroboam.<sup>5</sup> **This was the beginning of the Northern Kingdom, called Israel.**

**Rehoboam became king of the Southern Kingdom, called Judah.** The tribes of Judah and Benjamin stayed loyal to their King, Rehoboam, mostly because they were devoted to Jehovah, and wanted to continue to have access to the temple.

Rehoboam assembled 180,000 soldiers from the remaining two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, to fight against Jeroboam in hopes of restoring his kingdom. Rehoboam has never shown wisdom in any of his actions, and this was another one of those times. First, God had told Solomon the kingdom would be torn apart in Rehoboam's rule. Second, Jeroboam had a much larger army, probably over 900,000 soldiers. Out of God's mercy for His people, He sent a **prophet named Shemaiah** to speak to Rehoboam. He said **"You must not go and fight against your relatives. Go home!"**<sup>6</sup> Amazingly enough, Rehoboam listened to the words of the prophet and went home; and civil war was averted.

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<sup>3</sup> 2 Chronicles 10:14

<sup>4</sup> 2 Chronicles 10:15-18

<sup>5</sup> 1 Kings 11:9-13

<sup>6</sup> 1 Kings 12:22-24

Rehoboam lived in Jerusalem, which Solomon had fortified. Ever fearful of being attacked by Jeroboam, **Rehoboam fortified many cities in Judah and Benjamin** in the seventeen years<sup>7</sup> that he was king. They were: Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, Beth-zur, Soco, Adullam, Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, Zorah, Aijalon and Hebron. He put officers and stores of food, oil, and wine in each of these fortified cities. He placed spears and shields in every city and strengthened them greatly; **ensuring in his mind that he could hold onto the land of Judah and Benjamin.**<sup>8</sup>

**Rehoboam had 18 wives and 60 concubines;** but his favorite wife was his cousin, Maacah, the daughter of Absalom. These women gave him 28 sons and 60 daughters. Rehoboam scattered his 28 sons and their families across his kingdom, in the well-provisioned fortified cities. **He appointed his son Abijam by his favorite wife Maacah to be the leader of his brothers, because he wanted him to be the next king.**<sup>9</sup>

We will see later that when Jeroboam appointed his own priests, **the Levites whom the Lord had placed all over the land of Israel to minister to the people, left their homes and came to live in Jerusalem to be near the temple.** Also some men and their families from the tribes of Simeon, Ephraim, and Manasseh, who set their hearts on seeking the Lord God of Israel, left their home towns and moved to Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup> They strengthened the kingdom of Judah as they supported Rehoboam.

**Once Rehoboam had established and strengthened his kingdom, he and all Israel turned away from God!** The Bible tells us that pure worship to the Lord their God only lasted for three years!<sup>11</sup> They built high places of pagan worship with sacred pillars and asherim on every high hill and beneath every luxuriant tree. Homosexuality with male cult prostitutes was widespread all over his kingdom. Most likely **Rehoboam learned this idolatrous worship from his pagan mother** (her Ammonite heritage was mentioned three times). When a leader does not follow the Lord, but his own evil heart, the people will go astray!

Because he had been unfaithful to the Lord, in Rehoboam's fifth year as king, **the Lord allowed Shishak, king of Egypt, to attack Judah.** He came against them with 1200 chariots, 60,000 horsemen, and so many foot soldiers they could not be numbered. They captured many of the fortified cities in Judah and came to the walls of Jerusalem. **Shemaiah, the prophet,** came to the king and told him since he had forsaken the Lord, God had given him up to Shishak. **The king and his princes humbled themselves before the Lord and repented for their pagan ways.** God was moved with compassion because of their humble hearts, so He did not allow Shishak to destroy

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<sup>7</sup> 1 Kings 14:21

<sup>8</sup> 2 Chronicles 11:5-12

<sup>9</sup> 2 Chronicles 11:18-23

<sup>10</sup> 2 Chronicles 15:9

<sup>11</sup> 2 Chronicles 11:17; 12:1; 1 Kings 14:22-24

Jerusalem. But God said they would be slaves to Shishak, **so His people would know the difference between service to Almighty God and a pagan king!** Shishak came into Jerusalem and took the treasures of the temple and the king's palace. **The temple had been standing less than 50 years and Solomon's son allowed it to be looted.** The Egyptians even took all the golden shields Solomon had made as decorations in his homes. All throughout Rehoboam's remaining twelve years as king, there were wars between him and Jeroboam continually.<sup>12</sup>

### Jeroboam

We will now turn our study to the kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Their stories are told in 1 and 2 Kings. We will study them all, and then study the Kings of the Southern Kingdom. Just keep in mind their time frames are the same. **The first king of the divided kingdom of Israel (northern kingdom) was Jeroboam.** He was not of noble birth, but the son of a servant of King Solomon. God placed him in power as a consequence of the idolatrous ways of Solomon in the later part of his life.

Even though Jeroboam was described as a valiant warrior, he had a lot of fears, probably fed by his insecurities of not being the son of a king, but of a servant. He was fearful of possible attacks by Judah, so he too fortified many of the cities under his control. He was also fearful that when it came time for the sons of Israel to go to Jerusalem to celebrate the appointed feasts of the Lord their God, they would prefer the splendor of the temple and no longer want to be separated from it. **So Jeroboam decided to invent his own religion. He had two golden calves made** and presented them to the people saying, *"Behold, here are your gods, worship them."* He placed one in Bethel, in the southern part of his kingdom; and the other in Dan, in the northern part. **He erected pagan temples and altars on high places** all over Israel to sacrifice and burn incense. **He selected men to be his priests, not the Levites.** That is why the Levites left the Northern Kingdom. And then **he made up his own feasts** for the people to gather together and celebrate.

An **unnamed prophet** came to Jeroboam and cried against his idolatrous altar. He said **a king would arise out of the house of David (Southern Kingdom), by the name of Josiah;** and he would tear down this idolatrous worship. He would kill the pagan priests and burn their bodies on this altar to defile it. We will see that this prophesy was fulfilled 300 years later. The prophet spoke of a sign from God that He was displeased with Jeroboam. He said his pagan altar would split in two and the ashes would spill out. Jeroboam pointed to the prophet to command his men to seize him. But before he could say a word, the king saw that his outstretched hand was withered and useless. He was terrified. Then he looked, and the altar was split apart. Jeroboam begged the prophet to restore his hand. He agreed, and Jeroboam's hand was restored.<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately this did not turn Jeroboam from his idolatrous ways. So God caused his son to become very ill. Jeroboam told his wife to go to the **prophet Ahijah**, who had originally told him

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<sup>12</sup> 2 Chronicles 12:15

<sup>13</sup> 1 Kings 13:1-6

he would be king, and ask him if God would heal their son. He told her to go in disguise so the prophet would not know who she was. Obviously Jeroboam knew that Ahijah did not approve of who he had become. Even though the old prophet was blind, his spiritual sight was perfect. Ahijah instantly knew who she was. He told her since her husband had not been like King David, keeping the commandments of God; and **because he had done more evil that any of the kings before him by causing his people to worship idols; God would bring calamity to his family.** His son would die as soon as his wife returned home, and **He would cut off every male in his household.** The queen returned home with a heavy heart, and her son died just as the prophet said.<sup>14</sup>

In the 22 years that he was king, Jeroboam never repented of his idolatrous ways, even though he had been warned several times. Shortly we will see the rest of the prophecy came to pass. During his reign, Jeroboam continually battled against the first two kings of Judah, Rehoboam and his son Abijam. He was severely weakened in a huge defeat by the Lord and Abijam. Then the Lord struck Jeroboam, and he died.

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<sup>14</sup> 1 Kings 14:1-18

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

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1. In this historical time of the kings in Israel, we see much more activity by the prophets of God. Why do you think that is?

What were the names of the prophets in this chapter, and what did they tell the kings?

2. What were the reasons why God allowed the nation of Israel to be spilt into two parts?
3. What were the names of the two parts of the nation of Israel? Which of the twelve tribes were in each?
4. Eighteen times in the books of 1 and 2 Kings the phrase the "*sins of Jeroboam*" occur, almost always describing the character of the kings after Jeroboam. What abominations did Jeroboam do to make his sins so bad in God's eyes?

# 12

## Northern Kingdom- Israel

The Northern Kingdom of Israel lasted for 209 years, with **Jeroboam being the first of nineteen bad kings, none of which followed God and His commandments and laws.** Finally in 722 BC, God used the Assyrians to end this idolatrous kingdom and take His people into captivity, just as He said He would if they did not follow Him.<sup>1</sup> **This is their story.** Most of their stories are short, but none of them are sweet!

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***1Kings 15:26** He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father and in his sin which he made Israel sin.*

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**Please read 1 Kings 15:25- 16:28**

### Nadab & Baasha

After Jeroboam died, his son, **Nadab**, became king. ***“He did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin which he made the people of Israel sin”.*** Unfortunately this phrase, telling the type of idolatry the people followed, would be repeated over and over again about the kings of Israel. As a reminder, the **Jeroboam sin** was the false system of worship that Jeroboam set up to keep his subjects from going to God’s Temple in Jerusalem to worship the One true God. Nadab continued this idolatrous worship of golden idols, false altars, idolatrous priests, and pagan feast days.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of his reign, Nadab engaged in battle with the Philistines in the city of Gibbethon. **Baasha**, from the tribe of Issachar, conspired against King Nadab. He used the confusion of battle to kill Nadab, and **declare himself the next king!** He immediately went and **killed everyone in Jeroboam’s household**, not leaving anyone alive.<sup>2</sup> This is exactly what the prophet Ahijah told Jeroboam would happen to his descendants.

During the 24 years he reigned as king of Israel, **Bassha continually went to war against Asa**, the King of Judah. He too did evil in the sight of the Lord, and followed in the idolatrous ways of Jeroboam, causing all in Israel to sin. The idolatry continued. The **prophet Jehu** appeared to

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 9:6-7

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings 15:29-30

Baasha and told him his sins had provoked God to anger; and the consequences for his idolatry would be very severe, just like they were with Jeroboam. All in his family would be killed!<sup>3</sup> It is amazing that God used Baasha to bring His judgment against Jeroboam, and yet Bassha followed in his same sins and received the same judgment!

## Elah, Zimri, & Omri

Bassha died and his son **Elah** became the next ruler. His reign lasted for two years. Zimri, the commander of the king's chariots, a man of war, conspired against Elah. One night **Zimri** became very drunk and killed King Elah, and became the next king. As soon as he sat upon Elah's throne, **he had all the household of Baasha killed**. He did not leave a single male alive of Baasha's relatives or friends.<sup>4</sup> **Zimri's reign as king only lasted 7 days!** When the army heard that he had killed Elah, they left the battlefield and headed to Tirzah, where Zimri had killed Elah and set himself up as king. When Zimri saw the army coming after him, he went into the citadel (strong tower) of the king's palace. **He set the palace and the tower on fire, and died in the flames!**<sup>5</sup> Not only was he a murderer, but obviously he was insane!

**After his death, the people of Israel argued as to who would be their next king.** Half wanted Tibni and the other half wanted Omri. These two sides fought against each other and the supporters of Omri prevailed, so **Omri** became the next king of Israel. He reigned for twelve years. He kept his capital city in Tirzah for six years, and then **bought a hill in Samaria where he built a new capital city, which he named Samaria**. He chose this land because it was located on a high hill that towered over the surrounding plains, which seemed impenetrable to him. He ruled from there for the last six years of his reign. He did not follow the ways of the Lord, but in the ways of Jeroboam. The Bible tells us that he acted more wickedly than all the other kings before him! We are about to see the wickedness get even worse.

**Please read 1 Kings 16:29 - 22:39**

## Ahab & Jezebel

Omri's son, **Ahab** became the next King of Israel, and he reigned 22 years from the city of Samaria. He continued the false worship instituted by Jeroboam, but he did even more evil than any of the other kings. **He married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of the Sidonians; and she brought the worship of baal to Israel!** (Remember the worship of baal started in Babel with Nimrod.) Ahab erected an altar and temple to baal in Samaria, and it became the center of baal worship. Ahab also made asherah to be worshipped all over Israel.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings 16:1-4

<sup>4</sup> 1 Kings 16:11-13

<sup>5</sup> 1 Kings 16:18

<sup>6</sup> 1 Kings 16:29-33

Ahab provoked the Lord to wrath more than any of the previous kings. God sent **Elijah, the prophet**, to speak to Ahab, to tell him there would be no rain or dew in the land of Israel for years, until he once again spoke to the king and declared it would rain again. This was God's promised judgment for the land going into idolatry! He said He would shut up the heavens so no rain would fall to the ground, causing a drought and famine.

## Elijah

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***Deuteronomy 11:16-17** "Beware that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them. Or the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the Lord is giving you."*

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As soon as Elijah gave this prophecy to the King of Israel, the Lord told him to leave Samaria and cross over the Jordan River and **hide from Ahab by the brook Cherith**. God miraculously provided for his needs in a very unusual way. **He sent ravens** (very large black birds) **to bring him bread and meat twice a day**. He also provided plenty of fresh water for him to drink from the brook.<sup>7</sup>

After some time, the Lord dried up the brook, and **God told Elijah to go to Zarephath**, a city in Sidon which was located on the Mediterranean Sea between Sidon and Tyre, about 100 miles from the brook Cherith. He was sending Elijah to the center of Sidon's worship of baal. **God told him to stay at a specific widow's house**. She was very poor and only had enough food for one more small meal for herself and her son. She figured this would be the end of their lives. Elijah asked her to fix a meal for him first, and then make one of herself and her son. God miraculously filled her flour and oil supplies the entire time Elijah was with her. After some time, the widow's son got very sick and died. She blamed Elijah for bringing this judgement on her and her son because of her iniquities. He ignored her cries, and took her son out of her sight, and carried him up to his room. He prayed to God three times, and the boy came back to life. He brought the boy back downstairs to his mother, and told her, "Your son is alive." At that moment, the woman really knew that Elijah was a true prophet of the One True God.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the years of the drought, Ahab and Jezebel searched for Elijah all over the land of Israel, and even neighboring nations. They desperately wanted to kill Elijah, whom they blamed for the great trouble in their kingdom; when in fact it was their idolatry that brought this judgment.<sup>9</sup> Since they could not find Elijah, Ahab and Jezebel took out their wrath on the prophets of the Lord, and killed many of them. **A righteous man named Obadiah, who was in charge of Ahab's**

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<sup>7</sup> 1 Kings 17:3-6

<sup>8</sup> 1 Kings 17:9-24

<sup>9</sup> 1 Kings 18:17-18



household, took one hundred of God's prophets and hid them in two caves. He protected them from the wrath of Jezebel, and daily sent them food and water.<sup>10</sup> It is amazing that even in this idolatrous kingdom, God had hundreds and hundreds of prophets to speak truth to His people. At times, Elijah felt like he was the only righteous man in Israel<sup>11</sup>, but we must know that **God always reserves a remnant of faithful followers.**

**After three long years of drought, the Lord told Elijah to go to King Ahab, and let him know God would soon send rain upon the land of Israel.**<sup>12</sup> Elijah ran into Obadiah on the way to Samaria, and asked him tell the king he wanted to see him. Obadiah was hesitant to do this, fearing God would take Elijah somewhere else. Obadiah knew if that happened, Ahab would be furious with him, and he would be killed. Elijah promised Obadiah he would stay where he was.

Ahab came that very day, but Elijah didn't immediately tell him that the drought would soon be over. Instead **Elijah proposed a contest to prove whose god was the most powerful.** Jehovah had already shown His power by withholding rain for three years, while baal had never stepped in to change the drought. God had also brought a boy back to life in the midst of baal-country; something baal could never do. **Yet God wanted to demonstrate very clearly to Ahab and all of Israel that He was the Supreme God.**

<sup>10</sup> 1 Kings 18:4, 13

<sup>11</sup> 1 Kings 18:22, 19:10

<sup>12</sup> 1 Kings 18:1

Elijah ordered Ahab to call all of men of Israel to come and gather at Mt. Carmel, along with the 450 prophets of baal, and the 400 prophets of the asherah. Everyone came except the 400 prophets of the asherah. Elijah asked the people, **“How long will you waver between two opinions? Either follow God or follow baal.”**

Elijah proposed a contest between Jehovah and baal. Elijah and the prophets of baal were to kill an ox and put it on an altar, with wood under it; **but not put a fire under it.** They were to call upon the name of their god, and Elijah would call upon the Lord. The god who answered with fire would be declared to be the one true god! Elijah let the prophets of baal go first – all 450 of them. **They prayed from morning until noon, but no fire came.** Elijah mocked them and said maybe they needed to yell louder, because it seemed that baal couldn't hear them. Elijah offered some suggestions as to what kept him: maybe baal was busy, on a journey, or asleep. He told them they should shout and wake him up. They carried on for the next three hours, exhausting themselves, **but still no fire came from baal.**<sup>13</sup>

It was now the time of the evening offering, around 3:00 in the afternoon. Elijah took twelve large stones to build an altar, each stone represented one of the twelve tribes. Firewood and the sacrifice were placed on the altar. Elijah then dug a trench around the altar. He had 12 large pitchers of water brought to him, about 36 gallons; which he poured over the wood and the bull, and the water filled the trench. Elijah cried out to God, *“O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, today let it be known that you are the God in Israel. Answer me that this people may know that you are God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You.”* **Instantly the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, the dust, and all the water!**<sup>14</sup>

Wow, that was quite an amazing miracle! When lightning hits the ground, the bolt is very hot, but very rarely does it burn things because the bolt strikes very quickly and then the heat dissipates. Whatever fire God sent down to earth had to have been extremely hot and last longer than lightning. The limestone and flint rocks of Mt. Carmel would have vaporized when they reached 5000-6000 degrees Fahrenheit. If you have ever stood near a huge bonfire, you know it gives off a lot of heat, but typically they only have temperatures of 1000 degrees Fahrenheit. You can just imagine how hot the fire was that God sent to show He was the One True God!

**The people fell to the ground, bowing to their God. They kept repeating, “The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God.”** Elijah ordered the men to seize the 450 prophets of baal and kill them. The men of Israel took them down the mountain and killed them in the valley beside the Brook Kishon. **Elijah turned to Ahab and told him to celebrate; to eat and drink, for the drought was over.** Rain was on its way. Elijah and his servant went back up on top of Mt. Carmel looking for the coming rainclouds. When they finally saw a small cloud, they ran down to tell Ahab to leave immediately,

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<sup>13</sup> 1 Kings 18:19-29

<sup>14</sup> 1 Kings 18:30-38

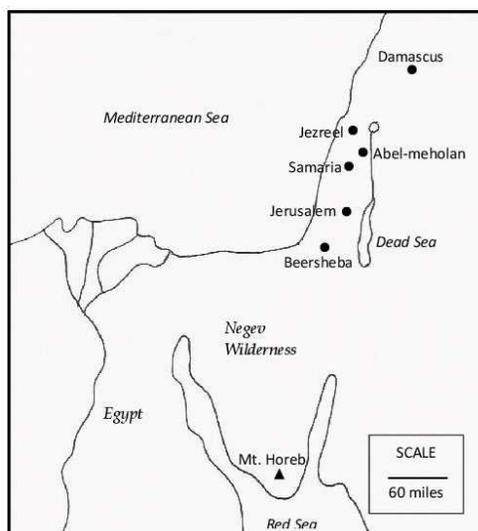
because rain was coming. Suddenly the wind picked up, the sky grew dark, and a heavy rain fell. God had one more miracle to show Ahab. God's hand was on Elijah, and he outran Ahab's chariot to Jezreel, which was 17 miles away!<sup>15</sup>

When Ahab finally made it home, **he told Jezebel everything that had happened, and she was furious.** She sent a message to Elijah telling him he would be dead the next day for killing all of her prophets. **Jezebel terrified Elijah, and he ran for his life.** He did not stop running until he got to Beersheba, about 120 miles away. He left his servant there, and he travelled for another day, out into the desert of the Negev Wilderness. He was exhausted and asked the Lord to end his life. He fell asleep, but was awakened by an angel telling him to eat the food that was next to him. This went on for two days, and then the angel told him to get up and take a 40 day journey to the mountain of God, Mt. Horeb.<sup>16</sup> Remember that after Moses led God's people out of Egypt, this was the same mountain where God told Moses to meet with Him and receive the Ten Commandments, and the rest of God's law.

When Elijah got to Mt. Horeb, he took refuge in a cave, feeling sorry for himself. God in told him to get up, for **He had more work for Elijah to do.** God told him to:

- go to Damascus and anoint **Hazael** king over Aram
- go to **Jehu** and anoint him king over Israel
- anoint **Elisha** as Elijah's replacement

**God wanted to use these three men to execute God's punishment for Israel's apostasy.** This was the beginning of the end for the Northern Kingdom. Soon Ahab, Jezebel, and their entire family would be gone. Elisha would out-live them, and he would be surrounded by 7000 faithful men who had never worshipped baal-another preserved remnant.<sup>17</sup>



## Wars with Aram

**For the remaining years of King Ahab's life, he was in often involved in war against the kings of Aram.** Thirty-three kings laid siege against Samaria and demanded that Ahab give them his gold and silver, along with his most beautiful wives and children. He agreed to give them what they asked for, if they would spare his life. The kings of Aram changed their minds and said they wanted all the men of Israel to give up their money and families. The elders said no; you can have the king's money and family, but not

<sup>15</sup> 1 Kings 18:41-46

<sup>16</sup> 1 Kings 19:1-8

<sup>17</sup> 1 Kings 19:9-18

ours. **Then several prophets came to Ahab and told him to stand up and fight against Aram, and he would prevail and see that Jehovah is the Lord!**<sup>18</sup> King Ahab went into battle, and defeated the kings of Aram. They pleaded for mercy, and he let them go in peace. **God was very upset with this disobedience, and sent another prophet to Ahab.** He told King Ahab that since he spared the lives of the men God had devoted to destruction, his life and the lives of his men would be taken instead.<sup>19</sup>

When there was a break in war, Ahab was looking out his palace window admiring his neighbor's vineyard. He decided he wanted to purchase it to plant a vegetable garden. The man refused because it was his family's land, and Jewish law said he was never to sell it. **Jezebel saw how much Ahab wanted the land, and conspired to have Naboth killed, so Ahab could have the land.**<sup>20</sup> Immediately God told Elijah to go and confront Ahab about murdering Naboth in order to steal his land. God laid out very serious consequences for his sins. God told him that since he followed the idolatrous ways of his wife Jezebel and agreed to her evil; when you die, dogs will lick up your blood where Naboth was murdered. God then promised to destroy his entire family like, just like He did to Jeroboam and Baasha.<sup>21</sup> When King Ahab heard these words of prophecy, he torn his royal robes and put on sackcloth in great sorrow and repentance. God was moved by his humble reaction to the prophecy. He told him these things would not happen during his reign, but during the reigns of his sons.<sup>22</sup>

After three years of peace, King Jehoshaphat of Judah asked King Ahab to help him fight against Aram to take back the city of Ramoth-gilead. Ahab thought that was a good idea. Jehoshaphat was pleased to have this help, but before they left for war, he wanted them to consult with a prophet of God. **Ahab sent for his 400 prophets,** probably the prophets of Asherah that did not show up for the showdown with Elijah on Mt. Carmel. They said, "Go and fight for you will win".<sup>23</sup> Jehoshaphat knew immediately that they were not prophets of God, and asked Ahab **if he knew of a man who could inquire of the Lord.** Ahab knew of one, a man named **Micaiah**; but he never liked his prophesies. Micaiah said they were to go and succeed, and the Lord would give it into the hand of the King. He then said he saw Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep without a shepherd, and they were to return to their houses in peace. Ahab was upset that this was not a clear cut prophecy that they would get the city back from Aram. So Micaiah added a vision he had of the Lord asking for someone to entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead. **One of the gathered angels said he would go and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all of Ahab's prophets, to entice Ahab to go to war.** Ahab ordered Micaiah be thrown in prison until they returned. I can just imagine

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<sup>18</sup> 1 Kings 20:13,22,28

<sup>19</sup> 1 Kings 20:35-43

<sup>20</sup> 1 Kings 21:1-16

<sup>21</sup> 1 Kings 21:17-26

<sup>22</sup> 1 Kings 21:27-19

<sup>23</sup> 1 Kings 22:6,11-12

Micaiah yelling to the king and the people gathered around him, "If you return then what I said was not of God, but if you don't return, remember that I am in prison and get me out!"<sup>24</sup>

Even though they were not sure what God was saying to them, they went into battle. King Ahab decided to dress as an ordinary soldier, but told Jehoshaphat to dress in his royal robes. Amazingly enough, Jehoshaphat agreed. The king of Aram hated King Ahab and told his soldiers to focus their fight against the king of Israel. When they saw a king in his royal robes, and went after him, but stopped when they saw it was not Ahab. **One of the soldiers from Aram was randomly shooting arrows, and one happened to hit Ahab, seriously wounding him in a joint in his armor.** He told his chariot driver to get him away from the battle. **He died that evening at sunset.** A cry went through the army; and all the men turned and went back to their homes, scattering like sheep without a shepherd! Ahab's driver took the king's body back to Samaria, where he was buried. The dogs licked up his blood when his chariot was being washed, just as it was prophesied.<sup>25</sup>

### Ahaziah

**Ahab's son, Ahaziah, became the next king of Israel, and he reigned two years from Samaria.** He provoked the Lord to anger because he followed in the idolatrous ways of Jeroboam, his father Ahab, and his mother Jezebel.<sup>26</sup> He served and worshipped baal; not the God of King David! **Ahaziah made an alliance with Jehoshaphat, the King of Judah, to build a fleet of ships to go to Ophir for gold.** The ships were broken apart before they could even leave the port of Ezion Geber, where they were built, probably in a strong windstorm or hurricane. The Lord sent a prophet by the name of Eliezer to Jehoshaphat to tell him God had destroyed their ships because He disapproved of his unholy alliance with Ahaziah. King Ahaziah wanted to rebuild the ships to continue in their plan to get more gold, but Jehoshaphat said NO.<sup>27</sup>

One day when Ahaziah was on the upper deck of his palace, **he fell through the lattice and had a very bad fall.** Whether he fell to the room below, or to the ground several stories down, we do not know; but the fall was very severe. He developed an infection with a fever and he was very worried he would die. **He sent messengers to inquire of baal-zebul** (lord of the flies), as to whether he would recover or die. The angel of the Lord told Elijah to get up and meet the messengers of the king and give them a message from the one true God. "Is there no God in Israel that you have to consult baal, the god of Ekron? You shall surely die from your fall." The messengers shortly returned to King Ahaziah and he asked why they were back so soon. They said they met a prophet of God and he told them what would happen to the king. When he found out the prophet was Elijah, he sent fifty soldiers to go and bring Elijah to him. They found Elijah sitting on top of a hill and yelled up to him, "*Oh man of God, the king says to come down*". Elijah answered this demand with, "*If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and the men with you.*" This

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<sup>24</sup> 1 Kings 22:7-28

<sup>25</sup> 1 Kings 22:29-38

<sup>26</sup> 1 Kings 22:52

<sup>27</sup> 2 Chronicles 20:35-37, 1 Kings 22:48-49

is exactly what happened. Not just with this troop, but with the next one Ahaziah sent. With the third group of soldiers, their captain bowed down before Elijah and begged him to spare their lives. The angel of the Lord told Elijah, *“Go with this captain, you do not need to be afraid of him”*. Elijah went and spoke the message to Ahaziah, and he died!<sup>28</sup>

Before we continue with this next king of Israel, we will delve into the end of Elijah’s ministry, and the

## Elijah says Goodbye

beginning of Elisha’s. Remember God told Elijah to go to Abel-meholah and anoint Elisha as his successor. Elijah went directly from talking to God on Mt. Horeb to meeting with Elisha. **He threw his mantle over Elisha, and anointed him a prophet of God.** Elisha went and told his parents what had just happened, and then he sacrificed a pair of oxen and had a feast with his family and friends. Afterwards he got up and followed Elijah, ministering to him.<sup>29</sup>

As his time on earth was coming to a close, **God told his prophets that soon He was going to take Elijah up in a whirlwind to be with Him.** Right before Elijah left, God sent him from Gilgal, to Bethel, to Jericho, and then across the Jordan River. Every city they went to, the prophets told Elisha, *“Today God is going to take away your master”*. Elisha said, *“I know, please be still”*. Every town they went to, Elijah told Elisha to stay behind, but he refused to leave him. When they got to the Jordan River, Elisha took his mantle and folded it and then struck the waters of the river. Instantly the waters divided and they were able to cross over on dry land. Elisha asked Elijah to please put a double portion of his spirit upon him. Elijah told him he really didn’t know how difficult that request would be for him, but if Elisha saw him ascend into heaven, he would receive the double portion. As they were walking, a chariot of fire pulled by horses of fire drove between the two men, and Elisha was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. **Elisha watched until Elijah disappeared,** and then reached down and picked up Elijah’s mantle that had fallen to the ground. He struck the waters with the mantle and **the water divided in two places,** so he was able to cross back into Israel on dry land. Fifty prophets of God had watched the entire thing from a distance, and declared that *“the spirit of Elijah was resting upon Elisha”*.<sup>30</sup>

Immediately Elisha went across the land of Israel to do the bidding of the Lord. Men from Jericho came to him asking him to help them with their water supply. The springs of water coming into the city were bad, causing the

## Elisha

people to be sick and the land unfruitful. Elisha poured salt into the springs, and **declared the Lord had purified the waters,** and there would no longer be death of fruitlessness because of the water.<sup>31</sup> As he was passing by Bethel, one of the centers of the worship instituted by Jeroboam, **Elisha was mocked by a gang of 42 young boys of the city.** They taunted him to leave the same

<sup>28</sup> 2 Kings 1

<sup>29</sup> 1 Kings 19:19-21

<sup>30</sup> 2 Kings 2:1-15

<sup>31</sup> 2 Kings 2:19-22

way that Elijah did, to leave them in their sins. Elisha cursed them in the name of the Lord and the boys were all killed by two bears that came out of the woods.<sup>32</sup> Elisha went to Mt. Carmel, and then **settled in Samaria, to be near the kings.** He did many incredible miracles in his lifetime as a prophet of God.

