The Living Commentary Series

THE BROKEN CROWN



Lessons from the Divided Kingdoms of Israel and Judah

1 Kings – 2 Chronicles

By Dr. James Rasbeary

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DEDICATION

This volume is affectionately dedicated to

DR. CLAYTON SUGGS

Pastor of the Bible Baptist Church of Rendon, Texas.

"Learn the Bible when you are young, and when you are old you will draw from it like a well." Dr. J. Frank Norris

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INTRODUCTION

(Rom 15:4) "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

Many Christians have the erroneous idea that the Old Testament has no relevance for a New Testament believer. But Paul, under Holy Spirit inspiration, said that those things which were written aforetime (the Old Testament Scriptures) were written for OUR learning, and Paul was writing to New Testament Christians. The things that we learn from the Old Testament Books will give us patience, comfort, and hope.

The Old Testament and the New Testament form ONE BOOK, not two separate Books. The New Testament did not do away with the Old, but *completed* it. (*Mat 5:17-18*) "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. {18} For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

The Old Testament is the New Testament *concealed*; the New Testament is the Old Testament *revealed*. They are not contradictory, but complimentary. They complete each other. Without the New Testament, the Old Testament is a beginning without an ending; without the Old Testament, the New Testament is an ending without a beginning. Hundreds of verses in the New Testament are quotes of verses in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament, with all it is wonderful stories, lessons, history, laws, and principles, ought to be a vital part of a New Testament Christian's life.

One reason I believe many Christians do not read their Bibles more faithfully is that they do not understand the background of much of

the Old Testament. Many a Christian sits down in January with Genesis and is lost by the time they get through 2 Kings (who are all those kings, anyway?). They struggle through the Levitical sacrifices and the nine chapters of chronologies in 1 Chronicles. Then, they try to struggle through the Prophetical Books, But, lacking a basic understanding of what these Books are about, many a Christian becomes quickly discouraged. He then settles into the bad habit of reading whatever the Bible falls open to instead of systematically reading through the entire Word of God. The attitude is developed that, "I just can't understand the Bible." First of all, let's get rid of that attitude. God said these things were "written for our learning." That means that I CAN learn them. The Bible is an open Book, and, if you are saved, the Author of the Bible lives in you. It is not written in secret code. It was not just written for scholars, divines, or theologians. It was written for "our learning."

At the center of the Old Testament are twelve Books called the Historical Books.

A proper understanding of the Historical Books is key to a proper understanding of the Bible. These Books cover approximately 1000 years – from around 1400 B.C. to around 400 B.C. They include Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

When you have a basic understanding of the Historical Books, the other 39 Books of the Old Testament fall right into place, and much of the New Testament opens up as well.

- > The Pentateuch leads into the Historical Books.
- The Poetical Books (except for Job) and the Prophetical Books (Isaiah – Malachi) are set against the backdrop of the Historical Books.
- > The Historical Books lead into the Gospels.

In this book, we are going to study some biographical lessons on some of the most important kings in the Kingdoms of Israel. From

their lives, which were *"written for our learning,"* we will learn doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 *Tim. 3:16-17*).

It is also my hope that these lessons will open up a huge section of the Bible to your understanding, so that you will read an enjoy your Bible more than ever before!

THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

The first king was **Saul**. But because of his disobedience to God, God took the kingdom away from Saul's family (*1 Samuel 15:28*).

After the death of Saul in battle, the kingdom rent in two. Judah made **David** their king, but Israel made Ishbosheth (Saul's remaining son) their king (2 Samuel 3:1). Seven years later, David united all the Tribes into one kingdom. The kingdom stayed united through the last 33 ½ years of his reign.

Solomon reigned over a united kingdom for forty years, but his apostasy and worship of false gods caused God to determine to rend the kingdom in two after his death:

(1 Ki 11:29-36) "And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field: {30} And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: {31} And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: {32} (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:) {33} Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father. {34} Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes: {35} But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes. {36} And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there."

Solomon died, and his son **Rehoboam** began to reign. However, the united kingdom was showing signs of division (1 Kings 12:3-4). Rehoboam's foolishness caused the kingdom to be divided again, this time irreparably. The Northern Tribes elected **Jeroboam** as their king (2 Chr 10:16-19).

The northern Tribes retained the name of **Israel**. The two southern Tribes (Judah and Benjamin) took the name of **Judah**, the largest Tribe.

Judah's capital remained **Jerusalem**, while **Samaria** eventually became the capital of the Northern Kingdom.

A SUMMARY:

- 1. Kingdom of Saul United Kingdom, but divided after his death.
- 2. Kingdom of David Divided at first, but united after the death of Abner and Ishbosheth (2 Samuel 3-4).
- 3. Kingdom of Solomon a United Kingdom, but divided after his death.
- 4. The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, divided for the rest of their history.

Chapter One

SOLOMON THE WISEST FOOL TO EVER LIVE



(1 Ki 10:23-29) "So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. {24} And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. {25} And they brought

every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armour, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year. {26} And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he bestowed in the cities for chariots, and with the king at Jerusalem. {27} And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as the sycamore trees that are in the vale, for abundance. {28} And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price. {29} And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring them out by their means."

Background of the Kingdom of Israel

The first king of all Israel was **Saul**. He was the people's choice (*1* Samuel 8:4-22). God gave them what they wanted – a man that looked like a king (he was probably seven feet tall) and that would fight their battles for them. But, because of Saul's persistent stubbornness and rebellion, God stated that He would take the

kingdom away from Saul's family and give it to a man after his own heart (1 Samuel 13:13-14). Years later, Saul was killed in battle against the Philistines.

CHRONOLOGY OF SOLOMON'S LIFE			
Year Event	Solomon's Age		
1034 Birth			
1023 Absalom's Revolution	11		
1015 Crowned King	19		
1015 Birth of Rehoboam	19		
1014 Married Pharaoh's daughter	20		
1014 Given his great wisdom	20		
1011 Began construction of the Tem	ple 23		
1004 Finished & dedicated the Temp	ole 30		
994 God appeared to him for the se	econd time 40		
992 Visited by the Queen of Sheba	42		
992 Apostasy into idolatry	42		
975 Death	59		

After the death of Saul, the kingdom divided between the Northern Tribes and Judah. The Northern Tribes, led by General Abner, made

Ishbosheth, Saul's remaining son, their king. Judah made David their king (2 Samuel 2:10-11).

About seven years later, Abner was murdered by Joab, David's general. Following this, Ishbosheth was murdered by two of his own men. After the death of these leaders and David's diplomatic outreach, the Northern Tribes came and made David their king (2 Samuel 5:1-5).

David reigned over a united kingdom for 33 ½ years, during which time he conquered his enemies and made Jerusalem the capital. Because of his sins in the *"matter of Uriah the Hittite"* (1 Kings 15:5), his kingdom was beset by problems from within – including two revolutions staged by his own sons, Absalom and Adonijah.

Solomon was born to David and Bathsheeba. The baby conceived in their sin of adultery died after birth (2 Samuel 12). However, God gave them Solomon, whom God called "Jedidiah," which means "beloved of God." (2 Sam 12:24-25) "And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him. {25} And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD."

Before David's death, he appointed Solomon to take his place as king over all Israel. He was not David's oldest son. Adonijah was the oldest. But Solomon was God's choice for the kingdom (1 Kings 1:29-30). David had sworn to Bathsheeba that Solomon would be his successor.

At the tender age of nineteen, Solomon became the king of all Israel. And for about twenty-three years, he was an exceptional king. It doesn't appear that he fell into idolatry until he was around forty-two years of age. The last seventeen years of his life, he was the "wisest fool to ever live." He died at age fifty-nine after ruling for forty years.

Solomon was used of God to write three Books of the Bible:

- The Song of Solomon (probably in his youth);
- Proverbs (at the height of his wisdom and walk with God);
- Ecclesiastes (in his old age).

This lesson will break Solomon's life down into three main divisions:

- Solomon's *Faith* and *Favour*.
- Solomon's *Fame* and *Fortune*.
- Solomon's *Folly* and *Failure*.

I. SOLOMON'S FAITH AND FAVOUR.

In his youth, Solomon loved the Lord. (1 Ki 3:3-4) "And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. {4} And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar."

He walked in the statutes and laws of his father. He loved to offer sacrifices and worship God. Gibeon was where the Tabernacle was at that time (1 Chron. 16:39; 2 Chron. 1:3-6). Though David had brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, the brazen altar was still in Gibeon.

At age twenty, God appeared to Solomon the first time with a "blank check:"

(1 Ki 3:5-14) "In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. {6} And Solomon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. {7} And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. {8} And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. {9} Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? {10} And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. {11} And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; {12} Behold, I have done according to thy words: Io, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. {13} And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. {14} And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days."

(2 Chr 1:10) "Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?"

Solomon's desire for wisdom and understanding, so that he might lead God's people properly, pleased the Lord. Solomon's desire was not selfish vainglory, but a desire to serve God and serve God's people. Solomon later wrote about God's wisdom:

- (Prov 4:7) "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."
- (Prov 8:11) "For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it."

(Prov 24:5) "A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength."