### Jehoram

**King Ahaziah had no sons, so his brother, Jehoram (Joram), became the next king of Israel.** He reigned for twelve years, during the last few years of Jehoshaphat's reign and the entire reign of his son Jehoram, the kings of Judah. You need to carefully read the passages in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles to see which Jehoram it is talking about. **King Jehoram of Israel did away with the idolatrous worship of baal of his mother and father, but he continued in the idolatrous worship of Jeroboam.**

Ever since King Ahab had died, **the land of Moab had been in rebellion against Israel.** They had been paying tribute to Israel in the form of lambs and wool, but stopped when Ahab died. **King Jehoram asked King Jehoshaphat of Judah to team up with him to fight against Moab.** He said he would, and the king of Edom joined them also. These three kings and their armies travelled seven days in the desert, but became worried because they had not found any water for themselves or their horses. Jehoshaphat asked Jehoram if there was a prophet of the Lord among them. He said yes, his name is Elisha and he used to minister to Elijah. King Jehoram called for Elisha, who scorned him saying, *"I have nothing to do with you, why don't you call the prophets of your parents?"* Jehoram begged him to help. Elisha said he would, but only for the sake of Jehoshaphat, the King of Judah. Elisha told them **to dig many trenches in the valley where they were camped, and in the morning they would be full of water, even though it would not rain.** He then told them, *"Oh, by the way, God will give the men of Moab into your hand"*. Things happened just as Elisha said.<sup>33</sup>

**The king of Aram was warring against Israel** and he told his servants where he wanted his camp set up. God told Elisha where his camp would be, so he could warn the king of Israel to avoid this location. This happened several times. The king of Aram was furious and wanted to know which of his servants was a spy. They spoke up and said, *"It is not us, but Elisha tells the king of Israel where you are"*. **He ordered a band of mercenary soldiers to capture Elisha and bring him to him.** Elisha's servant was terrified when he saw the army. **But Elisha said, "Do not be afraid, the army that is with us is greater than the one against us."** Elisha asked God to open his servants' eyes, who was amazed when he looked and saw the mountain behind the mercenary army full of horses and chariots of fire surrounding Elisha.

As the mercenary army came closer to Elisha, **he asked God to blind their eyes.** Elisha came up to the blind soldiers, and told them they were going the wrong way. He offered to lead them to

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<sup>32</sup> 2 Kings 2:23-24

<sup>33</sup> 2 Kings 3:4-27

where the man they were looking for would be. They had no idea the man who was offering to help them, was the man they were ordered to find and bring to their king! **Elisha led them to Samaria, and asked the Lord to open up their eyes.** Once they could see, they realized they had been led into the midst of Samaria. The King of Israel asked Elisha, *“My father, should I kill them?”* Elisha, said no, don’t kill them. But instead give them food and drink and sent them home. **These soldiers were so amazed at what had happened to them by the hand of God, that they never bothered Israel again!**<sup>34</sup>

But Ben-hadad, the King of Aram, continued his war against Israel. He gathered his army and besieged Samaria. It was difficult to attack the city, because it was fortified and set high on a hill. But **the Aram army was able to cause a famine in the city by blocking all trade coming into Samaria.** When the famine became very severe, the Lord caused the Aram army to hear the sound of a huge army approaching. They thought it was the combined forces of the Egyptians and the Hittites; so they fled in great haste, leaving everything in their tents. The people of Samaria were able to go out into their camp and gather more than enough food for their starving families.<sup>35</sup>

Remember when God had told Elijah to go to Damascus and anoint **Hazael** king over Aram, and then go to **Jehu**, the son of Nimshi, and anoint him king over Israel? **He never did this, but Elisha did. He went to Damascus to deliver the prophecy about the next king of Aram.** King Ben-hadad was very ill; and when he heard that Elisha was in town, he sent his servant Hazael to ask the Lord if he would live or die? Hazael took 40 camel laden with gifts for Elisha, to bribe him to answer the king’s question. Elisha told him to tell the king he would recover from the illness, but he would surely die. Then Elisha started to cry. Hazael asked him what was wrong. Elisha had seen a vision of Hazael as king doing horrible atrocities to the people in Israel!

Hazael went and told the king that Elisha said he would recover from the illness, but nothing more. **The very next day, Hazael took a wet blanket and suffocated King Ben-hadad; and became king in his place.**<sup>36</sup> The Lord would use King Hazael to dole out his judgment for Israel’s idolatrous hearts. **King Jehoram (Joram) of Israel allied himself with his brother-in-law King Ahaziah of Judah (who was married to Jehoram’s sister) to fight against King Hazael of Aram at Ramoth-gilead.** King Jehoram was wounded and went back to Jezreel to heal. King Ahaziah of Judah followed him to see if he was going to be okay.

**Please read 2 Kings 9-10**

Jehu

In the meantime, Elisha instructed one of the prophets with him to run to Ramoth-gilead and find Jehu, captain of King Jehoram’s army, the son of

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<sup>34</sup> 2 Kings 6:8-23

<sup>35</sup> 2 Kings 6:24- 7:20

<sup>36</sup> 2 Kings 8:7-15

Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi. He was to take **Jehu** into a private room and **anoint him as the next king of Israel**. The prophet then instructed Jehu to strike **and kill all in the relatives of Ahab, including Jezebel**; to avenge the deaths of God's prophets. The men with Jehu wanted to know what the prophet had said to him, and he told them he was just anointed as he next king of Israel. They all bowed before him, blowing trumpets, and declaring Jehu their king.

Jehu left the battlefield and went to Jezreel. **He shot King Jehoram and King Ahaziah with arrows, and then had Jezebel thrown out her window**. She died in the fall and was trampled by the horses below.<sup>37</sup> Jehu then sent messages to the elders of each city where Ahab's 70 sons lived and asked them to kill the sons of Ahab and bring their heads to him in Jezreel. Jehu then killed the heads of each city along with anyone who had any relationship with Ahab!

Jehu sent a message to all the prophets of baal, telling them to gather in Samaria, for he wanted to worship baal more than Ahab ever did. He then had them call all the baal worshippers in Israel to gather for the largest sacrifice ever to baal. As soon as Jehu finished offering the burnt offerings, he called his soldiers to kill everyone assembled. They then destroyed the temple of baal; **eradicating baal from Israel! God was pleased that Jehu executed His judgment against Ahab and Jezebel**, and God promised that his sons and grandsons would be on the throne of Israel for four generations.

Even though Jehu destroyed all baal worship in Israel, he still followed the idolatrous worship of Jeroboam, and he was not careful to walk in the law of the Lord. **Because of this rebellion, the Lord allowed King Hazael of Aram, to cut off portions of the land of Israel on the east side of the Jordan River, all during Jehu's 28 years as King.**

### Jehoahaz

After Jehu died, his son **Jehoahaz** (Joahaz) became the king of Israel and he reigned 17 years. He too followed the sins of Jeroboam and led his people to sin. This continued to stir the anger of the Lord and He gave Israel into the hand of Aram continually. The Arameans had almost completely destroyed the army of Israel. All they had left were 50 horsemen, 10 chariots, and 10,000 foot soldiers. Jehoahaz went before the Lord and prayed for Him to deliver His people from this oppression and constant state of war. The Lord heard and answered his prayer and sent a deliverer. They had peace for the rest of his reign.

**Please read 2 Kings 13:9-25, 14:8-16**

### Jehoash

After Jehoahaz died, his son **Jehoash** (Joash), became king and reigned for 16 years. Jehoash was very fond of Elisha and was very upset when he died. Even though had a good relationship with Elisha, he still led his people to worship the idols Jeroboam put in place. Hazael, the king of Aram was still oppressing

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<sup>37</sup> 2 Kings 9:21-37

Israel during the reign of Jehoash. He fought back, and in three campaigns he was **able to recapture all the cities that had been taken from Israel during the reign of Jehu.**

King Amaziah of Judah had just defeated Edom and was feeling very powerful, **so he challenged Jehoash to meet him in battle.** Jehoash told him to stay home and enjoy his victory over Edom, but he didn't. God allowed Jehoash to defeat Amaziah as punishment for him serving the gods of Edom. Jehoash captured king Amaziah, went into Jerusalem and tore down the fortified wall from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, about 600 feet. Then he took all the gold and silver utensils from the temple and the king's treasuries. He took several hostages and returned to Samaria. He had no desire to continue to war to gain more land; but **this was the beginning of great animosity between the two kingdoms.**

## Jeroboam II

The next king of Israel was **Jeroboam**, the son of Jehoash. He reigned from Samaria for 41 years. He did evil in the sight of God by following in the tradition of all of the previous kings of the Northern Kingdom, following in the idolatrous false religion of Jeroboam. But he did do so good things. **He had very successful battles against Aram, and restored the original eastern borders of Israel set up in the days of Joshua;** as far as Damascus and the Arabian Sea. God used him to bring some relief to Israel from the oppression of the Aramaeans. He had a long reign and his son Zechariah became the next king.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> 2 Kings 14:16, 23-29

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

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1. In the back of this book on pages 209-220 is a chart of the Kings of Israel. Please fill in the information about the kings we discussed in this chapter.
2. Please read 2 Kings 2:12-6:20 and 2 Kings 13:14-21. These passages chronicle the ministry of Elijah. List the incredible events and miracles that happened in his life with God. What can be learned from each one of these?
3. Elisha performed some pretty spectacular miracles in his time of ministry. Please read 2 Kings 2-13. List the incredible events and miracles that happened in his life with God. What can be learned from each one of these?
4. Read 2 Kings 2:9-10. What did Elisha ask for from Elijah? What evidence did you see in the study of Elisha's life that leads us to think he got what he asked for?

# 13

## Assyrian Domination

Please read 2 Kings 15:8-31

### Last Kings of Israel

**Zechariah**, the son of Jeroboam II, became king when his father died. He was the last of the four generations of Jehu that would reign in Israel. He reigned for only six months. A man named Shallum conspired against the king and killed him in front of all the people. **Shallum** took over as king, but he only reigned for one month. He was killed by **Menahem**, who then became king. Each of these kings walked in the idolatry of Jeroboam and caused the people to sin against God. Menahem reigned for ten years, and he was a very cruel king. When a city did not embrace him as their new king, he destroyed the city and brutally murdered the pregnant women.

Up until this time, the Lord out of his anger against the idolatry of Israel, allowed the Kings of Aram to oppress His people. God gave Israel continually into the hands of King Ben-hadad and King Hazael during the reigns of King Baasha through King Jehoash.<sup>1</sup> There were many battles with many lives lost, and all of the land on the east side of the Jordan River was taken away from Israel. But during the reign of King Menahem, around 750BC, **God raised up a stronger enemy, the Assyrians. They would eventually bring an end to capital city of Samaria and the Northern Kingdom of Israel.**

### Menahem

**We first hear of the Assyrians during the reign of King Menahem**, when Pul (also called Tiglath-pileser III), the king of Assyria, came against the land of Israel. King Menahem made a deal with the Assyrian king to pay him a thousand talents of silver to not invade Israel. The king of Israel did not pay the money out of his own wealth, but he taxed the wealthy men 50 shekels of silver every year to pay this tribute.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that the cost of an Assyrian slave in those days was 50 shekels; so in a sense King Menahem was calling his nation the slaves of Assyria.

### Pekahiah & Pekah

When Menahem died, his son **Pekahiah** became king. He ruled for two years and then was killed by **Pekah**, who was one

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings 13:3

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 15:17-21

of the officers in his army. Pekah took 50 men from Gilead, and they killed Pekahiah in his palace. King Pekah reigned for 20 years, and continued in the idolatry of Jeroboam.

During Pekah's reign, the Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser III, was no longer appeased by the yearly tribute of 1000 talents of silver. He wanted land, and he wanted a lot of it. **He took the cities of Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee; these were all cities in the land of the tribe of Naphtali.** He made these part of Assyria and **he took all the people out of their land.**

**The Assyrian focused their energies on war, invasion, and conquest;** not on building an Assyrian civilization. They had a different policy towards the people they conquered than previous kingdoms. **The Assyrians would not kill all the inhabitants of the lands they defeated. Instead they would capture them, and then force them to migrate in large numbers to various other areas of the Assyrian empire.** Every new conquered land was stripped of people and then repopulated with captives from other lands, languages, and religions. Nobody knew anyone, and they could not communicate with each other. This kept rebellion down because the people were having such a hard time adjusting to their new surroundings. This also turned the Middle East, Mesopotamia, and Armenia into a melting pot of diverse cultures, religions and languages.

**Pekah conspired with King Rezin of Aram to fight against King Ahaz of Judah.** The prophet Isaiah came to King Ahaz and told him **not to be afraid of these two stubs of smoldering firebrands on the verge of being extinguished.** Even though Pekah and Rezin had plans to tear down the walls of Jerusalem, terrorize and capture the people and the land, God told Isaiah that their evil plans would not come to pass. Isaiah then prophesied that Ephraim, the northern Kingdom of Israel, would be shattered by the Assyrians, and within 65 years it would be not be inhabited by the sons of Israel.<sup>3</sup>

Even though King Ahaz heard the great prophecy that God would protect Judah from King Rezin of Aram, he decided to take things in to his own hands. **Ahaz approached the Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser III, to help him defeat King Rezin of Aram.** He gave him a large amount of silver and gold to convince him to help. The Assyrians took the money, and went into Damascus and it. King Rezin was killed, and the people were all captured and taken into exile in Kir.<sup>4</sup>

## Hoshea

After Pekah was king for 20 years, **Hoshea, the son of Elah conspired against the king and killed him, declaring himself to be the next king.**<sup>5</sup> He reigned for 9 years. A new king in Assyrian, named Shalmaneser, came against Israel and demanded they pay him tribute money. Hoshea went along

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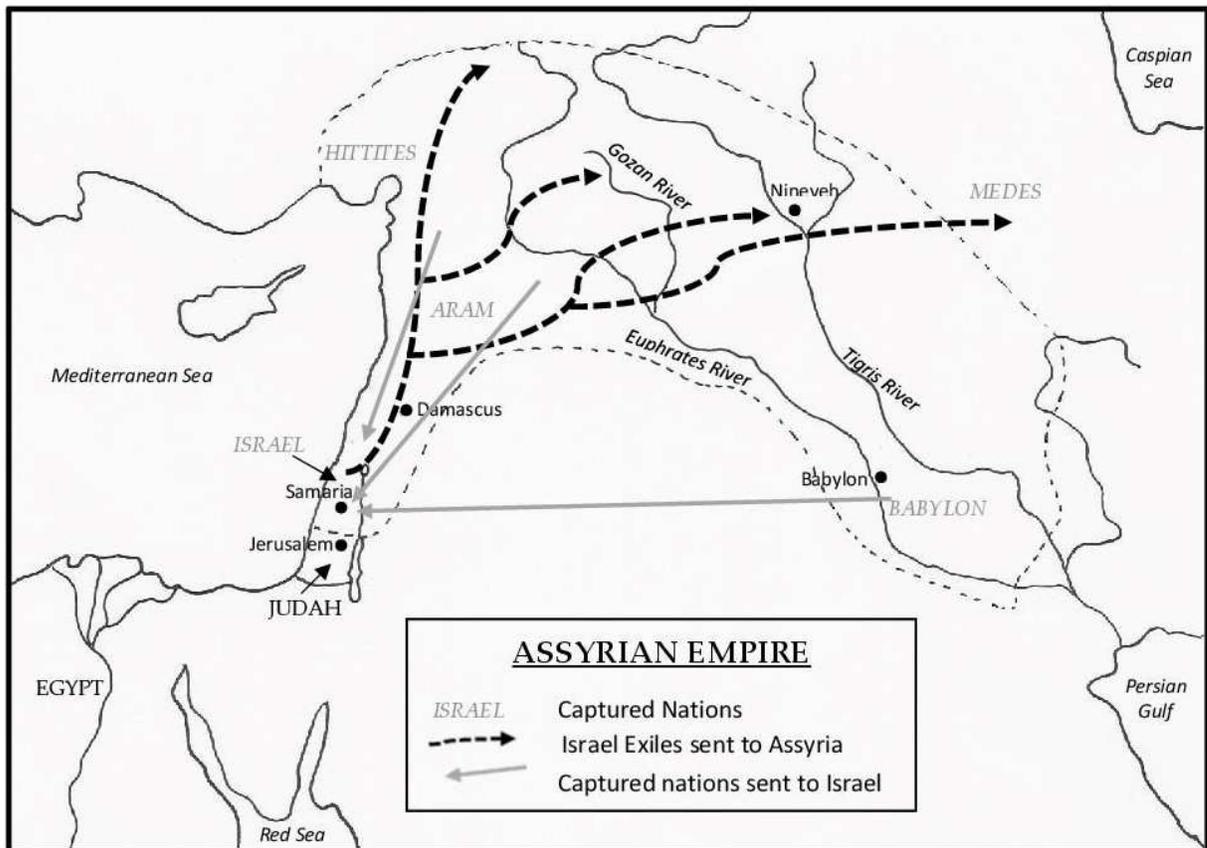
<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 7:1-8

<sup>4</sup> 2 Kings 16:5-9

<sup>5</sup> 2 Kings 15:30

with this for a while, but then he decided to make a different deal with Egypt instead. Hoshea foolishly thought that the king of Egypt would protect him from Assyria. When Shalmaneser did not receive his money, he sent his army to Samaria and **captured King Hoshea and took him to Assyria; where he spent the rest of his life bound in chains in prison.**

Assyria then laid siege to Samaria for three years. **Samaria was finally captured, and the people of Israel were carried away into exile.** The sons of Israel were dispersed over various regions of the Assyrian empire, to the cities of Halah and Habor on the Gozan River, and some of the cities of the Medes.<sup>6</sup> **They ended up blending into whatever pagan land they were sent to.** This was easy for them because of their centuries of compromise with God and His laws, and their worship of many pagan gods. When it was time to return to Israel, 200 years later, after the Persians defeated Babylon, **they had mixed so well into these foreign lands, they could not be found!** What a sad commentary on their lives. When the Lord returns, will the same be said of the church, that we blended so well into the culture of our land that we could not be distinguished from the world?



<sup>6</sup> 2 Kings 17:1-7

Please read 2 Kings 17

## Israel Exiled

God was patient and longsuffering with the people living in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, **but after 208 years He said no more! The Lord was very angry with Israel,** because they rejected Him. God gave the people of Israel into the hands of plunderers, and allowed them to be removed from the Promised Land. The Lord allowed the Assyrians to carry the sons of Israel away into exile because they:

- Sinned against God
- Revered other gods
- Walked in the ways of the nations they were supposed to drive out of Israel
- Did things secretly that were against God
- Built high places in all of their towns from watchtowers to fortified walls
- Set up sacred pillars and asherim on every high hill and under every green tree
- Burned incense on all the high places to other gods
- Did evil things that provoked the Lord
- Served idols
- Did not listen to God's prophets who urged them to repent
- Did not believe in the Lord their God
- Rejected God's statutes and His covenant
- Became vain
- Intermarried with the nations around them
- Forsook all the commandments of God
- Made molten images of golden calves
- Worshipped demons and baal
- Sacrificed children in fire
- Practiced divination and enchantments –witchcraft
- Sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord
- Walked in all the sins of Jeroboam

## Foreigners Move In

After the people of Israel were removed from the Promised Land, **65 years from the time of Isaiah's prophecy, the Assyrians repopulated the now wild and desolate land around Samaria** with people from Babylon, Cuthath (Persia), Avva, Hamath (Syria), and Sephar-vaim. **These were all pagan nations who did not know or fear the Lord.**

Shortly after these people from five separate lands moved into the northern part of the Promised Land, **the Lord sent lions to terrorize the people**, and several were killed.<sup>7</sup> Some of the new inhabitants of Samaria sent a message to the King of Assyria informing him of their lion problem, and a possible reason and solution for it. These foreigners thought **the plague of lions was caused by their presence in God's land. They did not know the God of Israel, but they reasoned if they knew His laws and followed them, it would go well with them while they lived in His land.** If only Israel had thought that way, they would have still been there.

The King of Assyria ordered one of the captured Israelite priests to go back to Samaria and instruct the new residents of the land how to fear the Lord. Unfortunately he was probably one of the idolatrous priests who worshipped the golden calves. **He taught the new residents the polluted religion of Jeroboam, which was a mixture of the worship of Jehovah and idols.** There were a few Israelites left in the land, who escaped from being taken by the Assyrians. **They intermarried with the new foreigners in their land and became known as Samaritans. They feared the Lord, but they also served their idols.**<sup>8</sup> The Samaritans were a race of people hated by the Jews in the times of Jesus, because they were made up of a mixed ethnic group with their own religion and customs.

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*Deuteronomy 4:25-27 "When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord your God so as to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. The Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord drives you."*

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**God had repeatedly warned His people, through His prophets, of the consequences of idolatry and following after the gods of the nations around them.** The Northern Kingdom was in existence for just a little over 200 years, before they were removed from the Promised Land and scattered among the pagan peoples of the Assyrian Empire – just as God had said! Let's look at a few of the prophets God sent to the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Hosea was given a prophetic message for the land of Israel during the reigns of their last six kings. God told him to marry a harlot and have children with her, because **the people of Israel had committed flagrant harlotry by forsaking the Lord** and going after false gods.<sup>9</sup> This request was astounding, but God was trying to jar his people to wake up and see the abominable acts they were committing against Him. Yet

Hosea

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<sup>7</sup> 2 Kings 17:25-26

<sup>8</sup> 2 Kings 17:28-41

<sup>9</sup> Hosea 1:2

**God told Hosea to love Gomer**,<sup>10</sup> even though she had been unfaithful over and over and over again with other men.<sup>11</sup> The Lord did this to show the love He has for all mankind. God always has His arms open to welcome His people back into His loving arms, if they would just repent and turn from their wicked ways.

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***Hosea 5:15*** "I will go away and return to My place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me."

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Unfortunately the people of Israel did not repent, and they were taken captive by the Assyrians. God left a remnant in the land, from the tribes of Ephraim and western Manasseh. For ten years, God pleaded with them to return to Him, so they would not be overtaken by the Assyrians. But they continued to play the harlot, and forsook the Lord, so He would not allow them to remain in His land anymore.<sup>12</sup> God punished their sins of unfaithfulness<sup>13</sup> by letting Assyria be their king.<sup>14</sup> The last chapter of Hosea is yet another plea to the people to return to the Lord, so he can heal their hearts and be freely loved by God. We must know that this is God's heart towards all mankind. He loves us and he wants us to love Him. All we need to do is repent of our sins and ask Jesus to be our Savior and wash us pure from our sins. No matter what we have done, God loves us and wants us to return to Him. But we must know, that if we do not, God is holy and He must bring judgment for our sins.

The book of Amos starts out with a list of the transgressions the Lord has against the people of the earth who live in Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Ammon, Moab, and Judah. **Then He narrows the target of His wrath to one nation – Israel!**

## Amos

Amos declared to Israel that the Lord had given His people many warning signs of the consequences of their sins, but they continued to do evil in the sight of the Lord!<sup>15</sup> He sent drought, scorching heat and winds, swarms of insects, plagues, and invading armies, yet they did not return to Him!<sup>16</sup> **The Lord had no choice but to bring upon their heads the consequences for their idolatrous rebellion.**

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***Amos 3:14-15*** "For on the day that I punish Israel's transgressions, I will also punish the altars of Bethel ... and the great houses will come to an end, declares the Lord."