God is still pleased with a Christian's sincere, unselfish desire for wisdom. (James 1:5) "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

God gave Solomon wisdom as well as riches, and a conditional promise of long life if he would walk in God's commandments (Solomon did not, and therefore died eleven years younger than his father).

How wise was Solomon?

(1 Ki 4:29-34) "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. {30} And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. {31} For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. {32} And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. {33} And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. {34} And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom."

Matthew Henry described the wisdom of Solomon:

"He had wisdom and understanding, exceeding much, great knowledge of distant countries and the histories of former times, a quickness of thought, strength of memory, and clearness of judgment, such as never any man had. It is called largeness of heart; for the heart is often put for the intellectual powers. He had a vast compass of knowledge, could take things entire, and had an admirable faculty of **laying things together...** The greatness of Solomon's wisdom is illustrated by comparison. Chaldea and Egypt were nations famous for learning; thence the Greeks borrowed theirs; but the greatest scholars of these nations came short of Solomon, v. 30. ...It was talked of in all nations round about. His great wealth and glory made his wisdom much more illustrious, and have him those opportunities of showing it which those cannot have that live in poverty and obscurity. The jewel of wisdom may receive great advantage by the setting of it."

It was during the first twenty years of his reign, while still in love with God, and while the Temple was being built, that he was used of God to write **the Book of Proverbs** and **the Song of Solomon**.

Solomon's faith was rewarded with the privilege of building the Temple.

The Temple was the desire of David's heart, but God would not allow him to build it because he had shed too much blood in war (1 *Chron. 28:3*). The Temple was to draw men to the Lord. David had made too many enemies, and God wanted the Temple to be associated with a man of peace.

The greatest achievement of Solomon's reign was the construction of the Temple. Tens of thousands of men were employed for seven years in building the magnificent structure. It was, in David's words, to be "*exceeding magnifical*, of fame and of glory throughout all countries" (1 Chr 22:5).

No expense was too great. The inside was covered with pure gold. (1 Ki 6:21-22) "So Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold: and he made a partition by the chains of gold before the oracle; and he overlaid it with gold. {22} And the whole house he overlaid with gold, until he had finished all the house: also the whole altar that was by the oracle he overlaid with gold." Even the

floor was gold. (1 Ki 6:30) "And the floor of the house he overlaid with gold, within and without."

The Temple replaced the Tabernacle of Moses as the specific place where God would meet with men. On the dedication day, the Shekinah glory of God filled the Temple (1 Kings 8).

God favoured Solomon with a second personal visit after the Temple was completed and dedicated (1 Kings 9:1-9).

(1 Ki 9:3-9) "And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eves and mine heart shall be there perpetually. {4} And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: {5} Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel. {6} But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: {7} Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people: {8} And at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss: and they shall say. Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and to this house? {9} And they shall answer, Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought upon them all this evil."

God's message to Solomon was simply this: "The Temple is pretty, but we pave our streets up here with gold purer than that. I am more concerned about your obedience to my Word. As long as you walk in my commandments, I will leave your sons on the throne and I will honor this house with my presence. But if you turn away from me, I'll kick you out of this land and allow this house to be destroyed."

God is not impressed with our beautiful buildings. God is impressed by His children's obedience to His Word (1 Sam. 15:22).

II. SOLOMON'S FAME AND FORTUNE.

Solomon's kingdom had unprecedented prosperity. Unfortunately, Solomon could not handle the prosperity. David's constant struggles and wars kept him close to God, while prosperity eventually pulled Solomon away from God. (Job 15:21) "A dreadful sound is in his ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him." There is an old saying that "Religion begat prosperity, and the daughter devoured the mother."

Solomon's wealth was unimaginable. Tribute came from every direction. He had more money than he knew what to do with.

(2 Chr 9:13-22) "Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and threescore and six talents of gold; {14} Beside that which chapmen and merchants brought. And all the kings of Arabia and governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon. {15} And king Solomon made two hundred targets of beaten gold: six hundred shekels of beaten gold went to one target. {16} And three hundred shields made he of beaten gold: three hundred shekels of gold went to one shield. And the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon. {17} Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure gold. {18} And there were six steps to the throne, with a footstool of gold, which were fastened to the throne, and stays on each side of the sitting place, and two lions standing by the stays: {19} And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps. There was not the like made in any kingdom. {20} And all the drinking vessels of king Solomon were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold: none were of silver; it was not any thing accounted of in the days of Solomon. {21} For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Huram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. {22} And king Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom."

His wealth pulled him in every direction seeking for the satisfaction he had once found in God. He tried *wine, women, works,* and *whims*. He satisfied every want or desire.

(Eccl 2:1-10) "I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with **mirth**, therefore enjoy **pleasure**: and, behold, this also is vanity. {2} I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? {3} I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. {4} I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: {5} I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: {6} I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: {7} I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of areat and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: {8} I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: **I gat me men** singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. {9} So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. {10} And

whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour."

Did these things make Solomon happy?

(Eccl 2:11) "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, **behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit**, and there was no profit under the sun."

(Eccl 2:17-18) "Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. {18} Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me."

Solomon learned too late that the real joys of life are in the presence of the Lord. (*Psa 16:11*) "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

His fame spread to every land. (2 Chr 9:23) "And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart."

Why did God raise Solomon up?

God raised Solomon up to draw the nations to Himself. God gave Solomon wisdom to point men to the wisdom of God's word. God gave Solomon wealth to show the success of God's ways, and the riches that are available in Christ.

The Temple was to be a house of prayer for all nations. (1 Ki 8:41-43) "Moreover concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake; {42} (For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house; {43} Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name."

Solomon had an opportunity to be a world-wide soul-winner. He himself had written, (*Prov 11:30*) "*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.*" No man ever had such a tremendous opportunity to reach the world for God like Solomon had. But he wasted it talking about *trees, bugs,* and *fish (1 Kings 4:33)* while marrying the daughters of these heathen kings and filling his land with their idols (*1 Kings 11:1-8*).

An understanding of world history reveals the tremendous opportunity that Solomon had. God had promised Israel that if they would obey His Word, He would exalt them above all nations. (*Deu 28:13*) "And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them..." Israel could have been the head of nations.

At the time Solomon was king in Jerusalem, Rome was not yet founded. Greece was made up of isolated city-states. Assyria, Babylon, and Persia were not even close to becoming world powers. God was ahead of all of these nations. Solomon was exalted at the perfect time to reach the world while the great civilizations were still forming.

Instead, Babylon became the golden head of world empires. (Dan 2:38) "And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold." Israel was eventually conquered and scattered by the Gentile world powers.

Solomon is the Bible's greatest example of wasted potential.

III. SOLOMON'S FOLLY AND FAILURE.

Even early in his reign, Solomon made some foolish decisions that would come back in greater forms later in his life.

1. He made affinity with Pharaoh and married Pharaoh's daughter. (1 Ki 3:1) "And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David..."

God had separated the Jews from Egypt and told them not to return that way again *(Deut. 17:16-17).* Solomon not only returned, but he married the heathen king's daughter!

Solomon showed his inconsistency by considering buildings holier than his own body. (2 Chr 8:11) "And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her: for he said, **My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places are holy**, whereunto the ark of the LORD hath come." Paul wrote a thousand years later, (1 Th 4:4) "That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel (body) in sanctification and honour..." The body of a believer is much holier than any building.

It would have been far better if Solomon had asked God for wisdom BEFORE he decided on his first wife!

2. He worshipped in the "high places."

(1 Ki 3:2-3) "Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the LORD, until those days. {3} And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places."

These high places were associated with the Canaanites' heathen worship. David never worshipped God in any *"high place."*

Throughout the Old Testament, these high places are mentioned in conjunction with evil, idol-worship, and fornication (1 Kings 12:31; 14:22-23; 2 Kings 17:9-12; 2 Chron. 21:11; 28:25). Throughout Israel's history, these high places represented competition to God's appointed place of worship. God had warned them about these high places, associating them with rebellion and heathen worship:

- (Lev 26:27-30) "And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; {28} Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. {29} And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat. {30} And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcases upon the carcases of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you."
- (Num 33:52) "Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places:"

These irregularities in Solomon's early life take on greater significance when we find Solomon later marrying hundreds of foreign wives and turning from God to idolatry!

Solomon's love for strange women.

There are two *Chapter Eleven Bankruptcies* in the Bible: 2 Samuel 11, in which David sinned with Bathsheeba, and 1 Kings 11, in which Solomon abandoned the God of heaven.

(1 Ki 11:1-3) "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; {2} Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. {3} And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart."

He married seven hundred heathen princesses and took another three hundred concubines, which were "secondary" wives. And there was not a good one among them.

There is no mention of Solomon marrying any Jewish women. He married women from the Canaanite people, as well as the daughters of many of the kings who came to visit him. He loved "<u>outland</u>ish" women (*Neh. 13:26*). Apparently the modest, clean, pure, God-fearing ladies of his own people were not as attractive to Solomon's sensual taste as the worldly women of foreign origin. The man who wrote the chapter on the "virtuous woman" (*Prov. 31*) spurned them in his own life.