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<sup>10</sup> Hosea 3:1

<sup>11</sup> Hosea 2:5

<sup>12</sup> Hosea 9:1-3

<sup>13</sup> Hosea 9:7-9

<sup>14</sup> Hosea 11:5-6

<sup>15</sup> Amos 3:1-10

<sup>16</sup> Amos 4:6-11

Yet in the midst of His sentence of impending judgment, over and over again in chapter 5, God begged his people to **“Seek Me, so you may live”**. Amos continued to tell the people of Israel that the Lord had set a plumb line before them of how to live their lives in a right and honorable way.<sup>17</sup> But since they continued to refuse to walk in His ways, **“He would spare them no longer!”** The book of Amos ended with prophecies about the end of the age, when the Lord Jesus will return and set up His kingdom on the earth.<sup>18</sup> God always has His arms open wide to receive us back into His kingdom, if we repent and turn whole-heartedly back to Him. He gives all mankind hope in Him, over and over again thought the words of His prophets. **Are we willing to seek Him?**

During the reigns of the last kings of Israel, right before Israel was destroyed and the people were taken out of their land, God spoke to the prophet Micah. He said the Lord God was coming forth from His place in heaven to punish the sins and rebellion of the people of Israel. He went on to list their many evil deeds<sup>19</sup>, which will bring about their end!

## Micah

- They hate justice
- They twist everything that is straight
- The land is full of bloodshed and violent injustices
- Greedy leaders, priests, and prophets take bribes instead of dealing justly
- Priests and prophets falsely say the Lord is in their midst, and no harm will come

We must understand **what the Lord requires from His people: “Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God, and fear His name.”**<sup>20</sup> But this was not how the leaders and consequently the people lived their lives. As a consequence for their rebellion, Micah prophesied that the Assyrians would invade Israel, and take the people and disperse them among the nations. They would be trampled down with no one to rescue them.<sup>21</sup> That is exactly what happened to them.

But in the midst of these prophecies of coming judgment, there is hope in the name of Jesus Christ, our Messiah. **Micah wrote down several prophecies about the first and second coming of the Messiah** when He will come and gather His people to Himself. Micah declared that he was waiting and watching expectantly for the God of his salvation<sup>22</sup>, and urged the people to do the same. Micah ended with reminding the people of God’s character. **We must know that God will pardon our iniquities, and forgive our rebellious acts; because He delights in unchanging love.**<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Amos 7:7-9

<sup>18</sup> Amos 9:11-15

<sup>19</sup> Micah 3:9-11

<sup>20</sup> Micah 6:8-9

<sup>21</sup> Micah 5:5, 8

<sup>22</sup> Micah 7:7

<sup>23</sup> Micah 7:18-20

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

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1. In the back of this book on pages 209-220 is a chart of the Kings of Israel. Please fill in the information about the kings we discussed in this chapter.
  
2. Isaiah was a prophet of God who lived in the Southern kingdom of Judah, during the reigns of five kings, from Uzziah to Manasseh. But in several chapters of the book of Isaiah, he also gave prophecies to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the nations who captures and harassed them, and of our Messiah, Jesus Christ. Read Isaiah 7-11.
  - a. List the coming judgements against the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which Isaiah also called Ephraim.
  - b. List the coming judgments against the southern Kingdom of Judah.
  - c. Why was God bringing judgment against His people?
  - d. List the times God extended an invitation to His people to repent and return to him.
  - e. List the coming judgments again the nations who came against His people.
  - f. Why did God punish the nations He used to bring judgment against His people?
  - g. List the prophecies of Jesus Christ, our Messiah.
  - h. Why do you think the prophecies of Jesus Christ were interwoven in these prophecies?
  
3. Read the book of the prophet Jonah.
  - a. What king of Israel was Jonah a prophet to? (search the name Jonah in 2 Kings)
  - b. What city and nation was Jonah to go to, and what was God's purpose?
  - c. Why did Jonah not want to do what God asked?
  - d. When have you ever been in a similar situation?
  - e. How did the inhabitants of Assyria react to the message Jonah finally gave?
  - f. Why do you think God wanted Assyria to know Him as Sovereign God?

# 14

## Southern Kingdom - Judah

### Rehoboam

**The Southern Kingdom of the divided Promised Land of Israel was called Judah.** Their first king was **Rehoboam**, Solomon's son, who reigned over the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin for 17 years. **He caused the split in the Promised Land of Israel** with his desire to put on a stern and cruel face to his people, instead of being sympathetic to their needs. All the leaders of the other 10 tribes, along with Jeroboam, pledged their loyalty to Rehoboam if he would lighten their loads. But when Rehoboam refused to ease up on his requirements for his subjects, and even vowed to make their tasks much harder and their punishments harsher; rebellion was birthed. Shortly afterwards, the kingdom was split in two.

**The tribes of Benjamin and Judah stayed loyal to Rehoboam**, not because they thought he was a good man; but because the temple was between their two lands, and they were fairly devout followers of the Lord. When Jeroboam instituted a pagan system of worshiping golden calves in Israel, **all the Levites and devout followers of the Lord** who had been living in the lands of the ten other tribes of Israel **moved to Jerusalem and pledged their loyalty to King David's grandson.** The temple was in Rehoboam's portion of the land and they desired to worship Yahweh, their God.

These devout followers of the Lord strengthened the kingdom of Judah for three years,<sup>1</sup> until **Rehoboam turned away from the worship of God he learned from his father and turned towards the idolatrous pagan worship he learned from his mother.** Three times it was mentioned that she was from the foreign land of Ammon. Rehoboam built high places of pagan worship with sacred pillars and asherim on every high hill and beneath every luxuriant tree in Judah. Homosexuality with male cult prostitutes spread quickly all over the land. When a leader does not follow the Lord, but his own evil heart, the people will go astray!

Rehoboam set a very bad example for the people of Judah, but fortunately not all the kings from his lineage followed his example. **The southern kingdom had 8 good and 12 bad kings in the 345 years of their existence.** We will see at the end of this portion of history that Judah was taken into captivity by the rising Kingdom of Babylon in three sieges in 605 BC, 597 BC, and finally destroyed in the last siege in 586 BC.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Chronicles 11:17; 12:1; 1 Kings 14:22-24

Please read **2 Chronicles 13** and **2 Kings 14:31-15:8**

## Abijam

**Rehoboam had 18 wives and 60 concubines**, who gave him 28 sons and 60 daughters; but his favorite wife was his cousin, Maacah, the daughter of Absalom. Rehoboam scattered his 28 sons and their families across his kingdom and appointed Abijam to be the leader of his brothers, because he wanted him to be the next king.<sup>2</sup> When Rehoboam died, his favorite son **Abijam was named king, and he ruled for 3 years**. He knew the Lord, but he also walked in the idolatry of his father and mother<sup>3</sup>. His heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord. He was in conflict with King Jeroboam of Israel for the entire three years that he was king, just like his father. There had been many small raids between the two nations, until Abijam decided to fully attack Israel with his 400,000 soldiers, even though Jeroboam had 800,000 warriors with Him.

Before the action started, **Abijam stood on a hill and boldly lectured Jeroboam** and the men of Israel telling them that:

1. The Lord God made a covenant with the house of David that they would rule over the people in the Promised Land.
2. Jeroboam rose up and rebelled against Solomon, his master, and then worthless men gathered around him. They proved too strong for Rehoboam because he was young and timid, and could not hold his own against them.
3. You are trying to fight against the kingdom of the Lord which is in the hands of the descendants of David, with your huge army and your golden idols.

### Fact check:

1. There were conditions to the descendants of David ruling in the Promised Land. They were to have a heart of pure devotion to God alone. But both Solomon and Rehoboam broke this covenant.
2. God is the one who first spoke of Jeroboam being the king of a divided Israel. Then the elders of the 10 tribes asked him to be king. Yes, Rehoboam was fearful and a weak leader, but he was hardy young. He was 41 when he became king.
3. Abijam was trying to sound very pious, even though he and the people of Judah did dabble in idolatry.

Abijam also condemned Jeroboam for driving out the Levites and priests who were descended from Aaron, and then making priests of whoever wanted to be a priest; and making his own gods. Abijam went on to say that **Jeroboam had forsaken the Lord, but he had not!** He declared that the **Lord**

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Chronicles 11:18-23

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings 15:13

**was Judah's God;** and the sons of Aaron are ministering to the Lord in His temple, which is in Abijam's kingdom. **He warned them not to fight against the Lord, because they would not succeed!**

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*2 Chronicles 13:18 "...the sons of Judah conquered because they trusted in the Lord, the God of their fathers."*

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**Jeroboam ignored Abijam's threats** and set an ambush for the armies of Judah. When Judah realized they were surrounded, **they sent up a war cry to the Lord, and God routed Jeroboam and his army.** As Israel turned to run away, Abijam and his soldiers killed 500,000 of the enemy. Abijam pursued Jeroboam and took many cities in Israel – Bethel, Jeshanah, and Ephron. Jeroboam went back to Israel, and never regained his strength. Abijam was very powerful for the remaining few years of his life. He had 14 wives, who gave him 22 sons and 16 daughters.

**Please read 1 Kings 15:9-24 and 2 Chronicles 14-16**

## Good King Asa

When Abijam died, his son Asa became the next king. **Asa did what was right in the sight of the Lord, like his great-great-grandfather, David.**

Asa removed all idolatry from the land of Judah, and even removed his grandmother from being the queen mother because of her idolatry. **His heart was wholly devoted to the Lord, and he commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers and to observe His laws and commandments.** He restored the gold and silver items taken from the temple during his grandfather's reign (Rehoboam). **The Lord was pleased with Asa and his devotion,** and He gave Judah rest from war. Once there was peace in the land of Judah, the people were able to turn their attention to building up their cities. God prospered the people of Judah in all they did.

**The first 10 years of Asa's 41 year reign were peaceful, until Zerah the Ethiopian came against Judah** with an army of 1,000,000 men, to face the 580,000 valiant warriors of Judah. Asa called to the Lord his God to help them win this battle. God heard his cry and struck the Ethiopians. King Asa and his army chased them as they were running away. Asa's army killed so many of the enemy as they pursued them all the way to the Sinai Peninsula, shattering the Ethiopian army. Asa and his army returned to Jerusalem with much plunder.

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*2 Chronicles 14:11 "...help us, O Lord our God, for we trust in Thee, and in Thy name have come against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God, let no man prevail against Thee."*

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**The prophet Azariah came and spoke encouraging words to Asa and all the inhabitants of Judah and Benjamin.** He told them that God was with them, when they were with God; and if you seek God, you will find Him. He encouraged them to be strong and keep doing good, and God would reward their work. When Asa heard these words, he removed more idols from the land, and he restored the altar of the temple. He invited all Judah and Benjamin, along with those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon (who had moved to his kingdom when they saw that God was with Asa) to offer burnt offerings to God. **Asa and all the people who had gathered made a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and soul.** They worshiped the Lord with loud shouting, trumpets and horns. It was a joyous celebration! You know how much this pleased the Lord.

**There was peace in the land of Judah until the 36<sup>th</sup> year of Asa's reign, when King Baasha of Israel waged war against him.** Baasha fortified a city on their border and used it as a barricade to prevent people from getting in and out of Judah. Instead of facing Baasha head on in battle, he devised a plan to have someone else fight him. Asa took the remaining gold and silver from his treasuries and the temple treasuries, and sent it to Ben-hadad of Aram. This money was to be a bribe to get him break his alliance with Baasha and engage him in battle, so he would no longer be able to threaten Judah with war. King Ben-hadad agreed and waged war with Baasha. He won, and took much land from Israel.

**God was very angry with Asa and sent the prophet Hanani to speak to him.** God was very upset that Asa did not ask Him for help, but instead asked a foreign pagan king! He reminded Asa of the time God defeated a much larger foe, the Ethiopians, because Asa had relied upon God for help. **Since Asa acted foolishly, God determined that he would have wars for the rest of his reign!** Asa was so mad at what Hanani said, that he threw him in prison, and then began to oppress some of the people in his kingdom, probably those who agreed with Hanani.

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*2 Chronicles 16:9 "For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His..."*

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**Three years later, Asa fell ill to a very serious disease in his feet, probably gout. Never once did he cry out to God to heal him, but he consulted many physicians.** He died two years later from this disease. If Asa had humbled himself and asked the Lord for help, God would have helped him. It is amazing that a man who was so devoted to the Lord would stop seeking Him in the last five years of his life. **We must all strongly go after the Lord, all the years of our life!**

**Please read 1 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 17-20**

# Jehoshaphat

When King Asa died, **Jehoshaphat**, his 35 year old son, became the next king of Judah. **He was a good king, who did right in the sight of the Lord**, following in the example of King David. He took great pride in the ways of the Lord and encouraged everyone to follow the Lord their God. In his third year as king, **Jehoshaphat sent Levites throughout all the cities of Judah with the Book of the Law, to instruct all the people in the ways of the Lord.**<sup>4</sup> The king appointed judges in each city in the land of Judah, telling them to carefully observe the laws of God and have no part of unrighteousness.<sup>5</sup>

**Because of his obedience to God and His commands, the Lord strengthened Jehoshaphat's kingdom.** All the nations around Judah were terrified of Jehoshaphat because the hand of God was on him. They came with great treasures to ask the favor of Jehoshaphat, just like they did with Solomon. Judah prospered under his rule, and they gladly brought tribute money to their king. Jehoshaphat was greatly honored by all and became very wealthy. He built up cities all over his kingdom and put large amounts of supplies in them for the people and his soldiers. Jehoshaphat had a standing army of 1,160,000 soldiers, which were divided into five divisions.<sup>6</sup>

**Jehoshaphat allied himself to the Kingdom of Israel, by marrying one of King Ahab's daughters, which led to peace between Israel and Judah.** King Ahab then came and asked King Jehoshaphat if he would help him take back the city of Ramoth-gilead from the king of Aram. He agreed; but before they went to war, **he wanted to consult a prophet of God to make sure this was part of God's plan.** Ahab called for his 400 pagan prophets, who all said they should *"go up and fight Aram, and they would surely win"*. Jehoshaphat was not comfortable with these prophets, since they were not hearing from God, so he asked Ahab if he knew of a man who was a prophet of Jehovah. Ahab sent for **Micaiah**, even though he never liked what the man said to him. Micaiah said the Lord would *"give it into the hand of the king"*. Ahab pushed Micaiah for more information, since this prophecy was not clear which king would succeed. The prophet then recounted a vision he had from God, of God asking who would go and speak falsely to Ahab in order to get him to go to war. Amazingly enough, both kings decided to go to battle against the king of Aram. But King Ahab took extra precautions to ensure he was not killed in the war. He dressed as an ordinary soldier, and told Jehoshaphat to dress as the king. Needless to say, the Lord protected Jehoshaphat and he survived without a scratch, while the Lord proclaimed disaster upon Ahab, and he died from a random arrow shot at him.<sup>7</sup>

**Three kings from Moab, Ammon, and Edom (Mt. Seir) came to make war against Judah.** King Jehoshaphat was afraid **and immediately turned to the Lord in prayer and declared a fast** for the people of Judah. He prayed in front of all the people that he did not know what to do, but they

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<sup>4</sup> 2 Chronicles 19:7-9

<sup>5</sup> 2 Chronicles 19:5-11

<sup>6</sup> 2 Chronicles 17:14-19

<sup>7</sup> 1 Kings 22:2-37; 2 Chronicles 18

## Riches of God's Word

would keep their eyes upon God for He would deliver them. The prophet Jahaziel came to Jehoshaphat and said, *“Do not be afraid of these kings, for the battle is not your, but God’s”*. He told them where the enemy was camped and what they were to do. They were to go to the end of the valley in the wilderness of Jeruel, and stand and watch the Lord fight on their behalf. Jehoshaphat and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed down to the Lord and worshipped Him!

The next day they got up early and walked south about 12 miles to see what the Lord was going to do. Jehoshaphat told everyone if they put their trust in God, they would succeed! Singers led the way praising God, with the army following behind them. Everyone was singing, *“Give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness is everlasting.”* When they got to the place the Lord told them to go, they looked out and saw the ground was covered with dead bodies. The Lord had caused the armies of Moab and Ammon to fight against Edom. When Edom were destroyed, Moab and Ammon fought against each other until they had killed each other. The people with Jehoshaphat gathered spoils from the dead soldiers for three days, and then spent the fourth day praising the Lord! They returned home with great joy; singing and dancing all the way, knowing the Lord was with them!<sup>8</sup>

**Jehoshaphat kept on friendly terms with Ahab’s son and successor, Ahaziah. They went into a joint venture to build a fleet of ships** to sail to Ophir (Tarshish) for the sole purpose of getting gold. God destroyed these ships with a great storm. Ahaziah wanted to rebuild the ships, but Jehoshaphat knew that the hand of God had destroyed these ships, and he did not want to go against God.<sup>9</sup>

**Please read 2 Kings 8:16-24 and 2 Chronicles 21**

## Jehoram

Jehoshaphat died at the age of 60, and his oldest son **Jehoram**, who was 32, became the next king. **He was NOT a good king like his father and grandfather.** As soon as he became king, he killed his five brothers and some of the rulers in Israel, just to solidify his claim as king of Judah. He was married to one of Ahab’s daughter, and adopted her worship of baal and the false worship of Jeroboam! He did evil in the sight of the Lord.

**Elijah sent a letter to Jehoram with a dire message from the Lord.** *“Since he did not walk in the ways of his father and grandfather, but turned from the Lord and caused the people to worship false gods; and killed all his brothers who were better than him; **the Lord was going to strike him and his family with great calamity.**”* The Lord stirred up enemies on all sides, and they came and invaded Judah. They carried away all the king’s possessions and all his sons and wives, except for his youngest son, Ahaziah. After this happened, then the Lord smote Jehoram with a horrible bowel disease, and he died two painful years later. He reigned for only eight years, and no one mourned for him when he died.

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<sup>8</sup> 2 Chronicles 20:1-28

<sup>9</sup> 1 Kings 22:48-49; 2 Chronicles 20:35-37

**Please read 2 Kings 8:25-29; 2 Kings 9:21-28; and 2 Chronicles 22:1-9**

## Ahaziah

The inhabitants of Jerusalem made Jehoram's only surviving son, Ahaziah, king of Judah. He was twenty-two years old, and reigned for only one year. He was married to one of Ahab's descendants, who influenced him to worship baal. He was also counseled to do evil by his mother who was the granddaughter of Omri, the daughter of Ahab. He and Joram, the King of Israel, waged war against King Hazael of Aram. Joram was badly wounded and taken to Jezreel to be tended to. Ahaziah decided to go with him to see how he was doing. While there, the Lord stirred up Jehu to kill the remaining members of Ahab's descendants. Jehu killed Joram and also Ahaziah.

**Please read 2 Kings 11 and 2 Chronicles 22:10-23:15**

## Queen Athaliah

When Ahaziah's mother, Athaliah, saw that her son was dead, she killed all the royal offspring of Judah, except one. Jehoshabeath, the king's sister, took Joash, who was one year old, and hid him and his nurse for six years. During that time, **Athaliah ruled as Queen of Judah.**

**Please read 2 Kings 11-12 and 2 Chronicles 23-24**

## Joash

Jehoshabeath and her husband Jehoiada, the priest, protected Joash from his grandmother. Jehoiada strengthened himself and surrounded himself with many soldiers and made a covenant with them. They wanted to appoint Joash king and get rid of Queen Athaliah. **When Joash was seven years old, they took him to the temple and put a crown on his head, gave him the law of God, and made him king.** All the people who were gathered around him yelled out, "*Long live the King*". The queen heard the noise and went to discover what was going on. When she saw the seven-year old Joash with a crown on his head, she tore her clothes shouting, "*Treason, treason!*" Jehoiada commanded his army to take the queen out of the temple. They killed her at the horse gate near the King's palace.

**Jehoiada made a covenant between himself, all the people, and the king, to be the Lord's people.** All the people went to the house of baal and tore it down, and **completely destroyed all forms of pagan worship in Judah.** Jehoiada restored the temple, with burnt offerings and singing as King David had ordered. All the people of Judah were so glad to be rid of Queen Athaliah, and to have Joash as their new king. **Joash did what was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest, who served as his main advisor.**

In the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of Joash's reign<sup>10</sup>, he decided **the temple needed to be restored**. He asked the priests and Levites to go to all the cities of Judah and collect money from the people for the restoration. When they did not follow out his order quickly, he summoned the high priest, questioning why they were not collecting the tithe that Moses had set up for all his people for the upkeep of the temple. **They set up a collection box in front of the temple and sent a proclamation throughout the land for all the people to bring their prescribed tithe to the temple. The people gladly came and brought their money.** Soon the temple was fully functioning as God had instructed David. This continued all the days of Jehoiada, until he died at the age of 130. He was so honored by the people and King Joash, that the priest was buried with the kings of Judah.

After the death of Jehoiada, officials of Judah came to the king and he went along with what they said. **They wanted to abandon their worship of God and serve the asherim and the idols of the lands around them.** God's wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem because of this. The Lord sent prophets to them to turn them back to Him, but they would not listen. Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada. He spoke to the people, *"Why do you transgress the commandments of the Lord? Because you have forsaken the Lord, He has also forsaken you!"* The people conspired against Zechariah, and stoned him to death at the command of King Joash.

At the end of that year, the Lord helped a small army of the Arameans execute His judgment on Joash and his officials. They destroyed all the king's officials and took great spoils from Jerusalem. Joash was left in Jerusalem, but he was very sick. **His servants murdered him while he was sick, to avenge the death of Zechariah.** Joash reigned for 40 years; most of which were pleasing to the Lord during the years that Jehoiada was alive. **It is such a tragedy that Joash turned from God at the end of his life.**

**Please read 2 Kings 14 and 2 Chronicles 25**

### Amaziah

Joash's 25 year old son Amaziah, became the next king of Judah, and he reigned for 29 years. **He was a good king who did right in the sight of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart.** He did not take down all the pagan high places of worship and allowed the people to worship foreign gods. Shortly after he became king, he ordered the killing of all the servants who had killed his father.

**King Amaziah was a military king.** He took a census of all the men in Judah for the purposes of identifying all the choice men over the age of twenty. He ended up drafting 300,000 valiant men in to his army and then hired 100,000 mercenaries from Israel. A prophet came to the king and told him the Lord did not want him to hire soldiers from Israel, because He was not with Israel. *"But if you insist on having them in your army, I will cause you to be defeated."* Wisely, King Amaziah

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<sup>10</sup> 2 Kings 12:6

dismissed the soldiers, who returned home with fierce anger towards Judah.<sup>11</sup> Over the years they carried out many raids against the border cities in Judah killing 3000 people and taking much loot.<sup>12</sup>

Amaziah took his 300,000 men and invaded Edom, and killed 20,000 of the men of Seir. Afterwards, he took their idols and set them up as his gods. The anger of the Lord burned against Amaziah, and He sent a prophet to speak to him. **The prophet said, “What are you doing worshipping the idols of the people you just defeated, instead of the God who helped you win?”**<sup>13</sup> The king refused to listen to the prophet of God. He then told the king that **God would destroy him because of this idolatrous act.**

Instead of listening to the prophet of God, Amaziah listened to the counsel of the men around him, and decided to invade Israel instead. King Joash of Israel send messages to King Amaziah saying I know your heart is full of pride from your victory over Edom, but you need to stay home. If you insist on fighting against us, you will lose. But Amaziah would not listen to Joash; for **God had hardened his heart, so he would be punished for his idolatry.**<sup>14</sup> Israel attacked Judah, and was defeated. Amaziah was taken captive and brought to Jerusalem. Israel tore down 600 feet of the wall around Jerusalem; and they took much gold and silver from the temple and the king’s palace. Amaziah was left in Jerusalem, but many of the men of the city were angry at his idolatry, and conspired against him. He sought safety in the city of Lachish, but was followed and killed there.

**Please read 2 Chronicles 26.**

## Uzziah

The people of Judah took Amaziah’s 16 year old son, Uzziah, and made him their next king. He reigned for 52 years and was a good king. He did right in the sight of the Lord, and sought the Lord through the visions of the prophet Zechariah, who instructed Uzziah in how to fear the Lord his God. **King Uzziah loved the land of Judah, and spent much of his reign rebuilding the land** that had suffered under Amaziah’s reign. He oversaw repairs to the wall around Jerusalem, fortifying it with towers. He helped the farmers and the herders by building watchtowers throughout the land, and digging many cisterns to hold water reservoirs for the people, land, and animals.<sup>15</sup> He even built the seaside town of Eliat, which still stands on the shore of the Red Sea in Israel.<sup>16</sup>

**King Uzziah built a large army, with an extensive arsenal to equip the soldiers.** He had skillful men invent new devices of war, like the catapult, which made him very successful against all

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<sup>11</sup> 2 Chronicles 25:6-10

<sup>12</sup> 2 Chronicles 25:13

<sup>13</sup> 2 Chronicles 25:15

<sup>14</sup> 2 Chronicles 25:20

<sup>15</sup> 2 Chronicles 26:10

<sup>16</sup> 2 Chronicles 26:2

enemies.<sup>17</sup> They were able to wage war with great power against the Philistines, who in the past had been very difficult to defeat. His army was able to defeat them and capture much of their land, so he was able to build cities in their midst. God was with him in his wars against the Philistines, Arabians, and the Meunites. Many nations paid tribute money to Uzziah, and Judah became very strong and well respected among the nations of the earth.

His fame spread throughout the earth, but so did his pride; and King Uzziah acted corruptly and was unfaithful to the Lord his God. **One day he decided that he wanted to go into the Holy Place of the temple, and offer up prayers and incense on the golden altar.** The high priest, Azariah, and eighty other priests saw Uzziah enter the temple with a golden censor full of hot coals in one hand and a plate of incense in the other hand. They ran after King Uzziah, trying to get him to leave since only consecrated priests were allowed to go into the Holy Place and burn incense. King Uzziah was furious that the priests would dare to deny him anything. **As soon as he turned and began to yell at the priests to leave him alone, leprosy broke out on his face.** At the same time, a very strong earthquake struck the city of Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup> The king and all the priests were horrified by what had happened. The priests quickly helped the terrified king, and they all ran out of the temple.<sup>19</sup> When we read stories from the Bible like this, we are reminded that we must be careful to enter into God's presence with reverence every time, and not be casual about it. Now that Uzziah had leprosy, he immediately had to give up his throne. Jewish law required lepers to live separate from other people, because the disease was very contagious. Uzziah had to live in a separate house for 8-10 years before he died, and was forbidden from coming near the temple again.