Matthew Henry wrote in his commentary of this passage, "No one can imagine how lasting and how fatal the consequences may be of being unequally yoked with unbelievers."

Solomon *"clave to these in love."* This was not love – it was *lust*. He used to love the Lord; but now he loves strange women.

We are not sure when Solomon began marrying all these women. The numbers, any way you look at it, are staggering:

- If Solomon started at age nineteen and married women for the rest of his forty years, he would have married an average of one every two weeks.
- By the time he had all 1000 women, he would have had to visit three different women every day, year round, to visit each one once a year!

What a fool. Solomon made a complete mockery of God's design for marriage. He did not have a wife the way God intended. He had a harem of women that he simply used for his own pleasure. He did not heed his own words:

(Prov 5:18-21) "Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. {19} Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts **satisfy** thee at all times; **and be thou ravished always with her love.** {20} And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? {21} For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings." Solomon was not satisfied with any woman, much less the wife of his youth.

- (Prov 2:16-19) "To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; {17} Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. {18} For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. {19} None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life."
- (Prov 5:3-5) "For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: {4} But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword. {5} Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell."

His later opinion of women was definitely tainted by the company that he kept - (Eccl 7:26) "And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her."

A wicked woman defeated the strongest man to ever live (Samson), and wicked women conquered the wisest man to ever live (Solomon). How can we be stronger than Samson and wiser than Solomon? Stay away from the snares of the "strange woman!"

His wives turned away his heart.

(1 Ki 11:4-8) "For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. {5} For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. {6} And

Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. {7} Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. {8} And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods."

Solomon did the unthinkable: he turned away from the God of heaven, and worshipped the filthy, heathen gods of his wives. Matthew Henry called the Canaanite gods "dunghill deities." He even built an altar to Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, on the Mount of Olives, overlooking his own Temple.

This brought God's judgment on Solomon and his kingdom. (1 Ki 11:9-13) "And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, {10} And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. {11} Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. {12} Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. {13} Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen."

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What a shame! (Lam 4:1) "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street."

The man who was given more wisdom than any man alive became a fool. The man who was given the greatest opportunity to do the greatest good wasted it in sinful compromise and idolatrous living. After Solomon's death, his kingdom would fall apart in the reign of his son. He fulfilled his own proverb: (*Prov 29:1*) "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." It was Solomon, not Rehoboam, whose foolishness ruptured the kingdom!



Chapter Two

REHOBOAM

THE BIG SHOT WHO BROKE A KINGDOM



(1 Ki 11:41-43) "And the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon? {42} And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel

was forty years. {43} And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead."

Solomon reigned as long as David, forty years, but died younger, at age fifty-nine. At his death, his kingdom was passed on to his son, Rehoboam.

It would do us well to consider what we are going to pass on to our children. What will our heritage be to our children when it is our time to go on to our reward? David, despite his shortcomings in life, passed on a heritage of faith to Solomon. In fact, just for comparison, look at David's final charge to his son:

(1 Chr 28:8-10) "Now therefore in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the LORD, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD your God: that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you for ever. {9} And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the

imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. {10} Take heed now; for the LORD hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it."

David encouraged Solomon to know the God of his father, and to serve Him with a perfect heart, and to keep the commandments of God. David told Solomon to make sure that he passed on to his children the same inheritance that he himself was receiving.

But Solomon backslid into awful idolatry in the last seventeen years of his life. He did not pass on the same inheritance to his son. He passed on a heritage of compromise, worldliness, wickedness, and disobedience to God's Word. And he passed on to Rehoboam a kingdom with serious cracks of division in its foundations. His son, though forty-one years of age, was not ready for the kingdom.

I. THE DECAY OF THE KINGDOM.

The first twenty-three year period of Solomon's kingdom was their Golden Age of wealth and prosperity. But the last seventeen years of his reign caused the gold to become very dim.

(1 Ki 11:9-13) "And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, {10} And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. {11} Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. {12} Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. {13} Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen." God disrupted the peace of Solomon's kingdom by stirring up adversaries against him.

(1 Ki 11:14) "And the LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom."

(1 Ki 11:23-25) "And God stirred him up another adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah, which fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah: {24} And he gathered men unto him, and became captain over a band, when David slew them of Zobah: and they went to Damascus, and dwelt therein, and reigned in Damascus. {25} And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, beside the mischief that Hadad did: and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria."

Most importantly, a young man named **Jeroboam** rebelled against Solomon.

(1 Ki 11:26-28) "And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow woman, even he lifted up his hand against the king. {27} And this was the cause that he lifted up his hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, and repaired the breaches of the city of David his father. {28} And the man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph."

Solomon placed him over the house of Joseph, which was the Tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Ephraim was the largest of the northern Tribes and became the center of the Northern Kingdom.

Ahijah the prophet told Jeroboam that God planned to rend Solomon's kingdom and give ten Tribes to him. (1 Ki 11:35-37) "But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes. {36} And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there. {37} And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel."

When Solomon learned of this, he tried to have Jeroboam killed, but Jeroboam fled to Egypt, where he remained until Solomon's death (11:40).

It became obvious that there was a serious division between the northern Tribes and the two southern Tribes of Judah and Benjamin. After Solomon's death, these Tribes plotted to bring Jeroboam back (12:1-3) and make him their new king.

This division went back more than eighty years. David had united them, but even in his reign there was a great deal of contention. After Absalom's failed revolution, they had fought over who should bring the king back (2 Sam. 19:41-43), and the northern Tribes even split briefly under Sheba (2 Sam. 20).

The fact is that God had held the people together. David understood this. (Psa 144:1-2) "Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: {2} My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me."

Solomon's apostasy caused God to rend the kingdom apart. His kingdom and home were vivid illustrations of (*Psa 127:1*) "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

II. THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM.

The royal robes of the kingdom fell on the slender shoulders of Solomon's son, Rehoboam. (1 Ki 14:21) "And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD did choose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess."

Rehoboam was the son of an Ammonitess woman named Naamah. He was forty-one years old when he began to reign, which would have made Solomon only nineteen-years-old old when Rehoboam was born. Apparently, Pharaoh's daughter was not his first "strange woman."

The Jews were strictly forbidden to marry among the Ammonites or the Moabites, which were the descendants of Lot's incestuous relationships with his two daughters after the destruction of Sodom. (*Deu* 23:3-4) "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever: {4} Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee."

Solomon's love for "strange women" set a horrible example for all Israel, and for his son, who had quite a harem of his own. (2 Chr 11:21,23) "And Rehoboam loved Maachah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines: (for he took eighteen wives, and threescore concubines; and begat twenty and eight sons, and threescore daughters.)...And he desired many wives."

From the evidence of Scripture, Rehoboam was Solomon's only son, though he did have two daughters (1 Kings 4:11,15). With all the other kings, the sacred writers took care to list their sons or give the number of sons that they had. In Biblical days, having many sons was the king's honor. Only Rehoboam is listed as the son of Solomon. There certainly was no dispute over the throne after Solomon died.

But could a man have a thousand women and yet only have one son? Absolutely. (*Psa 127:1*) "Except the LORD build the house,

they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." No one has any children unless God gives them. Perhaps this lack of sons was part of the reason that Solomon wanted so many women – surely the problem could not be him!

However, instead of focusing his attention on his one son to raise him for the kingdom, it appears that Solomon was too busy impressing the world with his wisdom, getting married (again), and building heathen altars. By the time his son had come to young adulthood (twenty-three years old), Solomon was already making a mockery of God and pursuing the strange gods of his wife. It is no wonder that Rehoboam turned out as he did. He was raised by a *heathen* mother and a *hypocrite* father.

Rehoboam came to the throne at age forty-one. But his first act as king showed his foolishness. Solomon at nineteen was wiser than Rehoboam at forty-one. David told his nineteen-year-old son, (1 Ki 2:9) "...for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do..." David himself, in his early twenties, behaved himself with impressive wisdom (1 Sam. 18:15,30). Wisdom does not run in the bloodstream. Nor does age always indicate wisdom. Education does not always equal wisdom, either. There is no fool worse than an old fool, because he is the least likely to change.

By the way, this shows us the foolishness of a hereditary government. The best man available was not made the king – the only son was. So what if he is a fool and incapable of leading wisely?

The Occasion of the Division of the Kingdom.

The northern Tribes brought back Jeroboam from Egypt, and then set Rehoboam up with a ridiculous complaint and demand. (1 Ki 12:3-4) "That they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, {4} Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee."

Just how "grievous" was Solomon's service?

(1 Ki 4:20) "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry."

(1 Ki 4:25) "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon."

It sounds like everyone was doing pretty good under Solomon's reign of peace and prosperity. But they demanded a lighter yoke.

Rehoboam sought counsel. This was wise – but his response to counsel was foolish.

(1 Ki 12:6-8) "And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people? {7} And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. {8} But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him..."