**Please read 2 Kings 15:32-38 and 2 Chronicles 27.**

### Jotham

The day King Uzziah was struck with leprosy, his 25 year old son, Jotham took over his duties as king, and he reigned for 16 years. He followed the Lord in the ways of his father, but he did not stop the people of Judah from acting corruptly with their idols. He had a lot of building projects throughout the land of Judah that were good for the people. His army fought against the Ammonites and won, forcing the Ammonites to pay a large amount of tribute (silver and grain) to him every year. **Because he ordered his ways before the Lord his God, he was known as a good and mighty king**

**Please read 2 Kings 16 and 2 Chronicles 28.**

### Ahaz

When King Jotham died, his 20 year old son, Ahaz, became king. He reigned for 16 years. **He did NOT follow the Lord, but sacrificed to numerous foreign gods and idols, even sacrificing some of his sons by fire.**<sup>20</sup> Because of his

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<sup>17</sup> 2 Chronicles 26:11-15

<sup>18</sup> Amos 1:1; Zechariah 14:5

<sup>19</sup> 2 Chronicles 26:16-23

<sup>20</sup> 2 Kings 16:3-4; 2 Chronicles 28:2-4

detestable idolatrous ways, the Lord delivered him into the hands of the kings of Israel and Aram. **King Pekah of Israel conspired with King Rezin of Aram to fight against King Ahaz of Judah,** and he was defeated by them raid after raid. Over the years, Israel and Aram killed 120,000 soldiers in Judah's army, along with one of Ahaz's sons and several high officials of Ahaz. They took the city of Eliat on the Red Sea, along with a great amount of wealth from the people of Judah.

Some of the sons of Israel carried away over 200,000 women and children to be sold as slaves. A prophet by the name of **Obed** met the army from Samaria and **told them the anger of the Lord would burn fiercely against them if they took their brethren as slaves.** Some of the sons of Ephraim (Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai) believed the prophet, and convinced the soldiers to return the captives to Judah. These men, who were called by name, took the captives and saw to their needs of clothing and shoes, food and drink, and even transportation of those who were too weak to walk. They were taken to their brothers in Jericho.<sup>21</sup> It is odd that these men's names were written down, and then referred to again as men who were designated by name. Remember when you see a list of names that seem out of place in the story line, stop and do some research in to the meanings of their names. Often, the Lord has a **hidden message for us to discover and be encouraged.**

Azariah - God has surrounded and helped  
Johanan - God has stooped over to see and shown favor  
Berechiah - Kneel before God to receive a blessing  
Meshillemoth - reconciliation, to bring peace  
Jehizkiah - strengthened by God  
Shallum - recompense, reward, requital  
Amasa - load, burden  
Hadlai - rest

*When we listen to the voice of God, He will surround us and give us the help we need. He has bent over to show favor to us. As we kneel before His blessing, He will bring us reconciliation and peace. He will strengthen us and bring us a reward. He will take and carry our burdens so we can have rest.*

**Pekah and Rezin continued their battles against Judah, and sent a message to Ahaz.** They were coming tear down the walls of Jerusalem, terrorize and capture the people and all the land of Judah. The prophet Isaiah came to King Ahaz and told him "***not to be afraid of these two stubs of smoldering firebrands on the verge of being extinguished.***" Even though they had devised evil plans against Judah and had much success in the past, this time they would not succeed<sup>22</sup>. King Ahaz heard this great prophecy that God would protect Judah from King Rezin of Aram, but because

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<sup>21</sup> 2 Chronicles 28:8-15

<sup>22</sup> Isaiah 7:1-8

of his lack devotion to God, he decided to take things in to his own hands. **Ahaz approached the Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser III, and offered to pay him a large quantity of silver and gold from the temple to go to war against King Rezin of Aram.** The Assyrians took the money and went into Damascus and destroyed the city. King Rezin was killed and the people were all captured and taken into exile in Kir.<sup>23</sup>

King Ahaz traveled to Damascus to meet with the Assyrian king after their great victory. **He saw the altar that the Arameans built at their temple and wanted one just like it.** He ordered a drawing made of it so he could have this altar put in the temple in Jerusalem, to replace the bronze altar. He had Urijah, the high priest, make this pagan altar and place it where the Bronze altar had always been located. He had them move the bronze altar and the brass laver out of the way; and to make room for his great altar, he ordered that the stands for the original pieces be sawed off and laid them directly on the pavement. He instructed the high priest to offer all sacrifices on his new altar, and unfortunately the priest agreed!<sup>24</sup> He closed down the worship by the priests in the Holy place, so that the lights in the Golden lampstand were extinguished and no incense was burned on the golden altar.<sup>25</sup>

**The Lord continued to humble Judah because Ahaz had brought about a lack of restraint in Judah and was very unfaithful to the Lord.** He allowed Judah to be attacked by Edom, the Philistines, and even the Assyrians, who were once their allies. **Instead of repenting of his sins, Ahaz became more unfaithful to God.** He took up the worship of the gods of Damascus, he took the utensils from the temple and cut them to pieces, closed the doors to the temple, and made altars for himself in every corner of Jerusalem. He provoked the Lord to great anger.<sup>26</sup>

**Please read 2 Kings 18-20, 2 Chronicles 29-32, and Isaiah 36-39**

## Hezekiah

After Ahaz died, his 25 year old son Hezekiah became the next king of Judah, and he reigned for 29 years. **He did right in the sight of the Lord and worshiped the Lord his God, as King David did.** He reopened the Temple which his father had closed down. He gathered up the priests in Judah and had them consecrate themselves for the work of cleansing the temple of all idolatry and mixture. Hezekiah repented for his father's sins of leading the people of Judah astray. He urged the people to join him in making a covenant of faithfulness to God, so His anger would turn from them! After 16 days, the Temple was restored and sacrifices were once again offered on the Bronze altar. The

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<sup>23</sup> 2 Kings 16:5-9

<sup>24</sup> 2 Kings 16:10-16

<sup>25</sup> 2 Chronicles 29:7

<sup>26</sup> 2 Chronicles 28:19-25

Levites led in worship as the offerings were presented to the Lord. Everyone who was gathered at the temple bowed down in worship to the Lord.<sup>27</sup>

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**2 Chronicles 31:20-21** *“Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah; and he did what was good, right and true before the Lord his God. Every work which he began in the service of the house of God in law and in commandment, seeking his God, he did with all his heart and prospered.”*

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Hezekiah sent letters to everyone in Judah, and to the remnant of Israel that had escaped Assyrian captivity; **inviting them all to come and celebrate Passover**. Passover had not been celebrated since the days of Solomon.<sup>28</sup> Most of the remnant scorned and mocked his invitation, but a few men from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. In preparation for the Passover, the people of Jerusalem removed all pagan altars in their city. The priests and the Levites consecrated themselves and stood at their stations, according to the Law of Moses. Hezekiah prayed for God to pardon those who had come to celebrate, but did not know about God’s laws of purification. All the people ended up celebrating Passover for two weeks because they were enjoying the presence of God so much. At the end, the Levitical priests blessed the people, and their prayers were heard in heaven!<sup>29</sup>

Between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> years of Hezekiah’s reign, the Northern Kingdom of Israel was under siege and then carried away into captivity by Assyria.<sup>30</sup> **Eight years later, King Sennacherib of Assyria decided he wanted to conquer Judah.** King Hezekiah made many preparations for war in Jerusalem. He ordered:

- the water supply that came from springs inside the city to be cut off outside the city walls, so the people of Jerusalem would have water, but the Assyrians would not
- the walls of the city to be strengthened and to build fortified towers
- his military officers to encourage the people of Jerusalem that the One true God who was with them, was greater than the one with the Assyrians<sup>31</sup>

King Sennacherib sent messages to the inhabitants of Jerusalem to tell them to give up. He said that no one had been able to resist his forces, and no gods had been able to save the people who served them. He mocked God, saying He would be no different. Sennacherib went on and on to tell the people that they were foolish if they believed the lies that Hezekiah was speaking about God! **This discourse was recorded in great detail in three different books in the Bible: 2 Kings 18-19,**

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<sup>27</sup> 2 Chronicles 29

<sup>28</sup> 2 Chronicles 30:26

<sup>29</sup> 2 Chronicles 30

<sup>30</sup> 2 Kings 18:10

<sup>31</sup> 2 Chronicles 32:1-8

**2 Chronicles 32, and Isaiah 36-37.** King Hezekiah was very upset by Sennacherib's blasphemous words. He tore his clothes and put on sackcloth, sent for the prophet Isaiah, and headed to the temple to hear from God. Isaiah said, *"Do not be afraid of Sennacherib, for I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to Assyria, where he will die!"*

**Hezekiah was encouraged by these words and prayed to God to completely deliver them from the Assyrians, so the whole world will know that He alone is God!** The Lord heard his prayer, and said He would defend Jerusalem for His own sake and for the sake of King David. That night, the angel of the Lord went out and struck 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. King Sennacherib left Judah and went back to Nineveh. When he got home, the king went into the temple of his god, Nisroch, to worship him. Two of his sons were waiting for him, and they killed him.<sup>32</sup> Isaiah's prophesy came to pass!

Shortly after this great deliverance by the Lord, Hezekiah became mortally ill. Isaiah came to him and told him he would die of this illness.<sup>33</sup> Hezekiah prayed for the Lord to change His mind and heal him; reminding the Lord that he had walked before Him in truth with his whole heart, and had done well in His sight. As Isaiah was leaving the King's palace, the Lord spoke to him, and told him to go back and tell Hezekiah that the Lord had heard his prayer and would heal him. He then asked the king to ask Him for a sign. Hezekiah asked the Lord to send the shadow on the stairs backwards ten steps- meaning he wanted the sun to go backwards for a time (about 30 minutes). God gave him this sign, and Hezekiah was healed and lived for another 15 years.<sup>34</sup>

At this same time, Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, the king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah for he heard that he had been very ill and had recovered. The Babylonians had always had a fascination with astronomy, and they probably had heard that Hezekiah had something to do with the sun going backwards when he was sick. The Lord sent this Babylonian prince as a test of Hezekiah's heart,<sup>35</sup> and we will see he did not pass the test. They struck up a friendship, and **when Merodach-baladan was visiting him, Hezekiah showed him all his treasures and his whole armory.** Hezekiah was proud of all he had accomplished and all he owned. There was nothing that he did not show him. Isaiah heard of this visit, and chastised the King for his foolishness. The Babylonians were gaining world prominence, and Isaiah prophesied that Israel would be defeated by Babylon in the future (about 90 years later). He told the king that his relatives would be taken to Babylon as slaves. Hezekiah was not bothered by this prophecy, because it would not affect him.<sup>36</sup> Again, pride took its toll on another good king towards the end of his life. Hezekiah died when he was 54, and all Judah mourned his death.

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<sup>32</sup> 2 Kings 19:35-37

<sup>33</sup> Isaiah 38:1

<sup>34</sup> 2 Kings 20:1-11

<sup>35</sup> 2 Chronicles 32:31

<sup>36</sup> 2 Kings 20:12-19, Isaiah 39

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

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1. In the back of this book on pages 221-222 is a chart of the Kings of Judah. Please fill in the information about the kings we discussed in this chapter.

2. What part did Rehoboam play in the division of the nation of Israel?

3. Read the book of the prophet Hosea.  
What kings reigned when he was a prophet?

What did God ask of Hosea?

What point was God trying to make with Hosea's actions?

4. Read the book of the prophet Amos.  
What kings reigned when he was a prophet?

What phrase did God repeat in the first two chapters of Amos, and who is he speaking about?

In chapters 3-6, God is speaking against Israel. What is He saying in these chapters?

In the last three chapters, God showed Amos visions. What did he see and what did they mean?

What warning did God give to Israel?

# 15

## End of Judah Draws Near

Please read **2 Kings 21:1-18** and **2 Chronicles 33:1-20**

### Manasseh

Hezekiah's 12 year old son became the next king of Judah. Although he ruled for 55 years, **Manasseh was NOT a good king. He did great evil in the sight of the Lord; and greatly provoked the Lord to anger.** Here is a summary of what the Lord had against Manasseh:

- he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed
- he erected altars for baal and made an asherah
- he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them (astrology)
- he built pagan altars in the Lord's Temple
- he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the Lord's Temple
- he made his son pass through fire
- he practiced witchcraft and used divination, and consulted with mediums and spiritists
- he put a carved image of asherah that he had made, in the Lord 's Temple
- he seduced the people of Judah to do evil more than all the nations the Lord had destroyed

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*Jeremiah 15:4 "I will make them an object of horror among all the kingdoms of the earth because of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, the king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem."*

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**God send several prophets to talk to Manasseh and the people of Judah,** but they would not listen. Jewish tradition says that **Manasseh had Isaiah killed,** by sawing him in half. In the Faith Hall of Fame in Hebrews, it mentions that some of the men of God were sawn in two.<sup>37</sup> This can be further backed up by the passage in **2 Kings 21:16** that "*Manasseh shed very much innocent blood until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another.*"

**God spoke judgment against the Southern Kingdom of Judah,** just as He did to the Northern Kingdom. Even though the people of Judah had seen the consequences of their brother's idolatry

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<sup>37</sup> Hebrews 11:37

and rebellion against God, they still refused to repent of their own pagan ways. God told them He was going to “*wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down*”. Even though it brought Him sorrow, God was going to abandon the remnant of His inheritance in the Promised Land; and deliver them into the hands of their enemies to be plundered and killed.<sup>38</sup> God also spoke through **Jeremiah** that He was going to bring four kinds of doom against Judah: “*the sword to slay, the dogs to drag off, and the birds of the sky, and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy*”.<sup>39</sup>

God had had enough of Manasseh’s blatant rebellion and gross idolatry, so He brought the Assyrian army against Jerusalem. **They captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with bronze chains and took him to Babylon** (the supposed friends of his father). While he was there, he cried out to the God of his fathers with great humility. His prayer must have been genuine, because it moved the Lord to rescue him. Manasseh was brought back to Jerusalem and reinstated as the King of Judah, knowing that it was **only by the grace of God!**<sup>40</sup> We need to know that God will do whatever is necessary to get our attention so we too will get to know Him personally!

**When Manasseh returned to Jerusalem, he became a new man.** He removed the foreign gods and idols from the temple, and all the altars he had built in Jerusalem. He put the temple back in order, and commanded the people to serve the God of Israel. He repaired some of the cities in his kingdom, and put army commanders throughout his land to protect the people of Judah. **It is refreshing to see this king became a good king at the end of his life.**

**Please read 2 Kings 21:18-26 and 2 Chronicles 33:21-25**

### Amon

When Manasseh died, his 22 year old son, **Amon**, became the next king and he reigned for two years. **He did evil in the sight of God** as his father had by sacrificing to carved images and serving them, but he did not humble himself as Hezekiah did. Finally his servants had had enough of him, and they killed him in his own house. The people of Jerusalem rose up and killed all of the servants who had conspired against their king.

**Please read 2 Kings 22-23:30 and 2 Chronicles 34-35**

### Josiah

After the murder of Amon, the people of Judah made his eight year old son, **Josiah**, their next king. He reigned for 31 years. When he was 16, he began to seek the Lord.<sup>41</sup> **He was a good king** who walked in the ways of King David, and did not turn aside from God.

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<sup>38</sup> 2 Kings 21:12-14

<sup>39</sup> Jeremiah 15:3

<sup>40</sup> 2 Chronicles 33:11-13

<sup>41</sup> 2 Chronicles 34:3

**When he was 26, Josiah ordered the temple to be restored.** In the midst of the cleanup and repairs, the High Priest, Hilkiah, found the book of the Law of God that Moses had written. He gave it to the King's scribe, Shaphan, to read what it contained. He took it to the King and read it to him. **When Josiah heard the words of God, he humbled himself and tore his clothes in repentance for himself and his people.** He realized that neither they nor their ancestors had listened to the words of God, and they certainly had not done what He asked.<sup>42</sup> He understood that God was a righteous judge, and they all deserved the wrath of God to fall on them. He ordered his advisors to go talk to Huldah, the prophetess who lived in Jerusalem. She told these men to tell the man who sent them that God would bring the judgment He promised for disobedience on the land of Judah.

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*2 Kings 22:17 "Because they have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods that they might provoke Me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore My wrath burns against this place, and it shall not be quenched."*

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Then Huldah spoke a word from God directly to Josiah. God was moved by his humble and tender heart towards God. He promised that there would be peace in the land of Judah all the days of Josiah, and he would not see the evil which the Lord was going to bring to Judah.<sup>43</sup>

The king called all the elders of Judah to meet with him at the temple in Jerusalem; along with all the priests, prophets, and inhabitants of Jerusalem. He read all of the Book of the Law to them. Afterwards, **he made a covenant before the Lord to walk in all his ways, and to keep His commandments, testimonies, and statutes with all his heart and soul.** All the people were moved and entered into the covenant with the Lord!

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*2 Kings 23:25 "Before him (Josiah) there was no king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him."*

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**Josiah then commanded the priests to remove every bit of idol worship** from the temple and burn it outside the city, and then take the ashes to Bethel, ten miles away. He did away with all the idolatrous priests whom the previous kings had put into place in Judah. **He destroyed every form of idol worship in Judah:**<sup>44</sup>

- tore down the altars of baal
- ground all idols to powder and scatted it on the graves of those who worshipped these idols
- destroyed the asherah

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<sup>42</sup> 2 Kings 22:13

<sup>43</sup> 2 Kings 22:18-20

<sup>44</sup> 2 Kings 23:4-14

- broke down all the houses of the male cult prostitutes which were in the temple
- defiled all the high places around Judah and the places where they sacrificed children
- did away with the horses the kings had dedicated to the sun and their chariots
- smashed all pagan altars various kings had erected
- broke all the sacred pillars
- filled the places of pagan worship with dead bones to defile them
- removed all mediums and spiritists
- destroyed all idols

**Josiah was not content to remove all idolatry just from Judah, he even went into Israel.** Even though this land was in the control of Assyria, he was determined to remove all the idolatry that the people of Israel had erected. He went first to Bethel, and destroyed the altar that Jeroboam had made when he instituted his own religion in Israel, grinding the stones to dust. He then took bones from nearby graves and burned them. He put their ashes on the spot of the pagan altar to defile it. There was a grave of a prophet of God nearby that they did not touch, because he had prophesied to Jeroboam that a king would come in the future, named Josiah, who would destroy and defile his altar. Josiah removed all the high places in Samaria, and killed all the pagan priests who were still there. He burned their bones, and put the ashes on top of ruins of the pagan altar to defile them forever!<sup>45</sup>

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*1Kings 13:1-2 Now behold, there came a man of God from Judah to Bethel by the word of the Lord, while Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense. He cried against the altar by the word of the Lord, and said, "O altar, altar, thus says the Lord, 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, **Josiah** by name; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.'"*

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Two years after the Book of the Law had been found, and the cleansing of the temple and land began, Josiah commanded all the people to gather in Jerusalem to celebrate the Lord's Passover. He set the priests, Levites, and singers in their places in the temple. 37,000 lambs and 3,800 bulls were offered as sacrifices during Passover that year.<sup>46</sup> It was the greatest Passover ever celebrated in Jerusalem.

For the next eleven years, the people of Judah flourished because of their devotion to the Lord. God was very pleased with them, but He knew rebellion and judgment were coming soon. Little did Josiah know that it would be coming very soon.

When Josiah was 39, after he had been king for 31 years, there was a war between Egypt and Assyria. **Pharaoh Neco of Egypt was passing through the land of Judah on his way to Assyria.**

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<sup>45</sup> 2 Kings 23:15-20

<sup>46</sup> 2 Chronicles 35:7-9

Josiah mistakenly thought he was coming to fight against Judah. Pharaoh Neco sent him a message saying he had no intention of fighting against Judah, for he was on his way to battle Assyria. He said, ***“God has ordered me to hurry to Assyria. For your sake, stop interfering with God, who is with me.”*** God was using Pharaoh Neco to carry out His judgment on Assyria for how they had treated Israel. Unfortunately Josiah did not listen to Pharaoh Neco. We don't know why he didn't believe the sincere words of the Pharaoh. Maybe Josiah could not believe that God would speak to a pagan king of Egypt to do His bidding. King Josiah called his soldiers to engage in battle with the Egyptian king, and he even went with them. During the battle, Josiah was shot with an arrow and badly wounded. He ordered his servants to take him back to Jerusalem, where he died and was buried.<sup>47</sup> All Judah mourned for their beloved king! The prophet Jeremiah even chanted a lamentation for Josiah, who should have heeded the wisdom in Proverbs.

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**Proverbs 3:30** *“Do not contend with a man without cause, if he has done you no harm.”*

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### Jehoahaz

The people of Judah took Josiah's 23 year old son, **Jehoahaz**, and anointed him as their next king. **He did evil in the sight of the Lord**, by following in the ways of idolatry of his ancestors. He only reigned for three months, and was removed from being king by Pharaoh Neco, the same man who killed his father. When Jehoahaz was taken captive, the prophet **Jeremiah** said that he would not return to Judah, but he would die in captivity in another land.<sup>48</sup> Jehoahaz was taken to Egypt, where he died in an Egyptian prison.<sup>49</sup>

### Jehoiakim

Pharaoh Neco put Jehoahaz's older brother (by a different mother),<sup>50</sup> Eliakim, on the throne of Judah, and changed his name to **Jehoiakim**. He reigned as king of Judah for 11 years, and he too **did evil in the sight of the Lord**. During that time, the Egyptian Pharaoh imposed a huge fine on Judah of 100 talents of silver and 1 talent of gold; which King Jehoiakim commanded the people of Judah to pay each year. God sent bands of Babylonians, Arameans, Moabites, and Ammonites against Judah to get them to call upon Him for help.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> 2 Chronicles 35:20-24

<sup>48</sup> Jeremiah 22:11-12

<sup>49</sup> 2 Kings 23:30-35; 2 Chronicles 36:1-3

<sup>50</sup> 2 Kings 23:36

<sup>51</sup> 2 Kings 24:2

God also sent the **prophet Jeremiah** to call the people of Judah to repentance. Jeremiah told them if they did not repent and turn from their wicked and idolatrous ways, they would surely go into the shame and humility of captivity like their brothers in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.<sup>52</sup> The prophet Jeremiah had been speaking to the people of Judah since the time of Josiah, but again and again they did not listen to what he had spoken from the Lord! Out of God's love for his people, he sent warnings to them over and over again.<sup>53</sup> Almighty God prolonged the Babylonian conquest of Judah for 19 years, in three sieges; just to get the attention of His people. He wanted his people to repent, so He could relent of judgment. Jeremiah told the people that God was going to send King Nebuchadnezzar, His servant, to utterly destroy the land of Judah; which He would leave desolate for 70 years.<sup>54</sup>

## Jeremiah

After these repeated prophecies, the priests, false prophets, and the people wanted Jeremiah thrown into prison. They even spoke of killing him, **but Jeremiah kept prophesying**, telling the people of the coming judgment, and their opportunity to repent. Some of the officials and people pleaded with the priests and false prophets to not kill Jeremiah, because they knew that he had spoken to them from God.<sup>55</sup>

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***Jeremiah 26:13** "Now therefore, amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; then the Lord will relent concerning the doom that He has pronounced against you."*

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**The Lord instructed Jeremiah to write down all the words God had spoken to him concerning Israel, Judah, and the nations around them.** Jeremiah asked a scribe named Baruch to come and write down all that he dictated to him on a scroll. Then he commanded him to go and read these words to the people, since he was not able to freely walk around the temple area. Again God was giving the people another chance to repent and turn to Him. King Jehoiakim heard about the scroll and ordered it to be brought to him and read. When just a few lines were read, the king took a knife and cut the scroll into pieces and then tossed it into the fire. He commanded his son to go and seize Jeremiah and Baruch; but the Lord hid them, and they were safe. Jeremiah took another scroll and dictated the same prophecies again to Baruch.<sup>56</sup>

**During King Jehoiakim's reign, in 605BC, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came against Judah.** Jehoiakim agreed to pay him tribute; but he soon rebelled against him and stopped sending the money. In response, King Nebuchadnezzar sent his army to Jerusalem and after a prolonged

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<sup>52</sup> Jeremiah 22:18-30

<sup>53</sup> Jeremiah 26:1-6; Jeremiah 36

<sup>54</sup> Jeremiah 25:1-11

<sup>55</sup> Jeremiah 26:16-24

<sup>56</sup> Jeremiah 36

siege, he broke into Jerusalem and captured the king and many sons of the officials in Jerusalem. They were all bound with chains and taken to Babylon. **Daniel and his friends were taken to Babylon at this time.**<sup>57</sup> The Babylonians also carried away some of the silver and gold articles of the Temple, and put them in a pagan temple in Babylon. After the king was taken into Babylon, the prophet Jeremiah spoke to the people of Judah. He told them to not lament for their king, because he had not obeyed the voice of God, but neither had they.<sup>58</sup>

**Jehoiachin** Jehoiakim's eighteen year old son, Jehoiachin, became the next king. He did evil in the sight of the Lord. King Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem again, and laid siege to it shortly after Jehoiachin had become king. After three months and ten days as king, he and his mother, along with his servants, captains, and officials surrendered to King Nebuchadnezzar. **This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> siege of Jerusalem by Babylon, and it occurred in 597BC.** Jeremiah had prophesied against King Jehoiachin (whom Jeremiah called Coniah), telling him that he would be a man who did not prosper in his days, and no descendant of his would prosper either.<sup>59</sup>

The Babylonians took all the treasures of the Temple and the king's house. They took all the golden objects in the Temple, and cut them into pieces. The king and ten thousand mighty men of valor were taken captive, along all the craftsmen and metal workers in Judah. The king's mother, the king's wives, his officers, and **all the mighty of the land were taken to Babylon, leaving none but the poorest people of the land of Judah.**<sup>60</sup>

It is interesting to note that the Babylonians did not kill Jehoiachin, but threw him in prison. After he had been imprisoned for 37 years, a new king came to power in Babylon by the name of Evil-Merodach. He released Jehoiachin and brought him to live in his palace. He was given a prominent seat at his table and was treated very well for the rest of his life.<sup>61</sup>

**Zedekiah** King Nebuchadnezzar made 21-year old Mattaniah the next (and last) king of Judah. He was the uncle of Jehoiachin and the son of Josiah (he was 9 when his father died). It is interesting to note that he was renamed **Zedekiah** by king Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah means "*God is righteous*". Do you think King Nebuchadnezzar understood the righteous judgment God was bringing on the land of Judah by his hands? He had known Daniel for several years and would have heard about God's reasons for Judah's captivity.