What does it say about these older men's credentials if they had served as counsellors to the wisest man ever? These wise men said, "Serve them and treat them with respect, and they will serve you forever. Do not go out there as a dictator. Go out as a public servant." But Rehoboam did not like their advice. He did not want to be a servant. He wanted to be *served*. Many ask for counsel but are only interested in hearing what they want to hear. If they do not hear what they like, they will keep going until they find a counselor who agrees with them. So Rehoboam asked his fellow forty-something-year-old drinking buddies what they thought he should do. Of course, their combined experience in running a kingdom was a big **ZERO**. But, they told him *what he wanted to hear*. They were "yes men" boot-lickers who wanted to be on the new king's good side. They said, "Go out there and put them in their place. Who do they think that they are, anyway? You are the king! They *have* to serve you. Go say something to show you mean business – like, 'my little pinky finger is going to be thicker than my father's loins!' That'll show them!"

So Rehoboam went out on his little power trip to show everyone who was boss.

(1 Ki 12:13-16) "And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him; {14} And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. {15} Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people...{16} So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents."

It wasn't supposed to work out that way, was it?

Rehoboam found out that they did not have to stay with him after all. They had served David because they loved him (1 Sam. 18:16). They had served Solomon because they respected him and feared him (1 Kings 3:28), and because he brought prosperity. Rehoboam misjudged his people. They were rich, strong, proud, and ambitious – and they were not the least bit afraid of Rehoboam's threats. They did not love or respect Rehoboam, and his foolish reply caused the cracks in the kingdom to become an irreparable breach. From henceforth, the crown would be broken.
III. THE DEGRADATION OF THE KINGDOM.

Rehoboam, in a state of denial, sent Adoram to collect tax money from Israel (12:18). They stoned him to death. He is the only tax collector that I have ever felt sorry for! He was sent to his death by his foolish king. This caused Rehoboam to wake up and realize the seriousness of the situation. Israel immediately called Jeroboam and made him their new king (12:19-20).

Rehoboam was ready to attack Israel, when a prophet stopped him (12:21-24). This was the wisest decision that Rehoboam ever made.

As king, Rehoboam led the nation further into idolatry and vice.

(1 Ki 14:22-24) "And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. {23} For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree. {24} And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel."

Spiritual failure always leads to moral failure.

When a nation becomes apostate and wicked, the filthiest of perverts come out of the closets (*"there were also sodomites in the land"*). The nation *"did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel."*

The moral failures in our country are traceable to spiritual failures in our churches:

- 1. If society is decaying, it is because the salt has lost its preserving power. (*Mat 5:13*) "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."
- 2. If society is becoming darker, it is because the lights are not shining from the hillsides. (Mat 5:14-16) "Ye are the light of

the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. {15} Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. {16} Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Spiritual and moral failure led to national disaster. (1 Ki 14:25-26) "And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem: {26} And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made."

Just five years before, Solomon's kingdom was the superpower of the Middle East region and Mesopotamia. Five years later, Egypt was pillaging the Temple of its treasures.

When nations rot on the inside, its only a matter of time before they collapse on the outside, like a great tree that has rotten out in the middle and suddenly crashes to the ground in a storm.

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Rehoboam reigned only seventeen years, and died at age fiftyeight. **Chapter Three**

JEROBOAM AND HIS EASY RELIGION



(1 Ki 12:25-30) "Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. {26} And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: {27} If this people go up to do

sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. {28} Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. {29} And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. {30} And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan."

In the last two chapters, we saw how the kingdom of Israel was degraded under Solomon and divided under Rehoboam. The northern Tribes told Rehoboam to "hit the road." From then on, the crown was broken. The kingdom of Israel was now a divided kingdom.

The ten Tribes of Manasseh, Ephraim, Dan, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, Zebulon, Gad, Rueben, and Simeon formed the Northern Kingdom and took the name **Israel**. The southern Tribes of Judah and Benjamin formed the Southern Kingdom, and took the name of **Judah**. Their capital remained in Jerusalem.

Jeroboam was introduced into the field of politics by Solomon himself. Jeroboam was a "mighty man of valour" and "industrious." Solomon, who was more impressed at this time by engineering skill than spiritual character, placed Jeroboam over the "house of Joseph." The house of Joseph was the two Tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, the largest of the northern Tribes (1 Ki 11:27-28).

While serving in this capacity, Ahijah the prophet came to him with a stunning announcement.

(1 Ki 11:35-38) "But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes. {36} And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there. {37} And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel. {38} And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee."

When Solomon heard of this, he tried to have Jeroboam killed. This caused Jeroboam to flee to Egypt (1 Ki 11:40). After Solomon's death, Jeroboam returned to help stir up dissent against Rehoboam. He led the group that complained to the new king (1 Kings 12:1-3, 12). After Rehoboam was rejected by the northern Tribes, they elected Jeroboam to be their new king.