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<sup>57</sup> Daniel 1:1-7

<sup>58</sup> Jeremiah 22:18-23

<sup>59</sup> Jeremiah 22:24-30

<sup>60</sup> 2 Kings 24:13-16

<sup>61</sup> 2 Kings 25:27-30

Zedekiah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not humble himself before the words the Lord spoke to him through Jeremiah.<sup>62</sup> All his officials, priests, and subjects were very unfaithful to God and defiled the Temple of God!

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*2 Chronicles 36:15-16 "The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, until there was no remedy."*

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**The Lord knew the end of Judah was drawing very near, so he sent Jeremiah with another message to prepare His people for bondage.** Even though He was sending judgment to them, He still loved them so much that He wanted to save their lives. **God told Jeremiah to go around the streets of Jerusalem with an ox yoke on his shoulders, telling the people of the coming bondage to the Babylonians.** He told them if they submitted to the yoke of the king of Babylon, and served him, they would live. He told them there were many false prophets in the land saying they were to resist the Babylonians, but Jeremiah told them these prophets were speaking lies.<sup>63</sup>

King Zedekiah hated Jeremiah's prophecies, and accused him of being for the Babylonians. **He had Jeremiah arrested and put in the dungeon** that was in the house of Jonathan the scribe. After several days, the king took him out of his dungeon and had him brought to him. He asked him, **"Do you have a word from the Lord?"** Jeremiah said he did. He told the king that he would be given into the hands of the king of Babylon. Jeremiah pleaded with the king to not send him back to the dungeon, because he had done nothing wrong. The king compromised and sent him to the court of the guardhouse, and made sure he was fed every day.<sup>64</sup>

Some officials were still irate at the prophecies of Jeremiah and **demanding Jeremiah be put to death.** The king let them take Jeremiah, and they threw him into the cistern in the court of the guardhouse where he was staying. Thankfully there was no water in the cistern, but there was mud at the bottom, and Jeremiah sank in the mud. A man from Ethiopia named Ebed-melech took pity on Jeremiah, and **asked the king to not let him die there.** The king authorized him to take 30 men and pull Jeremiah out of the muddy cistern by ropes.<sup>65</sup>

King Zedekiah once again called for Jeremiah and asked him to tell him what God was saying. Jeremiah told him he and his people would survive if they did not rebel or fight against Babylon. **Jeremiah begged the king to obey the Lord so it would go well with him.** He warned him if he did not listen to the Lord, he would not escape, and Jerusalem would be burned! The king told

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<sup>62</sup> 2 Chronicles 36:12

<sup>63</sup> Jeremiah 27:1-17

<sup>64</sup> Jeremiah 37:13-21

<sup>65</sup> Jeremiah 38:1-13

Jeremiah not to speak of this to anyone, and sent him back to the court of the guardhouse, until the day Jerusalem was captured.<sup>66</sup>

King Zedekiah had sworn allegiance to Babylon by the name of God. He kept this vow for nine years, and then he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against God, **causing him to rebel against king Nebuchadnezzar**. In 588 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar ordered the attack of Jerusalem. For two years, the armies of Babylon surrounded Jerusalem and laid siege to it. Finally the people ran out of food, and the Babylonians were able to break through the walls of Jerusalem. All the men of war in Jerusalem ran out of the city and left the people helpless. The Babylonian army pursued these deserters and overtook them near Jericho.

King Zedekiah had left Jerusalem with his army, and was captured near Jericho, along with his sons. The Babylonians killed all his sons before his eyes, and then blinded him. He was then bound in bronze chains and taken to Babylon.<sup>67</sup> King Nebuchadnezzar victoriously rode into Jerusalem. The remaining people of Jerusalem ran into the temple for safety. The Babylonians broke down the doors and killed all the people hiding there, men, women, and children, having no compassion on anyone! They took everything of value that had been left in the temple. The few people who escaped the sword were carried as slaves to Babylon.<sup>68</sup> Then Jerusalem was burned to the ground.

Then an amazing thing happened. **King Nebuchadnezzar ordered the captain of his bodyguard to find the prophet Jeremiah and look after him**. He told Nebuzaradan, his captain, to make sure no harm came to Jeremiah, and to do whatever he says. Nebuzaradan knew the Lord had promised the destruction of Jerusalem at their hands, because God's people had sinned against the Lord! Nebuzaradan found Jeremiah in the court of the guardhouse and **told Jeremiah that he was now a free man. He could either stay in the land of Israel, or he could go with them to Babylon**. He told Jeremiah to "Do whatever seems right to you." Jeremiah decided to stay with Gedaliah at Mizpah, along with the remnant of the land.<sup>69</sup>

**King Nebuchadnezzar appointed a Hebrew by the name of Gedaliah over the remaining people in Judah to tend the fields and vineyards**. Remember God always leaves a remnant in the land. Gedaliah told the remaining people to not be afraid of the Babylonians. He told them if they lived on the land and served the King of Babylon, it would go well with them and their families. He told them to gather in all the fruit of the crops and put them in storage vessels for the future. He then dispersed them across the land.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Jeremiah 38:14-28

<sup>67</sup> 2 Kings 25:6-7

<sup>68</sup> 2 Chronicles 36:17-20

<sup>69</sup> Jeremiah 39:11- 40:6

<sup>70</sup> Jeremiah 40:7-12

But a man named Ishmael (of royal heritage) was opposed to Gedalaih. He took ten men and traveled to Mizpah to kill Gedalaih. They found him eating his meal with some of the Jews of Mizpah, and killed them all. Some Jews from other areas of Judah came to see Gedalaih, and Ishmael killed them also. Ishmael ended up capturing all the Jews in Mizpah. When some of the men from around Judah heard what had happened in Mizpah, they appointed Johanan to lead them to go free the people and get rid of Ishmael. When Ishmael heard about this, he and his men ran away across the border to Ammon.<sup>71</sup>

**Johanan and the men who were with him became terrified of Babylon, thinking they would retaliate against all the Jewish remnant for the murder of Gedalaih.** They decided to run away to Egypt for protection. But before they went, they found Jeremiah and asked him to seek the Lord for what they should do. Jeremiah came back to them ten days later and told them NOT to go to Egypt. If they did, they would be killed with the sword, because Babylon was about to defeat Egypt. But if they stayed in the land of Israel, God would protect them. **Incredibly, all the arrogant men called Jeremiah a liar, and they all went to Egypt!**<sup>72</sup>

**The prophet Jeremiah wrote the book of Lamentations,** during the years that God allowed Jerusalem to be under attack by the Babylonians. When you read through this lament, you can feel:

- the anguish of God, who was brokenhearted over the rebellion of His chosen people
- the frustrations of Jeremiah, because no one listening to the truths God told him
- the rebellion of the people who stubbornly held onto their idols.

All the people had to do was sincerely repent and turn wholeheartedly back to the Lord, and all their sorrow would be turned into joy!

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*Lamentations 3:22-25 "The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'Therefore I have hope in Him.' The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him."*

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<sup>71</sup> Jeremiah 41

<sup>72</sup> Jeremiah 42-43

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

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1. Please Read Jeremiah 29. This was a letter Jeremiah sent to the captives in Babylon after the 2<sup>nd</sup> siege of Judah when most of the people of Judah were taken there.

What did God tell the people to do?

What promises did God make to them?

What did God saw would happen to those left in Judah at that time in verses 16-20?

What did God say about the three false prophets named Ahab, Zedekiah, and Shemaiah?

2. Please Read Jeremiah 35.

Who was king when this prophesy was given?

What did God ask Jeremiah to do in verse 2?

Who was Rechab? Look for cross-references of his name and also what you observe from him in this passage.

What can you infer about the family of Rechabites? What vow does it seem they have taken as a family?

What was their response to Jeremiah?

What was God's response to them?

3. Please Read Jeremiah 31. In the midst of all the prophecies about the destruction of Judah, God speaks of restoration.

What prophecies have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ?

What prophecies will be fulfilled later when Christ returns?

4. In the back of this book on pages 221-222 is a chart of the Kings of Judah. Please fill in the information about the kings we discussed in this chapter.

# 16

## Babylonian Empire

The book of 2 Chronicles ends with the Lord stirring up the Chaldeans (Babylonians) to destroy Jerusalem and empty the land of Judah of all its inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that God used this cruel and idolatrous nation to bring judgment on His people, especially since all idol worship can trace its roots to Babylon. The Babylonian Empire first started 100 years after the flood, during the times of Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. For about 450 years Babylon consisted of city-states that fought against each other frequently. It wasn't until the time of Hammurabi that it became a united kingdom called the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, and then around 1400 BC the Assyrians destroyed Babylon. In 625BC, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty of the Babylonian Empire came to prominence, led by Nabopolassar. He was followed by **his son Nebuchadnezzar, the most important Babylonian king. He reigned for 43 years, and had very interesting interactions with God and His people.**

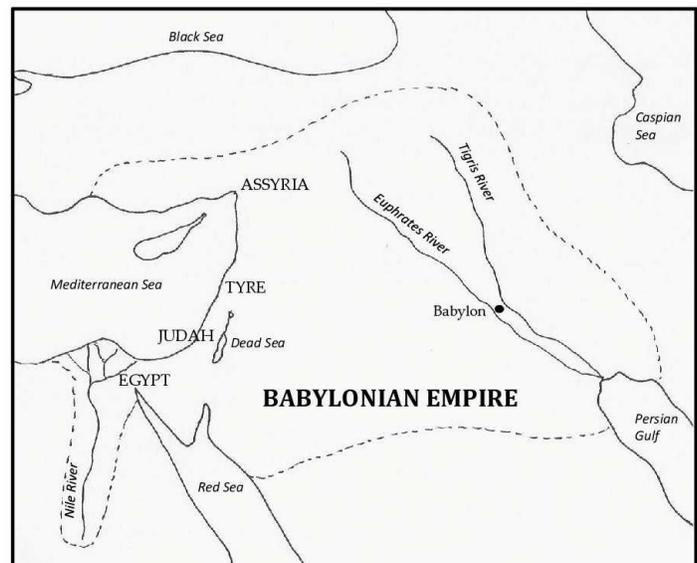
## Nebuchadnezzar

**The first half of his reign was a time of war.**

He defeated the lands of Assyria, Judah, Tyre, and Egypt; and became the most powerful

King in the world at that time. God used Nebuchadnezzar to carry out His judgment on Judah for their idolatry, and to enslave them for 70 years, all to get them to repent and return with all their hearts to Him.

Nebuchadnezzar attacked Judah and the city of Jerusalem three times in eighteen years. **In the first invasion in 605 BC,** his army broke into Jerusalem and captured King Jehoiakim and many wealthy sons of the officials in Jerusalem. 3,023 Jewish men, along with **Daniel and his friends** were bound with chains and taken to Babylon.<sup>2</sup> The Babylonians also carried away some of the silver and gold articles of the Temple, and put them in a pagan temple in Babylon.



<sup>1</sup> 2 Chronicles 36:17-20

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 52:28; Daniel 1:1-7

**King Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem again eight years later in 597 BC.** They captured the prophet Ezekiel and 10,000 people of prominence and skill from all over Judah, and took them and the rest of the valuable treasures of the Temple to Babylon. He put Zedekiah in place to be the next king of Judah. Only the poorest people were left in Judah and Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup>

King Zedekiah had sworn allegiance to Babylon by the name of God. He kept this vow for nine years, and then he rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar. In 588 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar ordered the attack of Jerusalem. **For two years, the armies of Babylon surrounded Jerusalem and laid siege to it.** Finally the people ran out of food and the Babylonians were able to break through the walls of Jerusalem. 745 people were taken as slaves,<sup>4</sup> while the rest were either killed or scattered. The Temple and Jerusalem were torn down and burned.<sup>5</sup> **In 586 BC, ISRAEL CEASED TO BE A NATION.**

**King Nebuchadnezzar spent the second half of his reign in peace, building up the city of Babylon.** He built huge walls around the city, measuring 56 miles in length, 80 feet thick, and 320 feet high. All along these walls were very impressive gates covered in blue ceramic tiles and golden reliefs of animals. The main gate was dedicated to the goddess Ishtar from time of Nimrod. The King also built a huge palace and a golden temple to his gods. Even though Babylon was located in the midst of a desert, he had beautiful gardens built to resemble the hillside of his favorite wife's homeland. These have been called the Hanging Gardens.

### **Please Read Daniel 1.**

The Babylonian way to deal with conquered people was to take captive the best (youth, beauty, intelligence) of the conquered people and teach them Babylonians ways, to indoctrinate them into their culture. The king would then choose the best to serve him in his court. Daniel, who was 15, and his 3 friends (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) were some of those taken in the 1<sup>st</sup> siege of Jerusalem. For 3 years they were taught the language, customs, art, and literature of the Babylonians. Their names were even changed to Babylonian names.

## Daniel

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***Daniel 1:7*** "Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego."

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Of all the teenage boys of royal and noble birth taken from their homes and families in Judah, these four stood out from the rest. They loved and honored God by keeping His laws. They didn't just do

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<sup>3</sup> 2 Kings 24:12-14

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah 52:30

<sup>5</sup> 2 Chronicles 36:17-20

what the law said, but they understood living a lifestyle of obedience to God was best for them, no matter their circumstances. They humbly and wisely refused the food of the Babylonians (probably meat offered to idols, or unclean meats like pork). The four became much stronger and healthier than the other royal captives. Over their three years of training, they excelled in every way. God blessed their desire to please Him, and gave them incredible knowledge and intelligence; and Daniel was given the ability to understand dreams and visions. King Nebuchadnezzar was impressed with these youths, and found them to be ten times wiser than any of his magicians and conjurers. King Nebuchadnezzar chose them all to be part of his royal court as advisors and administrators.<sup>6</sup>

**Please read Daniel 2.**

## Statue Dream

We see an interesting thing happen in the life of King Nebuchadnezzar in the first few chapters of Daniel, **God revealed who He is to the king.** In chapter 2, the king had a **dream of a statue made of different materials.** He asked his magicians and wise men to tell him what he dreamed and then what the dream meant. They said they couldn't because only the gods could do that, and their gods didn't communicate closely with them. King Nebuchadnezzar got very angry and ordered all the wise men in the kingdom to be killed. Daniel heard about this, and humbly asked to see the king. Daniel met with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah and they prayed to God to reveal the dream and its meaning. Daniel went back the king and told him no man could tell you what you ask, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. **As Daniel recounted the dream to the king, he told him that God was showing him what would take place in the future.** And God made it very clear that He is the One who puts kings in place and removes them.<sup>7</sup>

The king saw a statue of a man made of different materials: a golden head; a silver torso with two arms; bronze hips; and iron legs, with feet of iron mixed with clay. There was a stone cut without hands that struck the statue at the base and every part of the statue was crushed. Then the stone became a great mountain and filled the earth.

Daniel went on to tell the king that he represented the golden head of the statue. After his kingdom, another one will arise that will be inferior to him. After that kingdom there will arise another kingdom that will rule over all the earth. But after that one, a very strong kingdom will come that will crush and shatter all things. It will later be a divided kingdom with ten kings that will not always get along with each other. Some of them will be stronger than others. In the days of those ten kings, the God of heaven will establish a kingdom that will never be destroyed, and He will crush and destroy all the other kingdoms.

**The Golden Head represented the Babylonian Empire.** The head signified that Babylon was the

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel 1

<sup>7</sup> Daniel 2:21

beginning of the warrior empires, and it was gold because they used so much gold in their buildings and statues. **The silver torso with 2 arms represented the Medo-Persian Empire.** They were inferior to Babylon the way silver is less valuable than gold. Silver was the symbol for money; with trade and money being their power source. They had a wonderful set of roads that helped them collect taxes for their kingdom. The two arms represented the two nations of the Medes and the Persians that came together to form this kingdom. **The bronze hips that ruled the world symbolized Greece.** They were called the bronze empire because they made their powerful weapons out of bronze. They were known for war, and Alexander the Great conquered the world. **The iron legs represented Rome.** They were called the Iron Empire because they used iron for their weapons. The two legs signify a divided kingdom, of the eastern and western Roman Empire. **The ten toes of iron and clay represent a continuation of the Roman Empire that has not yet come to power.** The ten toes represent ten kings who will rule together, some being stronger than others. **In the days of the ten toes, the stone represents when God will set up His Kingdom, with Jesus as the King of the earth.** This will come to pass at Jesus' second coming!

Please read Daniel 3.

## Fiery Furnace

**With his statue dream, King Nebuchadnezzar saw that God knew what went on in the past, present, and future. Now he will see the power of God over**

**matter.** A few years after he had the statue dream, King Nebuchadnezzar ordered a golden statue to be made in His image. Not just a golden head like in his dream, but his pride drove him to commission an entire statue! He called everyone in Babylon to come to its dedication, and ordered them to bow down to his image when the music played. Daniel was not there; but Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were and they refused to bow down to the statue. The king became irate and threatened to **throw them into a fiery furnace.** He said, ***"What god can deliver you?"*** They did not hesitate one moment, and immediately told the king that they would not bow to an idol. In his rage, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the furnaces to be heated seven times hotter than usual. King Nebuchadnezzar was a very cruel king who seemed to delight in gruesome deaths for those who displeased him! The guards threw Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah into the furnace; but in the process of doing so, the guards who tied up the three, were killed by the flames.

The king looked into the flames and saw that Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were untied, and effortlessly walking around in the furnace. Then the king saw another man with them that resembled an angel! He was amazed, and yelled to them, ***"Come out you servants of the Most High God"***. Everyone saw that none of the men were burned, singed, or even smelled of smoke. AMAZING! The king blessed the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, and made a decree that no one was allowed to speak against their God, since there is no other God who is able to deliver those who trust in Him.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel 3:28-30

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***Daniel 4:2-3** “I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me. How great are His signs, and how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.”*

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**Please read Daniel 4.**

## Tree Dream

King Nebuchadnezzar is the narrator of this chapter, as he **shared his very personal encounter with God Most High**. King Nebuchadnezzar had great success in war, and he thought it was because of his greatness, not God’s. God gave Judah into his hands as judgment for their idolatry. Ezekiel tells us that God gave Egypt into the lands of Babylon as reward for getting rid of Tyre.<sup>9</sup> God gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream to warn him not to be full of pride, but to acknowledge Him as God Most High.

King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a great tree in the midst of the earth. It was very tall, large, and strong. The whole earth could see its beautiful foliage. It provided provision, and refuge for every person, animal and bird. Then an angel came and shouted, “Chop down the tree!” It was chopped down, with only the stump left. A band of iron and bronze were placed around it. The tree was called IT until verse 15, when the tree became HIM. His mind will be change into that of a beast for seven periods of time (seven years), **so that the living will know that God is the Most High. God is the ruler over the realm of mankind and He bestows favor on whomever He chooses!**

When the king asked Daniel to interpret the dream, Daniel became very upset. He cared about Nebuchadnezzar and hated to see what God said would happen to him. But after much coaxing by the king, Daniel explained the dream to him. The tree represented King Nebuchadnezzar, in that he had built a great kingdom and had provided for many people. God was going to cut down the tree, and the king would be driven away from mankind and live with the animals for seven years. He would live as an animal until he acknowledged that God is the Most High Ruler over everything! God left the stump to show the king that He would restore the Kingdom to him, when he finally saw God for who He is.

Daniel pleaded with King Nebuchadnezzar to repent of his wicked ways and his pride, but he didn’t. He went back to his old ways and went to war with Egypt. He came back home full of himself taking credit for the great victory. One year after the king had this dream, he was on his veranda, looking over his magnificent city, praising himself for all he had accomplished. Immediately a voice from heaven sounded and the king was instantly struck with Lycanthropy, a mental disease that makes you think you are an animal. He lived outside eating grass with the animals, his hair covered his

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<sup>9</sup> Ezekiel 29:17-20

body like feathers, and his nails grew long like claws. History reports that Nebuchadnezzar was insane for some time later in his life. After seven years, Nebuchadnezzar raised his eyes towards heaven and the mind of a man returned to him. **He then blessed, praised, and honored the Most High God who lives forever!** God restored him as the king of Babylon, and gave him surpassing greatness, all because he recognized God for who He is! God wants everyone to come to know Him as Almighty God!

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***Daniel 4:37** "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride."*

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Even though God's rebellious people were in exile in Babylon and spread all over the world, God had mercy and compassion them, and spoke of His plans and His heart to His people through dreams, visions, and prophecies. God spoke much to Daniel and Ezekiel for His people then and now.

Ezekiel was a Levite who had remained faithful to the Lord and was looking forward to serving in the temple in Jerusalem when he turned 30. But in that year, he was taken captive to Babylon in the 2<sup>nd</sup> siege of Jerusalem.

## Ezekiel

Even though he was very upset that he was not going to fulfil his destiny as a priest in the Temple, God had a very specific task for him to do for Him in Babylon. **God appointed him to be a prophet for the exiles living in Babylon.** God called them rebellious, stubborn, and obstinate children;<sup>10</sup> but He wanted to bless them while they were in Babylon. **He loved them and wanted them to repent and return to Him.**

Ezekiel found out just how rebellious God's people were. They would not listen to the words he spoke, so God told him to do some strange things to get the attention of His people. **Eight times the Lord told Ezekiel he was to be a sign to the sons of Israel. Here are some of the things God had him do as a visual aid for his people:**

- He was to lock himself in his house, tie himself up with ropes, and not leave his house. And if anyone was to come to his house, he would not be able to talk to them. This was to signify the captivity God's people were in.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ezekiel 2:4-5; 3:11,17

<sup>11</sup> Ezekiel 3:24-27

- Build a model of a siege wall, then lay on your left side for 390 days for Israel, and then on your right side for 40 days for Judah. These numbers corresponded to the years of their iniquity. Then he was to face the wall and prophesy to it.<sup>12</sup>
- Shave head and beard, divide the hair into thirds to show there would be 3 sieges of Jerusalem by Babylon.<sup>13</sup>
- Go around Babylon and put a mark on the forehead of every man who is grieved by the sin in the land of Judah. NO ONE was grieved!<sup>14</sup>
- Carry baggage throughout the city in the day time and the night. Dig a hole in the city wall in the daytime for all to see, and then crawl out of it at night with your baggage. This is what King Zedekiah and his soldiers did during the 3<sup>rd</sup> siege, leaving the people helpless.<sup>15</sup>
- Walk through the city groaning loudly and emotionally – with bitterness and a broken heart. When asked why, tell the people you are groaning because of what is coming to Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup>
- God told Ezekiel his wife, whom he loved, was going to die. Ezekiel was not to mourn for her, as a sign of what God was feeling about Jerusalem.<sup>17</sup>

All the while Ezekiel was performing these odd acts, he was **pointing out the sins of God's people**. He compared them to an adulterous wife, who continually played the harlot with the nations around them; even though God loved and provided for them, and welcomed them back to him time and time again.<sup>18</sup> He was hurt by their blatant rebellion of forsaking His laws, statutes, and ordinances. They had promised to love Him as the Lord their God, yet they defiled themselves with detestable idols.<sup>19</sup> No one listened to the words of Ezekiel, no one repented and turned back to the Lord. Yet God still loved His people. We will see in the next chapters, that God has great plans to bring His people back to the Promised Land and back into His heart!

**Please Read Daniel 5.**

## Belshazzar

**After 86 years of domination, the Babylon Empire came to an end during the reign of Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson in 539BC. Daniel was 80 years old and was no longer**

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<sup>12</sup> Ezekiel 4

<sup>13</sup> Ezekiel 5

<sup>14</sup> Ezekiel 9:4

<sup>15</sup> Ezekiel 12:1-16; 2 Kings 25:4-6

<sup>16</sup> Ezekiel 21:6-7

<sup>17</sup> Ezekiel 24:15-27

<sup>18</sup> Ezekiel 16; 23

<sup>19</sup> Ezekiel 20

an advisor to the king. Belshazzar had been co-regent with his father Nabonidus, who preferred the battle field to the palace. He battled against the Medes and the Persians, and lost. They captured him and took most of the land of Babylon, but they had not taken the city of Babylon. It was thought to be an impenetrable city because of its high well-fortified walls, a 20 year food supply, and plenty of water because the Euphrates River flowed through the city.

Belshazzar invited all the nobles of Babylon to take refuge in the city of Babylon, until the Medes and Persians saw the futility of trying to take their city. He spent his time in drunken feasts with the nobles. During his last feast, he ordered the golden vessels from the Hebrew Temple to be brought to him, so they could drink their wine out of them. They mocked Jehovah as they toasted and praised their gods made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. The king had known the story of his grandfather being humbled by Jehovah, but his arrogance led him to arrogantly challenge God. **Suddenly a hand appeared on the plaster wall in the banquet hall, and it wrote four words:**

**MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN**

Belshazzar was terrified when he saw a hand write on his wall; and then later curious to know what the words meant, because he had never seen them before. The partying ceased as the king called in all his "wise men" to tell him what these words meant, but they couldn't. Finally his mother came in and told him about Daniel, a man who had a spirit of the holy gods, illumination, insight, and wisdom like the gods. He called for Daniel and promised him a third of the kingdom to interpret the words. Daniel told him to keep his gifts. Daniel reminded the king who Almighty God is, and how He had been revealed to his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel called Belshazzar to repent of his blasphemous and prideful ways. But he didn't!

Daniel had no trouble telling this king what the words meant. He felt no compassion towards him because of his defiance to God. He said the hand was from God, and he had numbered your days and put an end to your kingdom (mene, mene). You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting (tekel). **Your kingdom has been divided and handed over to the Medes and Persians (upharsin).** What Belshazzar did not know was that while he was partying with the nobles for days on end, the Medes and Persians had dug a channel to divert the water of the Euphrates River. **That very night, they walked under the city walls in the empty river bed and easily took the city, and killed Belshazzar.**

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

1. Daniel and Ezekiel's lives were nothing like they had dreamed and planned they would be. But God had plans for them since before they were even formed in their mother's wombs. Great plans to help His people turn from their sinful ways back to the Lord.

What plans have you had in your life that did not turn out the way you planned?

When has God turned you around on the path you had for your life, and turned you to see His plan?

What was His purpose in it?

2. Have you had a time in your life when it seemed that everything was taken away from you?

Did you see it as a way of God trying to get you to see that He is Almighty God?

In light of the story of King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4, what changes do you need to make in your life to line up with God?

3. The Lord gave Ezekiel several detailed prophecies of the future that have not yet come to pass. What is promised to all believers in Ezekiel 36?

What incredible prophecies are in Ezekiel 37?

What future battle is described in Ezekiel 38-39?

Ezekiel 40-48 describe details of life with Jesus as our King in His Millennial Reign and into Eternity. What is said about that time?

4. I doubt we have never seen a hand write a message to us on our wall, but we have all had times when we have been walking in rebellion and pride, and God has used people or circumstances to get our attention. Give an example of that in your life.

# 17

## Medo-Persian Empire

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**Jeremiah 27:6-7** *"Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and I have given him also the wild animals of the field to serve him. All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson **until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings will make him their servant.**"*

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**God is sovereign! He is the One and Only True God! There is none like Him!** He is the One who called a people from the lineage of Abraham to be a special people for Himself. He rescued them from a worldwide famine, and from slavery to the Egyptians with mighty signs and wonders. He led, instructed, tested, and strengthened His people in the wilderness; and placed them in a land He had promised to Abraham. He defeated their enemies and gave them peace, but they rebelled over and over again with the Judges and Kings the Lord set in place over them. When their sins of idolatry and unfaithfulness grew too great, God raised up Assyria and Babylon to defeat and enslave His people for a time. Then He raised up the Medes and Persians to put in place His plan to return His people to the Promised Land. In His sovereign timing (70 years), God called Cyrus, a Persian King to defeat the Babylonians and let His people return to the Promised Land. In fact, **God spoke about Cyrus to His prophet Isaiah, 175 years before Cyrus was born.**

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**Isaiah 44:28-45:3** *"It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire... Thus says the Lord to Cyrus His anointed, whom I have taken by the right hand, to subdue nations before him and to loose the loins of kings... So that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.*

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**In 539BC, on the evening that the city of Babylon fell, the Persian Empire was birthed!**<sup>1</sup> God had given the lands of the empire of Babylon into the hands of Darius, the King of the Medes and Cyrus, the king of the Persians. **Along with the land of Israel, they were now entrusted with God's chosen people.**

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel 5:30-31

Before the Medes & Persians defeated the Babylonians, God gave Daniel two dreams similar to the statue dream of King Nebuchadnezzar. **His dreams were about future kingdoms that would dominate the world and affect God's people.** King Nebuchadnezzar's dream was a broad overview of the coming kingdoms from the worldly perspective of a pagan king; seeing the kingdoms in the form of precious metals. Daniel's dreams filled in more details, by portraying these kingdoms as fierce animals, showing the beastly nature of these kingdoms.

**Please read Daniel 7.**

### Four Beasts

Daniel saw four winds from heaven stirring up the great sea (*prophetically a sea represents people*). Then four great beasts came out of the sea, and they were very different from each another. **The first beast was a lion with eagle's wings.** The wings were plucked off the lion; and then it was lifted up, and given a human heart. The winged lion was a main symbol for **Babylon**. The wings being plucked symbolized the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar.

**The second beast was a bear raised up on one side,** with three ribs in its teeth. This beast represented the **Medo-Persian Empire**. A bear is larger than a lion (their kingdom was larger), but less majestic. Being raised up on one side signified that one side was stronger than the other – the Persians. The three ribs in its mouth were three countries they invaded: Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt.

**The third beast was a leopard with four wings and four heads, this represented the Greek Empire.** A leopard stalks its prey and then swiftly attacks. The Greeks conquered the world very rapidly, almost like they flew across the land taking their enemies by surprise. When Alexander the Great died, his empire was divided between his four generals (four heads).

**The fourth beast could not be described by a known animal, it was called a dreadful, terrifying, and extremely strong beast** that devoured, crushed and trampled all the nations they conquered. It had iron teeth and bronze claws. This represented the **Roman Empire**, who destroyed all nations in their path. This beast fascinated Daniel. It had 10 horns on its head; and then a small horn grew up, and pulled out three horns by their roots. This little horn grew to be the biggest; and had eyes like a man, and a mouth that loved to brag.

Then the Ancient of Days (Father God) sat on His throne and judged this beast, and destroyed its body and it was given to the burning fire. And then One like the son of man (Jesus) came in the clouds and God gave Him dominion, glory, and a kingdom. **Jesus was given the whole earth as an everlasting dominion.**

Daniel asked what this dream meant, and was told that these were four kings who would arise from the earth; and after them, the saints of God Almighty will receive and possess the Kingdom led by

Jesus Christ. **Daniel kept asking questions, about the forth beast and especially its little horn.** The angel told him this little horn would wage war with the saints and overpower them, until God came and passed judgment on the little horn in the favor of the saints. **The little horn is the antichrist.** He will come at the end of the age when there are ten kings ruing the earth. He will join them and destroy three of the kings. Then he will grow in power and be over them all. He will speak out against God, and wear down His followers. He will intend to make changes in the times and laws of the earth, while he is ruling for time, times, and half a time. **This is the last 3 ½ years of the tribulation, before Christ returns to reign!** When Christ returns, the antichrist will be judged and destroyed.

**Please read Daniel 8.**

### Two Animals

Two years later, Daniel had another prophetic dream. **He saw two animals in this dream, giving us more details of the coming empires of the Medo-Persians and the Greeks.** He saw **a ram that had two horns**, with one that came up later which became much larger than the first one. Horns represent power and authority; so the first horn which was smaller signified the **Medes**, and the larger horn that came up later signified the **Persians**. In Daniel's dream, the ram butted in three directions: west – Babylon, north- Lydia, and south – Egypt. Directions in the Bible are from vantage point of Israel. No other beast (kingdom) could stand up to this beast (kingdom), and there was no one who could rescue them from his domination.

The second animal Daniel saw was a **shaggy male goat that represented the Greek Empire**. He came from the west, not touching the ground; indicating he conquered with great speed. He rushed towards the ram and shattered it. It had a large horn (Alexander the Great), and he magnified himself exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty (defeated all the nations), his horn was broken (he died). Then four horns came up towards the four winds of heaven. His kingdom was divided between his four generals.

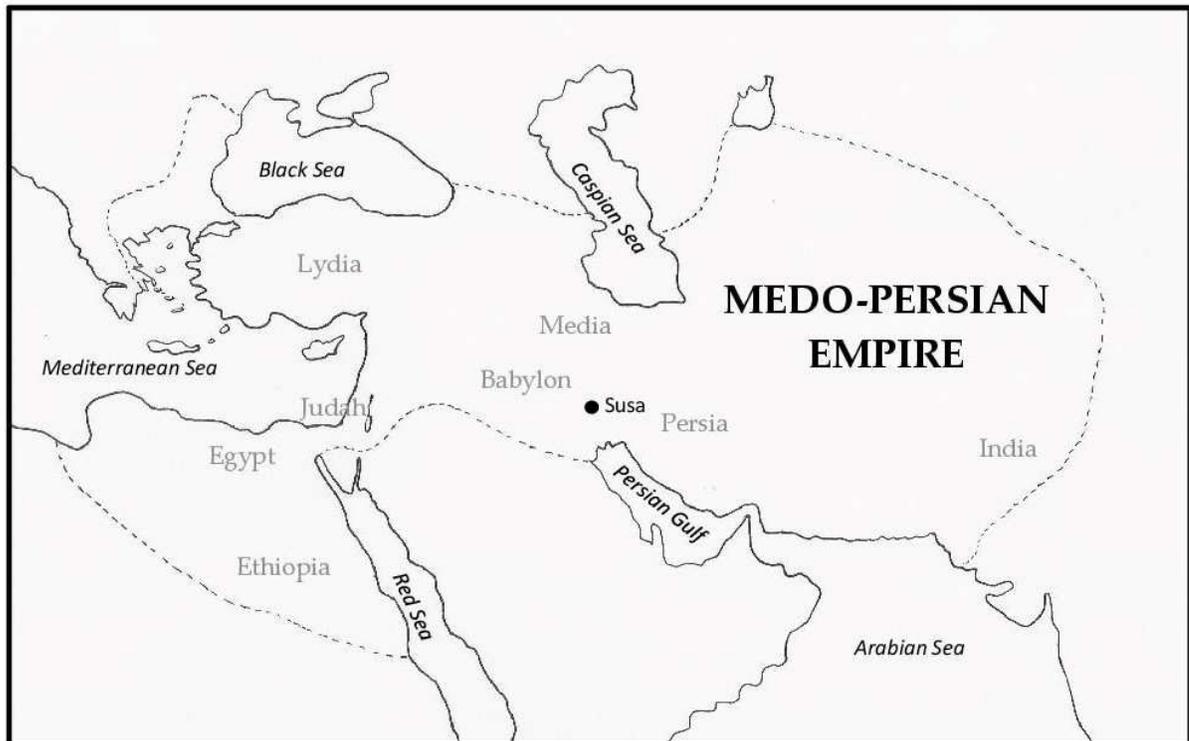
**The Medo-Persian Empire have now been described in three dreams in the book of Daniel.** The silver torso with two arms, the Bear with one arm raised above the other, and the Ram with two horns, with one being larger. **The Medes were led by a king by the name of Darius.** At the age of sixty-two,<sup>2</sup> he led his army to Babylon where he devised an ingenious plan to divert the river flowing under the city walls, and walk in under those walls to take the city. He set up local men to administer the government in Babylon. **Daniel was one of those leaders.**<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel 5:31

<sup>3</sup> Daniel 6:28

**The Persians were led by Cyrus;** and he united the two kingdoms to form one large Empire, stretching from Turkey to India to Ethiopia. Cyrus eventually took over as the king of the united Medo-Persian Empire. That is why each of the dreams had either two arms or two horns, with one being more dominant.



Please read Daniel 6.

## King Darius

**Daniel was 80 when Darius came into Babylon and took over as their king.** Darius appointed Daniel to be one of three commissioners over 120 satraps (governors or high officials) in the Medo-Persian Empire. Daniel was unlike any of the other officials, for he was a man of integrity, and the Spirit of God was very evident on him. He was not self-seeking, nor interested in worldly gain; and he always gave God the credit for everything. Darius had plans to name Daniel as the leader over all the officials, which caused the other leaders to become very jealous of him. When they could find nothing to accuse him of, they decided to make a law that they knew he wouldn't keep. They had Darius sign a decree that people could only appeal to the king for the next 30 days. No one was allowed to pray to their gods.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel 6:3-9

Daniel prayed three times to God every day on the roof of his house. Even after the decree was made, he continued to pray. The men who conspired against him reported his offense to Darius. He became deeply distressed, and spent the entire day trying to figure out a way to deliver Daniel; but once a law was made by the king of Persia, not even the king could change it!

Daniel was taken that night and put into a den of lions, which was the punishment for breaking this law. Darius spoke to Daniel and said, *"Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you!"* The king stayed awake all night fasting for Daniel. In the morning he ran to the lion's den and called out to Daniel. *"Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?"* Daniel answered the king, *"My God has sent His angel to shut the mouths of the lions."* The king was very pleased that he was alive. When Daniel walked out of the lion's den, everyone saw he not even scratched. Darius ordered the men who had maliciously accused Daniel to be thrown into the lion's den, along with their wives and children. They were all instantly killed.

**Please read Daniel 9.**

## Seventy Years

That same year, Daniel was reading the words of the prophet Jeremiah, and realized that God had told Jeremiah that He would put a 70-year time limit on His people's captivity in Babylon.<sup>5</sup> Daniel had been in Babylon for 65 years, so there were only five more years until God would return them to the Promised Land.

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**Jeremiah 29:10-11** *"For thus says the Lord: after seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."*

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God told Jeremiah that after the 70 years, His people would call upon Him and He would listen to their cries. **The Lord would allow His people to find Him again if they searched for Him with all their heart, and then He would return them to the Promised Land.**<sup>6</sup> As Daniel searched deeper into God's Word he saw some very sober curses God promised to His people if they did not obey His commandments. God promised to bring the Land of Israel into desolation, and allow His people to be scattered among the nations. He went on to say that the land shall rest and enjoy its Sabbaths, for the time it did not rest while you lived in the Promised Land.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah 25:11-12

<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah 29:12-14

<sup>7</sup> Leviticus 26: 14, 32-35

The sons of Israel had NOT obeyed the Lord's commandments, nor had they allowed the land to rest. God had given a commandment that every seventh year, the land was NOT to be planted, but allowed to lay fallow, allowed to rest.<sup>8</sup> Daniel knew that in the 490 years that there had been kings in Israel, the land never had a Sabbath rest! If you divide 490 by 7, you get 70. This is why the Lord appointed 70 years for His people to be removed from the land. One way or another, God was going to give His land rest!

As excited as Daniel was that the end of their captivity was drawing to an end, he became very somber. He realized that God's people were not living their lives correctly before the Lord. **Daniel went before God in prayer, supplication, fasting, sackcloth, and ashes; to confess the sins of the people and to repent for their sins. He asked God to have mercy upon His people.**

## Seventy Weeks

While Daniel was earnestly praying for his people, God sent the angel Gabriel to give him a vision of the **time line for Messiah's 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> comings**. He told him that **70 weeks have been decreed for your people (Jews)**. The word **weeks** means: groups of 7's, or 7 years. So 70 weeks equals 490 years. Gabriel went on to say that **before the end of these 490 years, several things would take place**: transgression would be finished, sin would end, vision would be sealed up, all prophecies would be fulfilled, and the Most Holy Place would be anointed.

**The 490 years would start when a decree was issued to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. From that time until Jesus came would be 7 weeks (49 years) and 62 weeks (434 years).**<sup>9</sup> We will see shortly that the Persian King Artaxerxes issued a decree to rebuild Jerusalem in 445 BC. **Using the Jewish custom of a year having 360 days, 483 years after 445 BC would have been 32 AD.** This was the time that Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey when the people openly proclaimed that He was the Messiah,<sup>10</sup> days before He was crucified. The prophecy goes on to say that **after these 62 weeks the Messiah will be cut off (crucified) and the people of the prince who is to come (Romans) will destroy Jerusalem and the temple.** In 70 AD, the Romans led by Titus, destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple.

The prophecy went on to say that there would be wars and desolations until the end of the last week. During the **70<sup>th</sup> week** (the last 7 years of Jewish history), he (antichrist/little horn) will make a firm covenant (peace treaty) with Israel for 1 week (7 years). In the middle of the week (3-1/2 years), he will put an end to the temple sacrifice, and bring abominations to the land (he will set himself up as god in the temple). Then he will be completely destroyed (when Jesus comes the

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<sup>8</sup> Leviticus 25:1-7

<sup>9</sup> Daniel 9:25-27

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 21:1-9

2<sup>nd</sup> time). **The time in-between the 69 weeks and the 70<sup>th</sup> week is the church age.** Then the focus will shift back to the Jewish people.

### King Cyrus

Cyrus took over as king of the unified Medo-Persian Empire in 529 BC, and he only reigned for nine years. But in that time the Lord used him in powerful ways. The first mention of Cyrus in the Bible was in the book of Isaiah. God gave him a prophecy about a king named Cyrus who would be born 175 years in the future.

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**Isaiah 44:28** *"It is I who says of **Cyrus**, he is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire. And he declares of Jerusalem, she will be built, and of the temple, your foundation will be laid."*

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God went on to say that He held Cyrus by his right hand, and anointed him to subdue many nations for God, all for the sake of His people Israel; whom God called His treasure. God called Cyrus by his name long before he was born, to show him that there is no God like Him.<sup>11</sup>

In Cyrus' first year as king of the Medo-Persian Empire, the Lord stirred up the spirit of the king to issue a decree and make a proclamation throughout his kingdom. He proclaimed that the Lord God of heaven gave all the kingdoms of the earth to him, and commanded him to **build Him a house in Jerusalem. He encouraged all of God's people to arise and return to Jerusalem.**<sup>12</sup> He then encouraged his subjects to freely give offerings to the House of God, and he returned the gold and silver articles that the Babylonians had taken from the Temple.<sup>13</sup>

**Cyrus' decree beautifully illustrates the sovereignty of Almighty God.** He called Cyrus 175 years before he was born to do some amazing things for Him and His people. God led Cyrus to issue an irrevocable law that signaled an end to the 70 years of captivity of God's people, and allowed the sons of Israel to return to the Promised Land. It also provided the necessary funds for the people (who had been captive slaves) to move and rebuild the temple. God safeguarded the 5,400 gold and silver items of His temple, so they could be returned one day. We serve an amazingly powerful God!

**So how did Cyrus, a pagan king, know about the prophecy God made about him, and why did he have such confidence that He was the Lord God of Heaven?** You must remember Daniel was one of His advisors, and he knew the Word of God. He is probably the one who taught Cyrus about God.<sup>14</sup> We have already seen that Darius acknowledged God as the Living God of Daniel. **Daniel's life was a powerful testimony of God to these kings!**

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<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 45:1-6

<sup>12</sup> 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-3

<sup>13</sup> Ezra 1:4-11

<sup>14</sup> Daniel 6:28

Two years after the decree, Cyrus appointed Zerubbabel to be the governor of Israel. He and 49,897 men returned to Jerusalem in 536 BC, and began the work to rebuild the temple. The book of Ezra recounts the telling of this monumental work. They faced great opposition from the inhabitants of the land of Judah and Benjamin for many years. They actually stopped working on the temple two years into the project and did not restart their work for another 14 years. During that time, Cambyses, the son of Cyrus was the king. He did nothing to help settle the disputes over the temple.

## King Darius I

Darius I became the next Medo-Persian king in 521 BC, and he reigned for 35 years. **Work resumed on the temple in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of his reign.** There was still great opposition coming against Zerubbabel and the men of Israel, but **God led King Darius I to always rule in their favor!** Darius provided all the money that was necessary to rebuild this temple, and he even donated animals for their sacrifices.<sup>15</sup> During this time the Lord sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah<sup>16</sup> to encourage the people to persevere and rebuild the temple.

**Haggai** prophesied during the reign of Darius I. He was part of the group that moved to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel. **God spoke through him to encourage the men of Jerusalem to focus their attention on rebuilding the temple.** He asked them, *“Why do you live in nice paneled houses when God’s House was desolate and in ruins?”* He told them God couldn’t bless them when they put their needs above God’s; so they better **consider their ways**. The people repented of their selfish actions and attitudes, and started working on the temple again.

## Haggai

The prophet **Zechariah** was born in Babylon, and also went to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel. Two months after God spoke to Haggai, God spoke through Zechariah to continue to encourage the people in Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. He told the men in Jerusalem that the **Lord was very angry with their fathers**. He urged them to *“Return to Me, so I may return to you”*, and **not be like their unrepentant fathers**. Four years after Haggai and Zechariah spoke God’s heart to the men of Jerusalem, **they finished the rebuilding of the Temple in 516 BC.**<sup>17</sup>

## Zechariah

**God gave Zechariah instructions for His people on how to treat one another**, now that they were back in the land of Israel. These instructions apply to all sons and daughters of God.

- dispense justice
- practice kindness and compassion
- do not oppress orphans, widows, strangers, or the poor
- do not plan evil

<sup>15</sup> Ezra 6:8-9

<sup>16</sup> Ezra 5:1

<sup>17</sup> Ezra 6:15

- speak the truth to one another
- fast with joy

### God gave Zechariah many visions of the future for God's people:

- Jerusalem will once again be a thriving city with God living there
- The nations who came to scatter Israel will be torn down themselves
- There will be a future Jerusalem where God's glory will dwell with Jews and Gentiles
- God will cleanse His people
- God will send His servant the Branch (Jesus) to remove all iniquity
- The Holy Spirit will be given to God's people
- A call to repentance is coming and sin will be purged from God's people
- Four chariots will come to bring God's wrath upon the earth and the Tribulation
- The crowning of Jesus as our King

### Please Read the book of Esther.

## King Xerxes

The next king in the Medo-Persian Empire was Xerxes, also called King Ahasuerus in the Bible. He reigned for 22 years, from 486 – 464 BC. He was the king in the book of Esther. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of his reign, King Xerxes had an extended 180-day banquet for the nobles of the land and his army officers. After that, he had a 7-day banquet for everyone in Susa, the capital. On the last day of this drunken feast, he ordered queen Vashti to appear before them all, but she refused to come. She was deposed, as his wife and queen, for her disrespect to the king.

**Five years later, Esther, a Jew, was chosen by Xerxes to become his wife, and the new queen of Persia.** Her uncle Mordecai, convinced her to not tell the king she was a Jew. Five years after they were married, an evil man named Haman convinced Xerxes that the Jews were plotting to overthrow the king. He got the king to write a decree to kill all the Jews at the end of the year. Mordecai told Esther about this, and she risked her life to go before the king to get this stopped. Haman's evil plot was found out, and he was killed. Xerxes could not revoke the decree, but he allowed the Jews to defend themselves. God intervened and put a fear of the Jews in the hearts of most of the people so they did not attack the Jews. Only 500 men came against the Jews, and they were all killed. The Jews celebrate Purim as a day of feasting and rejoicing to remember this time. Because of Xerxes' love for Esther, and his respect for her uncle, Mordecai was elevated to second in charge of the Medo-Persian Empire under King Xerxes.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Esther 10:3

# King Artaxerxes

**The last Medo-Persian king mentioned in the Bible was Artaxerxes**, and he ruled from 464-423 BC. Ezra and Nehemiah

were close friends of his. Sixty years after the temple was rebuilt, **Ezra who was a respected scribe, asked the king if he could go to Jerusalem to study, practice, and teach God's Word to the people there.** The king told him to take as many Hebrew priests and Levies who were willing to go; and he would provide all they needed for the journey and for when they got to Jerusalem. King Artaxerxes said he would give *"whatever the God of heaven commands, let it be given with zeal for the house of the Lord."* 1754 men and their families moved with Ezra to Jerusalem.<sup>19</sup> When Ezra got to Jerusalem, **he was grieved over the sins of the men who intermarried with the inhabitants of the land.** He challenged them to put away their foreign wives, and almost all of them did.<sup>20</sup>

**Nehemiah was a cup-bearer to king Artaxerxes.**<sup>21</sup> He got word from some men who came back to Babylon that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down making the city unsafe for the people of Jerusalem. This caused great anguish for Nehemiah. In the 20<sup>th</sup> year of King Artaxerxes reign, the king asked Nehemiah why he was so sad. Nehemiah prayed before responding to the king. He told him what he had heard about the walls of Jerusalem. **The king made a decree in 445 BC for Jerusalem to be rebuilt, and for Nehemiah to oversee the project, and to be the governor of Israel.** The King wrote letters granting Nehemiah permission to rebuild the walls, and for the taxes gathered in that region to be given to Nehemiah to purchase all the supplies he needed. This decree was the decree mentioned in Daniel 9, which started the 490 year (70 weeks) timetable for the Jews to know when the Messiah would come, and when He would return at the end of the age! The first 49 years was the time it took to completely rebuild Jerusalem, the next 434 years marked the Triumphant entry of Jesus in to Jerusalem days before He was crucified, and the remaining seven years are the time of the rule of the antichrist before Jesus returns to take His rightful place as the ruler of the earth! The last half of this seven year time period, also known as the time of tribulation, is also referred to as 42 months; time, times, and half a time; and 2520 days in the books of Daniel and Revelation.

When Nehemiah got to Jerusalem, he surveyed the scope of the project for three days before talking to the people.<sup>22</sup> He told them why he was there and they were all in favor of helping him rebuild the walls. During this time of rebuilding, they had much opposition from Sanballat and Tobiah. But the people continued to work nonstop, either posting guards to watch for attacks from their enemies, or they would watchfully work on the wall while armed. Every one worked on the part of the wall

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<sup>19</sup> Ezra 7-8

<sup>20</sup> Ezra 9-10

<sup>21</sup> Nehemiah 1:11

<sup>22</sup> Nehemiah 2:11-17

## Riches of God's Word

near their home or business, including the Levites. God blessed their work, and the wall was completed in 52 days!<sup>23</sup>

After the wall was completed, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem could live in safety, Nehemiah stated that Tobiah still tried to frighten the people. But it is interesting to note that in Nehemiah 6:18 he listed some of Tobiah's relatives, two of them being women. Lists of names placed in random places always peaks my curiosity, and sure enough when you look at the meanings of these five name, God has a hidden message for us.

*Shecaniah - the Lord has dwelt*

*Arah - to travel*

*Jehohanan - God has favored, shown grace and mercy*

*Meshullam - allied, to be at peace*

*Berechiah - blessing of the Lord, to make covenant*

***The Lord has dwelt with His people who have travelled to this place. He has shown them great mercy and grace. He has allied Himself to them and given them peace. He has made a covenant with them and granted them peace.***

After the wall was completed, the people asked Ezra to read the book of the Law of Moses to them. They would gather from 9 AM until noon, and listen to Ezra read the Word to them. From time to time he would stop and teach them what he had just read.<sup>24</sup> The people wept with joy when they heard and understood God's Word.

Again we can see a hidden message in the midst of this story of Ezra reading the Word of God to the people of Jerusalem. He listed the names of the six Levites on his right side, and the seven Levites on his left side. Then He listed the names of the Levites who helped him teach the people to give them more understanding of God's Word.

*Mattithiah - the gift of God*

*Shema - hearing and obeying*

*Anaiah - whom God answers*

*Uriah - the Lord is my light or fire, light of God*

*Hilkiah - God is my portion (help, supply)*

*Maaseiah - the work of the Lord*

***I have a marvelous gift for all who will hear and obey My Word. I will answer you with fire and light (power and understanding). I will supply all you need to do the work I have set before you!***

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<sup>23</sup> Nehemiah 6:15

<sup>24</sup> Nehemiah 8:1-3

*Pedaiah - redemption of the Lord, God has ransomed*  
*Mishael - who is what God is; who is asked for or lent*  
*Malchijah - the Lord is my King and Counselor*  
*Hashum - enriched, wealthy; silence*  
*Hashbaddanah - considerate judge*  
*Zechariah - remembered by God*  
*Meshullam - allied, perfect peace, friend*

***I am the Lord who has ransomed you from the darkness of sin. I am who I am. I am who you have asked for. I am your King and Your Counselor. I will share the riches of My Word with you. You will see that I am a considerate judge, let Me rule and judge in your heart, so our hearts can be woven together. I know you, you are my friend that I am in perfect peace with!***

*Jeshua - God saves, Savior, deliverer*  
*Bani - built*  
*Sherebiah - singing with the Lord; God has brought heat*  
*Jamin - south wind*  
*Akkub - devious, deceitful, to circumvent, to restrain; crookedness, lewdness*  
*Shabbethai - my rest, restful*  
*Hodiah - majesty of God. the praise of God*  
*Maaseiah - work of God*  
*Kelita - voice of the Lord, gathering together; assembly*  
*Azariah - he who hears the Lord; whom the Lord helps; God has helped*  
*Jozabad- God justifies, having a dowry; endowed by God*  
*Hanan- bestowing favor; full of grace, merciful*  
*Pelaiah - the Lord's secret; distinguished by God*

***I have saved you and delivered you from the enemy. I have built you up to sing My praises in the midst of your struggles. A strong south wind of deception is upon you to keep you from Me, but you have found rest in Me! Your life is a praise and testimony of My majesty. Do My work and raise your voice to gather My body (church) together. I have heard your cries and I am always here to help you. I have gifted you with all you need to accomplish My good work upon the earth. I am bestowing upon you My favor, grace, and mercy. You are my secret weapon on earth, but well-known to Me!***

Nehemiah and Ezra had the people gather to celebrate the Feast of Booths for the first time in a very long time. They celebrated with great joy for seven days. On the 8<sup>th</sup> day they gathered to sing praises to their God who had done great wonders. They all made a vow to God:<sup>25</sup>

- To keep and observe all of God's commandments
- Walk in His laws

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<sup>25</sup> Nehemiah 8-10

## Riches of God's Word

- Not intermarry with non-Jews
- Not to shop on the Sabbath
- Not to plant on the 7<sup>th</sup> year (Sabbath for the land)
- Contribute to the needs of the temple
- Give first fruits to the priests
- Provide wood for the burnt offerings
- Pay tithes to the house of God

Before they went back to their houses, Nehemiah said they needed to spread out in the land of Israel, and not just stay in Jerusalem. They drew lots and ten percent of the people stayed in Jerusalem, and the rest spread out all over the Promised Land to fill it

**Please read the book of Malachi.**

Also during this time, **the Lord sent His prophet Malachi to speak to everyone who moved back to the Promised Land.** He strongly warned His people to physically and spiritually shut the gates against the enemy. In order to honor and respect God, they must be careful to not present defiled things to Him. He instructed the priests to honor His name, teach His truths, be the Lord's messenger, and keep covenant relationships.

## Malachi

He then shared about things to come in the near and distant future. First he explained that the Lord (Jesus) was coming soon, and God would send a messenger (John the Baptist) before Him. Jesus was coming like a refiner's fire. Later judgment was coming to the earth, but God would send Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord. **God was sending clues to what would happen with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> comings of Jesus, if His people would heed His Words.**

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

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1. The book of Zechariah has many prophecies. Some were for the people in his time, some are for the time of the Lord's return at the end of the age. But others were about the first coming of Jesus.

Please read Zechariah 9:9; 11:12-13; 12:10: and 13:7. Write out the prophecy in Zechariah, and then how it was fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Provide the references where these can be found in the New Testament.

2. Please read Nehemiah 2-3. These two chapter list the ten gates in the walls of Jerusalem.

Research the meaning of the names of these gates. In the order in which they are written in these two chapter, list the definitions and relate them to your journey with the Lord.

For example, in Nehemiah 2:13 we see the first gate mentioned is the Valley Gate. The Hebrew word used here for "*valley*" means narrow- the path is narrow that leads to the Lord.

# 18

## Greek Empire

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**Daniel 10:20** *“Then he said, ‘Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come.’”*

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From the time of Malachi (around 415 BC) until the times of Jesus, **God was silent**. He sent no prophets to speak to His people, and nothing was written in His Word about them during these years. The Old Testament does not record any history of the Greek or Roman Empires (next chapter), but we do have historical records made by the historians in those times. We also have the fulfilled prophecies God gave through Daniel and others, which give us some interesting details of the happenings during these times. Do you remember King Nebuchadnezzar’s statue dream, describing the empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome?<sup>1</sup> Daniel also had two dreams of fierce beasts<sup>2</sup> that provided more descriptions of these empires. He had another dream of an angel explaining what would happen in the land of Israel with the kings to the North and South (Greek Empire) fighting against each other.<sup>3</sup> Most of these were fulfilled after the death of Alexander the Great. The rest will be fulfilled in the years before our Lord Jesus returns.

## Persian & Greek Wars

We saw in the preceding chapter that the Persians were the dominating empire

in the world. They were feared by all the nations that surrounded them, because they seemed invincible. King Cyrus of Persia decided he wanted to conquer the lands to the west of Persia, the city-states of Greece. These were an unorganized conglomeration of cities that ruled themselves. King Cyrus captured some Greek cities in Ionia, which put great fear into the rest of Greece. The Ionians later rebelled against the Persian rule during the reign of Darius. He put down the rebellion, and then headed to Athens to conquer it. The Greeks in Athens asked for help from the Greeks in Sparta, but they said they couldn’t come. The Athenian soldiers decided their only chance was to take the offensive, so they attacked the Persians. They fought bravely, and surprisingly defeated

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel 2

<sup>2</sup> Daniel 7 & 8

<sup>3</sup> Daniel 11

the Persian army. Darius went back to Persia with every intention of returning with more troops, but he died before he could.

**His son Xerxes was determined to resume his father's conquest of Greece and then go into Europe.** The individual city-states in Greece realized their only hope of survival was to work together. In a rare moment of unity, they met the Persians at Thermopylae. Many Persian lives were lost. The Persian army then marched to Athens, and found it empty, so they burned whatever buildings they could. This was a distraction, because while they were there, the Greeks were able to launch their warships. The Greeks were able to defeat the Persians, who had large warships that were hard to maneuver in the narrow straits of Salamis. The Persians lost more than 200 ships, while the Greeks only lost 40. Xerxes went home and sent 150,000 soldiers the next year to fight the Greeks. But they had also assembled a large army, and ran the Persians out of Greece for good. They kept Persia from conquering Europe.

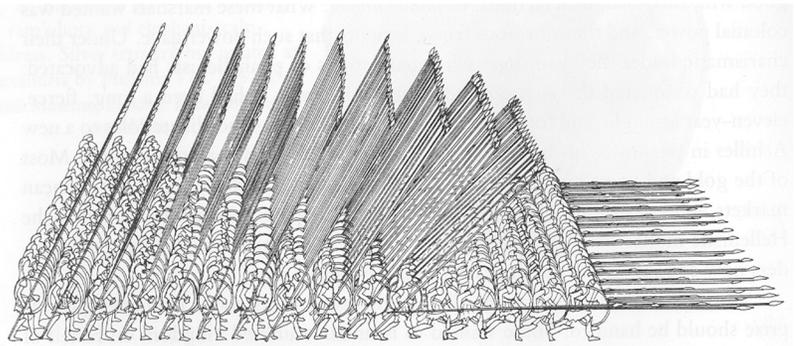


**Even in these wars against Persia, Greece was not a united country, but one made up of a conglomeration of city-states that were constantly fighting with each other.** This was especially true of the two most powerful cities of Athens and Sparta. They were very different from each other, with each thinking they were superior to the other. Athens was a center for democracy, culture, and advanced learning; while Sparta was known for its military aggression. These two city-states warred against each other for 27 years; causing much death, misery, and the depletion of their resources. This long-drawn-out war led to the downfall of Athens.

## Phillip II

**leader arose from the "uncivilized" northern land of Macedonia, a talented general and king by the name of Philip II.** He wanted to make Greece strong so they could withstand any future attacks of the Persian Empire. He knew the only way to

For a time Sparta dominated Greece, but they were horrible administrators, and could not keep the people together. **Then a**



do that was to unify all the city-states. Philip II was a power-hungry and ruthless leader, but also a shrewd and talented general. **Through his leadership, he was able to unify most of Greece, and build the strongest fighting force the world had yet to see.** He introduced many military innovations that gave his army a great advantage over other armies. He used a battle formation of soldiers arranged in sixteen rows. In each row the soldiers had different lengths of spears, so when they advanced there was a wall of spears coming against the enemy. This was very intimidating and deadly to the enemy.

## Alexander the Great

Philip II was accredited with unifying Greece in 338 BC. **Two years later he was killed, and his**

**powerful position was given to his 20 year old son, Alexander, in 336BC.** Alexander was taught by the finest tutors in Greece, including the famous philosopher, Aristotle. Alexander was an excellent student, with a passion for learning. He was tutored in ethics, politics, science, math, architecture, and literature. **Aristotle believed that the Greeks were morally and culturally superior to all other people, and instilled this idea in Alexander.** Aristotle taught Alexander that everyone who was not a Greek was a barbarian, and only worthy to be slaves. Aristotle also taught Alexander to attain personal excellence and glorious deeds during his life. **These philosophies gave Alexander the idea that it was his destiny to conquer the world.**

**As soon as Alexander became the king of Greece, he took off on a ten-year conquest of the world. He and his 50,000 soldiers quickly travelled over 20,000 miles, defeating every city and nation in their path.** Remember the Greek Empire was described in Daniel as a **leopard** with wings that flew across the face of the earth, and a **male goat** that came from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground.<sup>4</sup> He would march his troops for days; and when they got to the city they wanted to conquer, they would attack immediately. Alexander was considered a brilliant general because of the swiftness of his attacks, and the decisiveness of his victories. They captured lands as far away as India, Russia, and Africa. In 331 BC, he went against Darius III and defeated him, leaving the Persian army in shambles.<sup>5</sup> **After 200 years, the mighty Persian Empire was no more.**

Alexander the Great defeated the nations all around Israel, but he did not touch Israel. **Tradition says that Alexander had a dream warning him not to attack Israel.** But the Bible tells us what happened through the prophet Zechariah, God sent his angelic army to protect them.

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel 7:6; Daniel 8:5

<sup>5</sup> Daniel 8:7

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***Zechariah 9:8*** “But I will camp around My house (Israel) because of an army (Greece), because of him (Alexander) who passes by and returns; and no oppressor will pass over them anymore, for now I have seen with My eyes.”

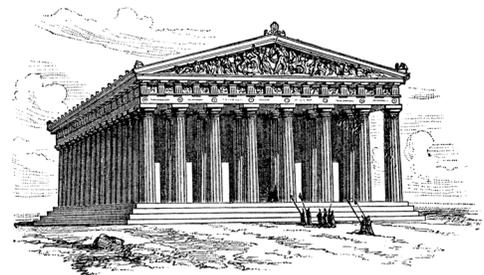
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After ten years of non-stop war and terrible losses in India, Alexander’s men refused to go any further. They retreated to Babylon, which became his capital city. **Two years later, when he was 32, he died after an illness with a prolonged fever, in 323 BC.** Some say he had malaria, others say he was poisoned, and yet others say it was from drinking too much.<sup>6</sup>

Even though Alexander was king for only 12 years, he greatly influenced the culture of the world he conquered. His empire encompassed more than one million square miles. **He desired to spread the Greek culture with its language, arts, ideas, and customs to all the lands he conquered.** This process was called **Hellenization**. Alexander believed Hellenization would unite all the many foreign people in his growing empire. Everywhere he went, Alexander built temples to the Greek gods, theaters, and gymnasiums; and sometimes whole cities. He built the city of Alexandria on the southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, on the continent of Africa. Unfortunately many of God’s people adopted the Greek ways, and were led astray to worship their gods.

### **Here are some of the cultural accomplishments of Alexander:**

- **The Greek language was used in all the lands that Alexander the Great conquered.** It was a very easy language that had very exact words. The Romans even used it during their reign. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek, so once it was written people all over the world could read about Jesus. **This led to the rapid spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, since there were no language barriers.** The Greeks loved learning and they loved books. They ordered the Hebrew Old Testament to be translated into Greek so they could have copies in their libraries. The Old Testament was even translated into Greek, so they could have a copy of it in their library. **This preserved the Word of God for future generations to read.**
- The Greeks had a **distinct style of Architecture** based on mathematics that the Romans adopted as their own. It is still used all over the world.
- Alexander **built larger cities, made better roads** to connect the cities, and built many port cities to take advantage of sea travel and trade. **Communications throughout the Greek Empire flowed easily and quickly, which helped spread Christianity 300 years later.**




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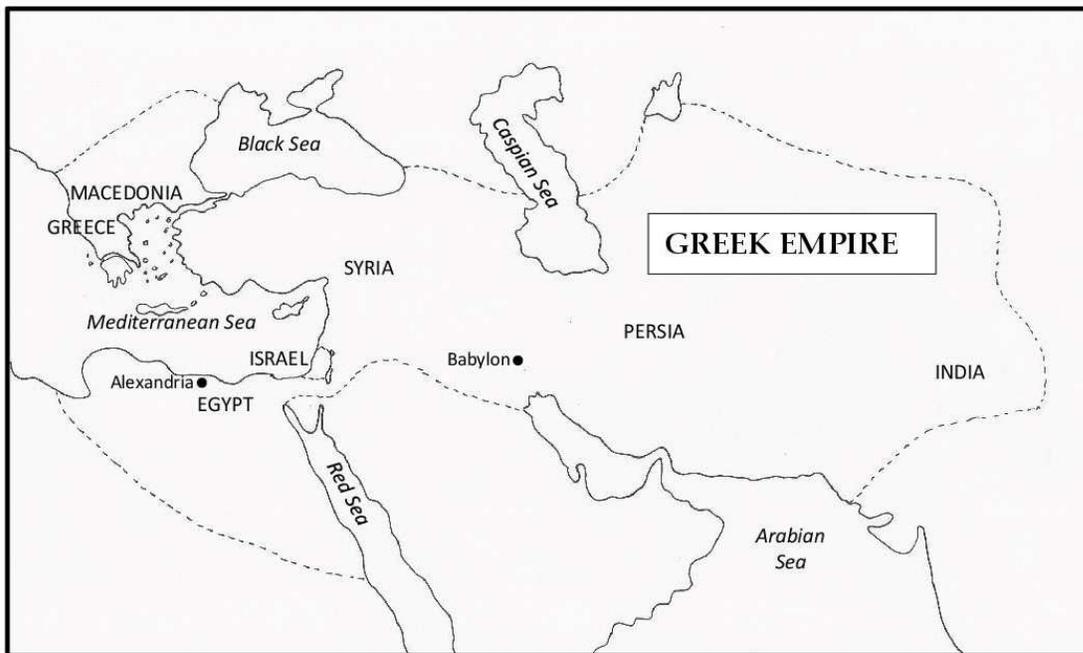
<sup>6</sup> Daniel 8:8

- Alexander made **one currency** for his kingdom which made trade easier.
- Alexander set up the Greek culture everywhere he went, which was readily accepted by most people all over the world. They valued education and philosophy, and had many Greek gods; which we have all studied in school as **mythology**. This led to more mixture within the hearts of people around the world.

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***Daniel 11:3-4** "And a mighty king (Alexander) will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases. But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass (four generals), though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded, for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides them."*

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## Empire Divided

Remember the Persian Empire was also described by Daniel as a male goat that had one large horn, and that large horn represented Alexander the Great. The prophecy went on to say that he magnified himself exceedingly, and as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken, and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns.<sup>7</sup> Alexander the Great was a great warrior who had incredible success in battle, and he conquered more land than anyone else had done before him. He took pride in his accomplishments.

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<sup>7</sup> Daniel 8:8

Shortly after his conquests stopped, he was broken (died), just like the prophecy said. Four of his generals (four smaller horns) tried to take control of the Greek Empire. They were not able to do this until Alexander's wife and son were killed, twenty-two years after Alexander died. Finally four of his generals were able to divide the Greek Empire between themselves,. **Lysimachus took Thrace and Bithynia (east), and Cassander took Macedonia (west). Ptolemy I Souter took Egypt (south), and Seleucus I Nicator took Syria (north).**

The kings of Syria and Egypt were described in detail in Daniel 11. **The Egyptian kings under Ptolemy were called the Kings of the South, and the Syrian kings under Seleucus were called the Kings of the North.** These two parts of the Greek Empire had a profound impact on Israel. Daniel described them as the kings of the North and South, because of their geographical position relative to Israel. Israel was its own autonomous nation for a while, but eventually these two kings conquered Israel. Over the years, they traded them back and forth with each other as spoils when they fought against each other.

## Daniel's Prophecies

**There are 135 prophecies in Daniel 11:1-35, and all were fulfilled in the Greek Empire after the time of**

**Alexander.** In Daniel 11:36- 12:13, we find prophecies about the kingdom of the antichrist, and the tribulation at the end of the age. None of these have yet to be fulfilled. But you know if the 135 prophecies were fulfilled, all of the future ones will be also.

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***Daniel 11:5** "Then the king of the South will grow strong, along with one of his princes who will gain ascendancy over him and obtain dominion; his domain will be a great dominion indeed."*

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The Ptolemies (southern kings of Egypt) dominated Israel from 323-204 BC, while the Seleucids (northern kings of Syria) dominated Israel from 204–165 BC. **There was a lot of intermarriage and intrigue between the two kingdoms; along with many wars, with Israel caught in the middle.** Let's look at the prophecies God spoke to Daniel, and then how they were fulfilled in history over 200 years later.

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***Daniel 11:6** "After some years they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South will come to the king of the North to carry out a peaceful arrangement. But she will not retain her position of power, nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in and the one who sired her as well as he who supported her in those times."*

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The second southern king, named Ptolemy II gave his daughter, Bernice, in marriage to the third northern king, named Antiochus II Theos for the purpose of making a peaceful alliance. Antiochus II got rid of his first wife when he married Bernice, and said any future children he has with her would be his lawful heirs. But when her father Ptolemy II died, Antiochus II took back his first wife; and she then killed Bernice and Antiochus II.

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***Daniel 11:7-9*** "But one of the descendants of her line will arise in his place, and he will come against their army and enter the fortress of the king of the North, and he will deal with them and display great strength. Also their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold he will take into captivity to Egypt, and he on his part will refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years. Then the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his own land."

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Ptolemy III (Bernice's son) became the next southern king, and he went to war against the next northern king, Seleucus II. Ptolemy won and took great treasure from Syria, along with their idols. Later on, Seleucus II tried to attack the Egypt again, but lost and went home. During each of these invasions, the armies of Syria and Egypt had to travel through the land of Israel.

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***Daniel 11:10-12*** "His sons will mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through, that he may again wage war up to his very fortress. The king of the South will be enraged and go forth and fight with the king of the North. Then the latter will raise a great multitude, but that multitude will be given into the hand of the former. When the multitude is carried away, his heart will be lifted up, and he will cause tens of thousands to fall; yet he will not prevail."

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Seleucus II sons, Seleucus III and Antiochus III, invaded the southern kingdom and fought against Ptolemy IV. They battled in Egypt for four years, and then Seleucus III died. Antiochus III kept up the battle and finally won, and went home. Ptolemy IV was furious that his army lost to Syria, so he took his army and went to the north to fight against them on their land. Even though Antiochus III had a greater army and fought on his land, he lost this war. They called a truce, and there was peace between the north and the south for a short time. After Ptolemy IV and his wife died mysteriously, their infant son, Ptolemy V, became the next king of the south.

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**Daniel 11:13-16** *"For the king of the North will again raise a greater multitude than the former, and after an interval of some years he will press on with a great army and much equipment. Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South; the violent ones among your people (Israel) will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down. Then the king of the North will come, cast up a siege ramp and capture a well-fortified city; and the forces of the South will not stand their ground, not even their choicest troops, for there will be no strength to make a stand. But he who comes against him will do as he pleases, and no one will be able to withstand him; he will also stay for a time in the Beautiful Land (Israel), with destruction in his hand."*

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Once again, Antiochus III gathered a huge army, including some Jewish mercenaries. The king and his army marched through Israel to Egypt to invade the southern kingdom. He captured the well-fortified city of Sidon, and overpowered the south. The Egyptian army was led by General Scopas, since the king was still a child. On Antiochus III's return to the north, he decided to wage war against Jerusalem. The city fell into his hands, and **Israel became part of the northern empire of Syria.**

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**Daniel 11:17-19** *"He will set his face to come with the power of his whole kingdom, bringing with him a proposal of peace which he will put into effect; he will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it. But she will not take a stand for him or be on his side. Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn. So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more."*

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Antiochus III arranged a marriage between his daughter, Cleopatra (not the famous one), and the 7-year old Ptolemy V. They married years later. Antiochus intended this to be his means of taking control of the southern kingdom, but Cleopatra sided with Ptolemy V instead of her father. Frustrated that he was not able to take the south, he decided to try to attack a Roman town on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. He was stopped and headed home in defeat. He stopped at a temple to plunder it on the way home, and was killed.

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**Daniel 11:20** *"Then in his place one will arise who will send an oppressor through the Jewel of his kingdom (Israel); yet within a few days he will be shattered, though not in anger nor in battle."*

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The next northern king was Seleucus IV. He oppressed Israel and raised taxes to pay for an army to withstand Rome, who was a rising threat to him. History tells us that he was poisoned by his brother, Antiochus Epiphanes.<sup>8</sup>

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**Daniel 11:21** *"In his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue."*

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# Antiochus Epiphanes

The next northern king was a **very despicable man** by the name of Antiochus Epiphanes.

He reigned for twelve years, from 175-164 BC. He was the youngest of the eight sons of Antiochus III, and the brother of Seleucus IV; whom he poisoned. He also killed his brother's son, who was the rightful heir; and named himself king. He went to Israel and murdered the high priest. He made an alliance with one of his two Egyptian nephews who were having a power struggle. Antiochus Epiphanes ended up attacking both of them.<sup>9</sup>

Antiochus Epiphanes took his army and attacked the southern kingdom, led by Ptolemy VI. Even though Ptolemy VI had an extremely large army, he lost the war because of schemes by his closest associates. The two kings sat down and made a peace treaty, but neither had any intention of keeping it. As Antiochus Epiphanes returned home, he went through Israel. He hated the people of Israel and persecuted them on the way home.<sup>10</sup>

Antiochus Epiphanes returned to Egypt with his large army because his two nephews had now allied themselves to Rome, who was challenging them to go to war against their uncle. Antiochus was enraged to be called out like this, and invaded Egypt; but this time he lost. The Romans ordered him to leave Egypt once and for all. He was afraid of Rome, who was gaining power in the world. The Romans had a fierce reputation for their brutal ways of dealing with their enemies.

Antiochus went home furious that he was bested, and he took out his wrath on Israel. At the time he got to Jerusalem, there was a lot of infighting in the leadership of Jerusalem. Out of spite (and stupidity) one group allowed Antiochus Epiphanes to come into their city. He treated all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with great cruelty (even those who helped him), and tore down the walls of the city. He burned the best buildings in Jerusalem and desecrated the temple by erecting a statue of Zeus there. He put a stop to the Jewish sacrifices and polluted the Bronze Altar by sacrificing a

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel 11:20

<sup>9</sup> Daniel 11:21-24

<sup>10</sup> Daniel 11:25-28

pig on it. He declared he was a god, and ordered altars to be erected all over Israel for the people to offer sacrifices to him. These events were called the Abomination of Desolation by the devout followers of God. The priests who opposed him were horribly murdered, along with their families.<sup>11</sup>

**Antiochus Epiphanes is a foreshadowing of the antichrist, who will be even more evil and cruel.**

**Antiochus issued a decree that all nations in his empire must abandon their own gods and customs,** so they could all become one people. If they did not, they and their families would be brutally murdered. All the Gentiles and many of the Jews submitted to this decree. They adopted the Greek language, worshipped their gods, dressed like them, and adopted Greek philosophy.<sup>12</sup> God was incensed by this decree and He threw down a challenge to the Greek Empire through His prophet Zechariah.

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***Zechariah 9:13-15** "For I will bend Judah as My bow, I will fill the bow with Ephraim. And I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece; and I will make you like a warrior's sword. Then the Lord will appear over them, and His arrow will go forth like lightning; and the Lord God will blow the trumpet, and will march in the storm winds of the south. **The Lord of hosts will defend them.** And they will devour and trample on the sling stones; and they will drink and be boisterous as with wine; and they will be filled like a sacrificial basin, drenched like the corners of the altar. And the Lord their God will save them in that day as the flock of His people; for they are as the stones of a crown, sparkling in His land."*

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## Maccabean Revolt

God stirred up a remnant of the Jews, who loved Him and kept His commandments. These Jewish men

refused to obey Antiochus' decree.<sup>13</sup> **A priest named Mattathias declared:** *"I don't care if every Gentile in this empire has obeyed the king and yielded to the command to abandon the religion of his ancestors. My children, my relatives, and I will continue to keep the covenant that God made with our ancestors. With God's help we will never abandon His Law or disobey His commands. We will not obey the king's decree, and we will not change our way of worship in the least."*<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Daniel 11:29-31

<sup>12</sup> Daniel 11:32

<sup>13</sup> Daniel 11:33-35

<sup>14</sup> The Book of Maccabees 2:19

He led a band of men to rebel against the Greek Empire, using guerilla warfare tactics, until his death in 166 BC. At his death, he charged his sons to continue the fight against Antiochus Epiphanes: *"But you, my sons, must be devoted to the Law and ready to die to defend God's covenant with our ancestors. Take each of these ancestors of ours as an example, and you will realize that no one who puts his trust in the Lord will ever lack strength."*<sup>15</sup>

Mattathias had five sons named John Gaddis, Simon Mathes, Judas Maccabeus, Eleazar Auran, and Jonathan Apphus. They stood up against the blasphemy of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Greeks. Two of his sons were put in charge of the rebellion against the Greeks. Simon Mathes led the family and **Judas Maccabeus** commanded their small army. They went around Israel and destroyed all the pagan altars, and killed all Greek officials.

Under the command of Judas Maccabeus, they killed every governor sent by the Greeks. Even though they were greatly outnumbered and poorly equipped, they came against every army that was sent to destroy them. **Before every battle, they consulted the Word of God and prayed for the Lord God to lead them in battle. God was with them, and they were always victorious.** Finally they were able to drive the Greeks completely out of Israel. **Israel regained its sovereignty over the land of Judah.**

Judas Maccabeus became the High Priest in Israel, and he and his followers purified the temple and repaired it so the worship of God could be resumed for the priests and the people. Three years after Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple, it was cleansed and restored. For eight days they celebrated with a great feast starting on December 25, 165 BC. The Jews still celebrate this day, which they call the **Festival of Lights, or Hanukkah.**

The remaining Greek kings kept sending forces against Israel, but Judas Maccabeus was able to defeat them because **God was with him.** When Judas died in battle, his brother **Jonathan** took over as High Priest and commander. **The Greek kings of Syria and Egypt continued to battle against each other. With each battle, the losers would take out their frustrations on Israel.** The walls of Jerusalem were torn down and rebuilt numerous times during these tumultuous times, but they were never conquered.

## Pharisees & Sadducees

Three religious factions came out of the lineage of Judas Maccabees:

Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. The Pharisees and the Sadducees made up the **Great Sanhedrin**, a kind of Jewish Supreme Court, which was responsible for interpreting civil and religious laws.

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<sup>15</sup> The Book of Maccabees 2:50, 61

The **Pharisees** were the most important of the groups. They thought they were the spiritual fathers of Israel. They believe the oral law that God gave Moses was just as important as the written Law, and they believed they were the only ones who could interpret it for the people. They wrote down these oral laws in the Talmud. **They devoted themselves to teaching and prayer.**

The **Sadducees** were the elitists of the priests, led by the high priest. But they also were the most liberal and worldly, for they embraced the Greek lifestyle. They rejected the oral law of the Pharisees, and insisted on a liberal interpretation of the written Law. **They devoted themselves to the rituals of the temple.**

The **Essenes** believed the Pharisees and the Sadducees had corrupted the Temple and Jerusalem, so they moved out of Jerusalem and lived in monasteries in **very remote areas of the desert**, often on the side of a mountain. They meticulously copied the Old and New Testaments and stored them in clay pots in dark caves to preserve them. In 1946 AD, some teenage shepherds found some of these clay pots in a cave near Qumran, which still contained some of the Essene manuscripts. They are called the Dead Sea Scrolls, because of their proximity to the Dead Sea; and are now in a museum in Jerusalem.



## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

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1. Read the 3 prophecies in Daniel 2, 7, and 8 that spoke of the Greek Empire. Who or what was signified by the various parts of the statue and animals?

Who was the mighty king in Daniel 11:3?

2. Who was the despicable king mentioned in Daniel 11:21-35?

Who is the future king mentioned in Daniel 11:36-45? List the evil things he will do and say.

Compare this future king with the little horn in Daniel 7, and the beast in Revelation 13:1-10.

3. We have seen in this study that God's ways are not man's ways- He does things very differently. Read 1 Corinthians 1:27. How was this verse lived out with the Greek city-states of Athens, Sparta, and Macedonia?
4. Even though Alexander was determined to conquer all the nations of the world within his reach, why he did not touch Israel?
5. God is the one who raised up Alexander to conquer the world. What were some of the reasons why God would have done this?

# 19

## Roman Empire

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**Daniel 7:23** *"Thus he said: 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.'"*

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The Roman Empire began as a group of villages on the west coast of Italy. The villages eventually joined together and became the city of Rome. It was ruled by kings until it became a republic in 509 BC. **This new form of government allowed the people to elect their representatives.** Each year the senate would elect two leaders, one to lead the government and the other to lead the military.

The Roman culture was steeped in mythology, the worship of many gods. They believed they were descendants of Mars, the god of war. **They excelled in all forms of warfare**, having perhaps the most successful and powerful military force in history. The Romans had a massive full-time professional army that was well organized and well provisioned. They were constantly devising ways to adapt to new enemies and new surroundings. Along with being well trained and physically fit, they were determined and ruthless to carry out whatever mission they were told to perform.

The Roman Army was extremely fierce and ruthless. They destroyed everything that got in their way, and they devised very cruel forms of punishment and death, as a deterrent to rebellion in the lands they conquered. There had never been a more brutal and powerful empire as the Romans, which is why **Daniel could only describe them as a dreadful and terrifying beast that was extremely strong, devouring, crushing, and trampling everyone in its path.**<sup>16</sup>

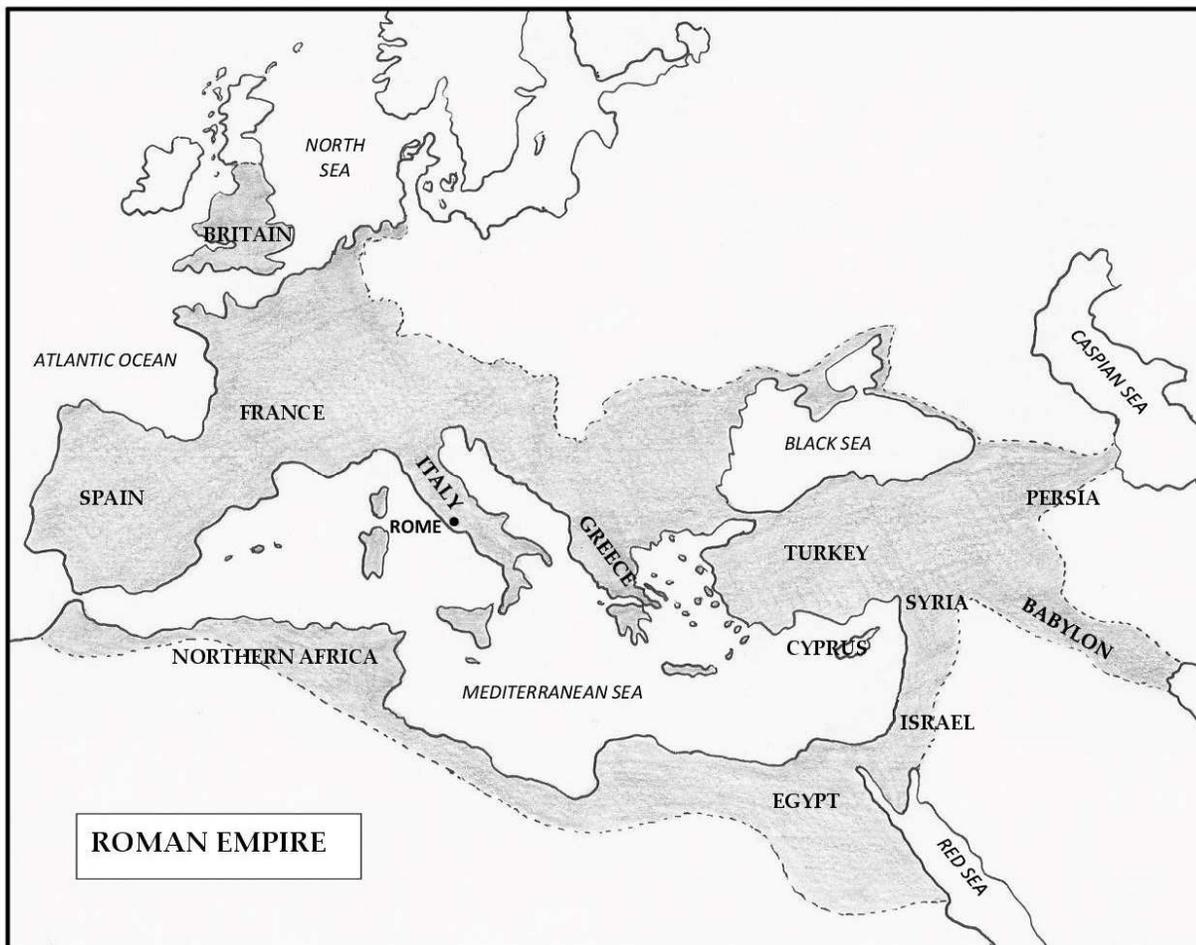
The Roman army began taking over the lands around them and then continuing to work outwards in all directions. When the Greek Empire was strong, the Romans stayed away from their land. But once Alexander the Great died, and his kingdom was divided they were easier prey. The more the Syrian and Egyptian kings wared against each other, the weaker the Greek Empire became. Rome even got involved in some of their fights. But soon, the Romans began picking off pieces of their empire, until the Greeks were totally defeated.

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<sup>16</sup> Daniel 7:7, 19, 23

## Riches of God's Word

**The Romans devoured the nations and people in the world around them.** At its peak, the Roman Empire encompassed lands in the current nations of: Italy, Portugal, Spain, Andorra, France, England, Monaco, Luxemburg, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, San Marino, Malta, Austria, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia, Croatia, Bosnia/Herzegovina, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Albania, Greece, Macedonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Syria, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Cyprus, Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Sudan.



Even though the Romans destroyed the Greek Empire, Greek culture flourished in the world. **The Romans adopted everything Greek**, even their gods (except they changed their names). Whenever the Romans took control of a country and found something they liked, they would slightly change it or call it something else, but it was essentially the same thing. The Romans spoke Latin, but they used the Greek Alphabet and Greek was spoken throughout the Roman Empire.

## Defeat of Israel

The Maccabeans ruled Israel until the **Romans came in 63 BC**. At that time, Israel was in political disarray. The last Maccabean king, Alexander, named his wife Alexandra to succeed him as ruler. She sided with the Pharisees, who killed many men who opposed them. When she died, her two sons, **Hyrchanus and Aristobolus vied for power**. Pompey, a Roman General, had defeated the nearby land of Damascus. **Both of these brothers sent Pompey expensive gifts (bribes) to persuade him to side with them in their power struggle**. Pompey said he would come to Judea and decide there. Aristobolus gathered an army just in case war broke out. This angered Pompey and he waged war against Jerusalem. Thousands of Jews were killed by the Romans, as well as by the opposing armies of the brothers.

Pompey took over Israel, but he did not loot the temple or stop the worship of God. **Pompey made Israel a tributary of Rome, meaning he would let them alone if they paid heavy taxes to Rome, and acknowledge their submission to them**. Pompey appointed Hyrcanus and the Sadducees to be in charge, since they seemed the most like Romans to him.

## Julius Caesar

When Pompey returned to Rome, he teamed up with Julius Caesar and Marcus Crassus, two other powerful generals. **They formed a three-man political alliance, they called the first Triumvirate**. They appointed themselves as leaders over the government and the military. **This was the end of the republic in Rome**. Crassus died in battle in 53BC. The two remaining generals continuing their conquest of the nations of the world. But between 49-45 BC Pompey and Julius Caesar entered into a civil war against each other, encouraged by the Roman senate who thought Julius Caesar was too powerful. Pompey died in these wars, and in 44BC, Julius Caesar was assassinated.

## Augustus Caesar

Caesar's adopted son Octavian formed an alliance with Mark Antony and Marcus Lepidus which they called the 2<sup>nd</sup> Triumvirate; and they killed all of the enemies of Julius Caesar. Once this was accomplished, Octavian and Mark Antony pushed Marcus aside, and then Octavian and Mark Antony fought against each other for total control of Rome. **Antony sought help from Cleopatra, the queen of the Egyptians, but lost; and Egypt became part of the Roman Empire**.

In 27 BC, Octavian became the sole leader of the Roman Empire, and he changed his name to **Augustus Caesar, and became the first Roman Emperor**. He ruled until 14 AD. His reign was marked with great stability and peace. **Augustus Caesar was the Roman Emperor during the birth and childhood of Jesus**. He was the Roman emperor who **ordered a census to be taken in**

**Israel the year Jesus was born**, causing Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem; which fulfilled a prophecy of where the Messiah would be born.<sup>17</sup>

The Roman Emperors were busy about business in Rome and conquest of the world, and they did not want to be bothered with governing the nations they had conquered. Instead they appointed local men to rule as governors over the people in the conquered lands. Even though they were appointed to be governors, they called themselves kings.

## Herod the Great

**The first governor/king we see mentioned in the New Testament after the Romans conquered Israel called himself Herod the**

**Great**, and he was given this position in 37 BC. Herod was the son of Antipater, who had been forced to become a Jew by Hyrcanus. Even though Herod was technically a Jew by birth, he hated the Jews. It is interesting to note that Herod's wife was the daughter of Hyrcanus. **Herod was granted almost unlimited autonomy to do as he saw fit in Israel.**

**Herod was a great admirer of Greco-Roman culture**, so he launched a massive construction program throughout Israel to have more Roman style buildings in his country. He created an entire city he called Caesarea, several palaces and fortresses, including Masada near the Dead Sea. **His most impressive building project was the remodeling the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.** This restoration took 46 years to complete.<sup>18</sup> When it was finished, it was one of the most magnificent buildings of its time. This was the temple that Jesus spoke in often in his three years of His ministry.

But despite his many achievements, **Herod failed to win the trust and support of his Jewish subjects, probably because Herod was a man of great pride and cruelty.** He was the king when Jesus was born, who ordered all boys under the age of two to be killed, just to prevent Jesus from fulfilling His role as the promised Jewish King.<sup>19</sup> An angel told Joseph to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt until Herod the Great died in 1 AD.<sup>20</sup>

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***Micah 5:2** "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity."*

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When Herod the Great died, Rome realized Herod had too much power, so they divided the local governing of Israel between his three sons. **Ten years after Herod's death, Rome took a more**

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<sup>17</sup> Luke 2:1-7

<sup>18</sup> John 2:20

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 2:1-7, 16

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 2:13-15

**active role in the governing of Israel because of the corruption and poor leadership of the kings of Herod's lineage.** They appointed Roman soldiers as procurators and prefects to make sure taxes were collected, and the people did not get out of hand. The Roman Emperor Tiberius Caesar appointed Pontius Pilate to be his representative in Jerusalem during the ministry and crucifixion of Jesus, to make sure what Rome wanted was done.

**After the death and resurrection of Jesus, Jerusalem and all Israel was in turmoil.** The Jewish leaders feared and hated the disciples of Jesus and their ever increasing followers. The Roman leaders sent by the Roman emperors became more corrupt and cruel. This led to rebellion and many violent skirmishes between the Romans and the Jews. In 66 AD, the Roman procurator Florus, who was very greedy and hated the Jews, took silver from the temple when the tax revenues were low. **This led to a full-scale revolt by the Jews against Rome.**

Rome ordered the Roman Governor of Syria to take his twenty thousand soldiers to Jerusalem. He tried to get through the city walls for six months, but failed. He returned to Syria after he had lost six thousand of his soldiers. **Emperor Nero sent Vespasian, a decorated general, to end the rebellion.** He and his troops circled Jerusalem, but before they could attack, they got word that Nero had died, and he was ordered back to Rome. There was a power struggle as to who the next emperor would be, and Vespasian won. As soon as he became Emperor, he appointed his son Titus to conduct the Jewish War. **In 70 AD, Titus and his soldiers were able to break through the walls of Jerusalem.** They killed the people in the city, destroyed and then burned everything in Jerusalem, including the Temple.

It was at this point in history that Israel ceased to exist. **It wasn't until 1948 AD that Israel became a nation again!**

**Please Read Daniel 9.**

## Rome in Prophecy

Remember when we studied Daniel, and he had a visit from the archangel Gabriel? At the end of his prophecy, Gabriel

explained to Daniel that there would be a time period in the future for the sons of Israel and Jerusalem. In this time period the following things would occur:<sup>21</sup>

- an end would come to transgression and sin
- atonement would be made for iniquities
- everlasting righteousness be brought to all
- all visions and prophecies would be fulfilled
- the Temple would be set apart for God

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<sup>21</sup> Daniel 9:24-27

- *Jerusalem would be rebuilt*
- *Messiah would come and then be killed*
- *a people of the prince to come after Persia (Rome) would destroy Jerusalem and the Temple*
- its (antichrist) end will come, but before that he will make a peace covenant with Israel (and allow the Temple to be rebuilt)
- he will break the covenant in the middle, stop the sacrifices in the Temple, bring abominations
- then he will be judged and completely destroyed

**This time period would last for 70 weeks. The Hebrew word for weeks means “sevens”; so 70 weeks is 490 years.** This prophecy was to start with a decree to rebuild Jerusalem, which occurred in 445BC. Nehemiah came before King Artaxerxes of Persia asking for permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. The king agreed and provided the resources Nehemiah needed to complete this work. The prophecy stated that after 7 weeks and then 62 weeks, the long-awaited Messiah would come, and then be killed. Shortly after that, Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed. These events happened during the Roman Empire in 32AD and 70 AD.

**The only events in this list that have occurred so far are italicized. The rest of the items to be accomplished in this time framed will occur in the last remaining week, the 70<sup>th</sup> week.** After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD by the Romans, the nation of Israel ceased to exist. Christians had left Jerusalem because of the persecution of the Jewish leaders. They scattered all over the world, while most of the Jews stayed in Jerusalem. The Romans killed most of them when they destroyed the city. **The time clock for the 70 weeks stopped after the death of Jesus, because the focus shifted to Gentile believers, and remember this time frame is all about the Jewish people.**

**The time clock will resume in the last week (7 years) of history, when the antichrist come to prominence and power.** He will come from one nation that was a part of the Roman Empire. The antichrist will make a seven-year peace covenant with Israel, and allow their Temple to be rebuilt and be fully functioning with sacrifices. But after 3 ½ years, he will break the covenant, stop the sacrifices in the Temple, bring great abominations and wars. **But at the end of the last 3 ½ years, the Lord Jesus will return and the antichrist will be judged and completely destroyed. Then ALL the rest of this prophecy will come to pass.**

## God's Sovereignty

“sovereign” means **one who possesses supreme power, one who has unlimited power and authority.** It come from a Latin word that means *over and above*. God is over and above everything.

I included this prophecy from Daniel 9 in this chapter on the Roman Empire, to **show the sovereignty of God!** The word

**He is the most exalted being who is certainly greater than us.** He is El Elyon, our sovereign ruler, and He is Elohim, our creator. God created everything out of nothing, just by speaking it into existence. With man, God came down in the form of Father God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit to personally fashion mankind in Their image, and then they bent over to breathe life into Adam and Eve!

**God created us for fellowship with Him, and He gave us a will to freely choose to love Him or reject Him.** It is our choice! If we choose to love Him, oh the delightful journey we will undertake into the true intimacy of His love for us. But if we choose to reject His love and directions for our lives, He is greatly grieved by the loss of a friendship with us that He would love to develop into something more!

We must know that rejecting God and choosing to live our lives in a way that seems right to us is sin! In His Word, God has shown us the path of righteousness and obedience leads to blessings in our lives. But it will not go well for us if we choose the path of rebellion and sin. **We must truly understand that our sins separate us from God.** We have seen over and over and over again in this study the tendency of mankind to choose sin over obedience and righteousness. When we do this we turn our backs from God and say, *“No thank you, You are not what I need.”*

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***1 John 1:6, 8** “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth... If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.”*

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As much as this grieves God, He still loves us. **Over the 6000 years that man has been on the earth interacting with God, He has been reaching out to us in love.** He spoke directly to righteous men from the time of Adam and Eve to Abraham. He also spoke directly to Moses and Joshua, but the people wanted them to talk to God for them. God then set up Priests, Judges and Prophets to communicate with His people. **You know this had to have grieved the Lord to know that the sons of Israel did not want to communicate directly with Him!** The people wanted God to help them, and they liked saying they were God’s chosen people, but their sinful ways separated them from fellowship with God.

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***Ezekiel 11:19-20** “And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.”*

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Towards the end of the reigns of the Jewish kings, God started talking through His prophets in a different way. The Lord shared about a time in the future when **He would make a new covenant**

**with mankind, and He would give them a new heart and put His Spirit in them.** God was going to do this so mankind would finally walk in obedience and love towards Him. He was longing for them to be His people, and for Him to be their God! He wants to have the intimate friendship with all of us that He planned over 6000 years ago when He created Adam and Eve.

God gave many prophecies as to when, where, and how this would come about; and they were all fulfilled by His Son, Jesus Christ. Do you know Jesus? **The Messiah, who knew no sin, came to earth to explain the love God has for all mankind.** He became the perfect sacrifice for our sins—past, present, and future. His shed blood cleanses us from all our sins.

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**1 John 1:9** *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

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God is righteous, and He cannot fellowship with those who walk in sin, no matter how much He loves us – and He does love us very much! But if we will confess our sins to Him and believe that Jesus took the penalty for our sins, He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness; and we become righteous in God's eyes!<sup>22</sup> **Can you imagine the rejoicing in God's heart when this happens?**

*Beloved, know today that I have you inscribed on My Hand and I call you by name, I can identify you out of millions! I have "fearfully made you wonderful"! There is not a moment of your life I have not meticulously designed as a Master Artist! Because of My Son, His grace on your life, you are My poem, My work of art! You need only to walk in My excellent workmanship! Precious and Treasured, I have made you a responsible being, endowed with ability and freedom to have an intimate relationship with Me! Walk with Me and I will make you so alive with My purpose! I have made promises with you! Promises I cannot break, but know I will continually walk with you through every "valley", every "lonely", every "difficult", every "weary" to bring balance, symmetry, order; a work of art from it! I am walking in every room of your heart, this day, you can be sure! And where I am there is certain peace because the enemy's power is broken! Walk with Me in every situation . . . responding to My Presence! I am your amazing rest, ability, and joy; all that you need! The reason you awoke this morning is to be with Me, to respond, to walk with Me as your complete source of life!!! O Treasured One, it is I that make you so alive!!<sup>23</sup>*

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<sup>22</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21

<sup>23</sup> Taken from Each Day from the Garden, by Cheryl Estes

## Digging Deeper into the Riches of God's Word

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1. All throughout the Old Testament there were prophecies of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Messiah, Jesus Christ. As we have seen in this lesson, Jesus' life as a man occurred during the reign of the Romans. Look up the following Old Testament prophecies, write down what was prophesied, and then using cross-references find the New Testament fulfillment.

- Micah 5:2
- Hosea 11:1
- Jeremiah 31:15
- Isaiah 53:12
- Psalm 22:15-16; Zechariah 12:9-10; Genesis 3:15
- Psalm 22:18
- Exodus 12:46; Psalm 34:20
- Zechariah 12:10
- Psalm 16:10; Psalm 49:15
- Isaiah 53:5-12; Exodus 12:3, 5-6; Isaiah 53:7
- Psalm 16:10-11; Psalm 49:15

2. Read about the beasts in Revelation 13 and 17. Compare them to the dreadful and terrifying beast in Daniel 7 and the small horn in Daniel 8. What similarities do you see, and what additional information is given in Revelation about this beast?

3. In our study we have seen the Sovereignty of God displayed. What does sovereignty mean?

Please read Job 38. This was God's response to the wrong understanding of God by Job's friends. What are some of the things God says that only He has done that point to His sovereignty?

Give at least five examples of God's Sovereignty from the stories in this study.

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*"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, "whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for "whoever will call on the Name of the Lord will be saved." **Romans 10:9-13***

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# Kings of Israel

KING	FATHER	YEARS REIGNED	BRIEF HISTORY	GOOD/ BAD	PROPHET
Jeroboam					
Nadab					
Baasha					
Elah					
Zimri					
Omri					
Ahab					
Ahaziah					
Jehoram					
Jehu					

# Kings of Israel

KING	FATHER	YEARS REIGNED	BRIEF HISTORY	GOOD/ BAD	PROPHET
Jehoahaz					
Jehoash					
Jeroboam II					
Zechariah					
Shallum					
Menahem					
Pekahiah					
Pekah					
Hoshea					

# Kings of Judah

KING	FATHER	YEARS REIGNED	BRIEF HISTORY	GOOD/ BAD	PROPHET
Rehoboam					
Abijam					
Asa					
Jehoshaphat					
Jehoram					
Ahaziah					
Queen Athaliah					
Joash					
Amaziah					
Uzziah					

# Kings of Judah

KING	FATHER	YEARS REIGNED	BRIEF HISTORY	GOOD/BAD	PROPHET
Jotham					
Ahaz					
Hezekiah					
Manasseh					
Amon					
Josiah					
Jehoahaz					
Jehoiakim					
Jehoiachin					
Zedekiah					

# RICHES *of* GOD'S WORD

## Book 2 POSSESSING THE LAND

I pray you enjoyed your journey through the final 1500 years of the Old Testament leading up to the life of Jesus Christ. We started this study with God's chosen people, the Hebrews, preparing to go into the Promised Land. They had many challenges; some ending in victory and others in defeat. God faithfully lead His people into greatness when they were following after Him, and then into captivity for a time until they repented of their sins and turned their hearts back to Him. This study clearly shows us God's sovereign hand in the rise and fall of nations. We will look at the political and religious atmosphere in Israel brought by the Romans in the years before, during, and after the life of Jesus Christ.

This book is a continuation of our historical journey through the Old Testament. If you have not read **Riches of God's Word, Book 1 – Beginnings**, I would encourage you to pick it up to study the first 2500 years of mankind on earth, and learn about the God who created us and loves us more than we can imagine. This amazing history was preserved in the first five books of the Old Testament. Along with this history, I hope you have a greater understanding of the character of God, especially His power, love, faithfulness, patience, and holiness.

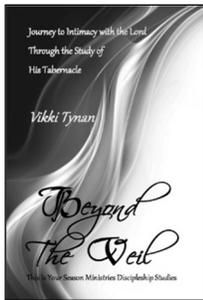
You can order additional copies of this book, **Riches of God's Word, Book 2 – Possessing the Land**, or **Riches of God's Word, Book 1 – Beginnings** from Amazon Books. You can also see other discipleship studies on our web site: [www.thecomingmessenger.org](http://www.thecomingmessenger.org).



This Is Your Season Ministries  
P O Box 206  
Rockwall, TX 75087

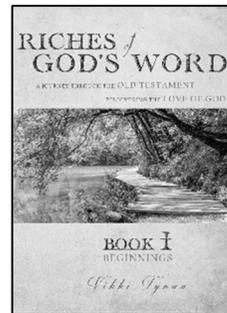
This Is Your Season Discipleship Studies are designed to encourage all believers to dig deeper into the Word of God, to know the Love of God, and to be filled completely with His Presence.

## OTHER BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM THIS AUTHOR:



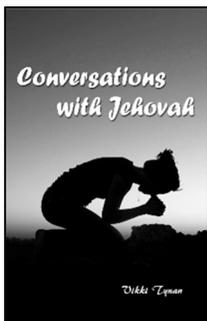
### Beyond the Veil

As we walk through each part of the Tabernacle, we take a surprising journey deeper into God's Presence.



### Riches of God's Word Book 1- Beginnings

Bible Study through the Old Testament discovering the Love of God. Book 1 covers the 2500 years of history from Creation through Moses.



### Conversations with Jehovah

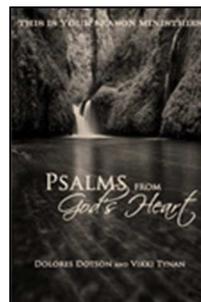
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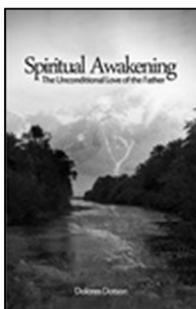
### This is Your Season

God has designated seasons for our lives. This book shows us how to accept our seasons and grow from them.



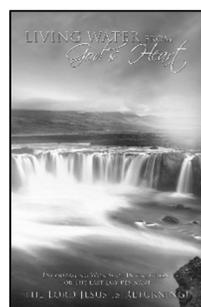
### Psalms from God's Heart

What would you do if you were gathered together with other believers and God showed up and poured out the secrets and passions of His heart to you?



### Spiritual Awakening

God is adamant about awakening us spiritually to know who He is and who we are in Him.



### Living Water from God's Heart

This is the continuation of Psalms from God's Heart. In this season before His Son returns, God is beckoning His people to be lights in the growing darkness, and to bring Him comfort through our prayers and worship.