I. JEROBOAM'S APPREHENSION.

(1 Ki 12:26-27) "And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: {27} If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam

king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah."

Jeroboam did not trust his people's loyalty. Tyrants never do. He himself was a traitor to his own king and therefore he feared traitors among his own servants. He felt that he had to do something to keep them under his reign.

Jeroboam also did not trust the promise of God, or intend to obey the conditions of God's word. God had said, (1 Ki 11:38) "And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee."

God has made us a lot of promises, yet Christians do not trust God's promises. We say that we do – when we have a job, a house, and good health. But when that Christian loses his job, God's promises are suddenly dim and distant. It is amazing how quickly a Christian will run from God's will when a little difficulty comes.

If God is your Plan A, you do not need a Plan B.

Jeroboam said, "I've got to do something to strengthen my position in this kingdom. If they go back to Jerusalem to the Temple, their hearts will turn back to Rehoboam. I cannot allow that. I can't trust my people's loyalty. I can't trust God's promise. I've got to come up with something that will work." So he took counsel and made his own religion.

When you get right down to it, there is only man-made religion and God's *"pure religion" (James 1:27)*. There is God's authentic faith and Satan's counterfeits.

You have all the world's religions (including many that are called Christian) on one side, and God on the other. On one side you have God saying, "This is how I want to be worshipped." On the other side you have men saying, "This is how God wants to be

worshipped." Either the Bible as God's Word is the final authority, or man's opinion is.

God lays out His worship and His expectations in the Word of God. God always has a proper place and proper procedures for His people to worship Him. At that time, God's proper place was the Temple in Jerusalem. He had an appointed priesthood made up of the sons of Aaron. He had appointed offerings and appointed times throughout the year for worship. These were not open for variation. They were laid out in great detail in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

God had established Jerusalem as the place, and the Temple as the specific place, for His worship and the place where the tithes and offerings were to be brought. Jeroboam took God out of his kingdom and replaced him with two golden calves.

Jesus Christ established only one Institution while on this earth. He started a local church (Mt. 16:18).

The only divinely appointed, divinely established, and divinely authorized institution for carrying out God's work in the New Testament is the local church. The only institution given the authority to baptize believers is the local church. The only institution that I am commanded by God to attend is the local church. The only place I am to bring my tithes and offerings is the local church.

My Christian life ought to revolve around the institution that Jesus started. I should be a member of a local church. I should be faithful to attend my local church. I should financially support my local church with my tithes and offerings. I should be more concerned about my local church than any other institution. My loyalty is to the local church.

I'll go a step further and say that my loyalty is to **my local church pastor**, and not to some *superstar pastor* out there somewhere. I admire any man that is used of God, but there is only one man that God has set up as *my* shepherd. He is the man who prays for me,

who cares about me, who loves me, who watches for my soul, and who preaches to my family. It irritates me that so many Christians show more love and loyalty to a man who does not even know they exist than to the pastor that gives his life in service to them and their family.

When we get away from the local church, we are getting away from the only institution that Jesus started for New Testament Christianity. We are going to get ourselves involved in some manmade Jeroboam religion. And a lot have.

II. JEROBOAM'S APPEAL.

(1 Ki 12:28-29) "Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. {29} And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan."

His religion was based on his own carnal, worldly, selfish motives. Therefore, it is no surprise that he appealed to the carnal, worldly, selfish desires of the people. He said, *"It is too much for you to go all the way up to Jerusalem. I have an easy religion that is more convenient and comfortable for you."*

Satan always wants to convince us that God's service is *"too much for you."* When we are trying to serve God in the flesh, with an unsubmissive will and a stubborn or rebellious attitude, we will start believing the devil.

God says that His commandments are not grievous. (1 John 5:3) "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." Jesus said that His yoke is **easy** and His burden is **light**. (Mat 11:29-30) "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. {30} For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." But the devil comes along and whispers to the flesh-filled, carnal, stubborn, rebellious, worldly Christian, "It is hard trying to obey God, isn't it? All these commandments! Do this. Do not do that. All this authority is frustrating. His commandments are making your life grievous, aren't they? Your life was a lot easier and better before you tried to serve God."

The devil comes along to the lazy, indifferent Christian and whispers, "His burden is too heavy, and that yoke is going to rub your neck raw. Life shouldn't be this hard. You have enough to do without bearing that extra burden and that yoke. You used to sleep in on Sundays. You used to watch TV on Wednesday nights and relax."

Now, either God is a liar or Satan is. If God said His commandments are not grievous, then they aren't. If Jesus said His burden is light and His yoke is easy, then they are.

But if we aren't careful, we will start looking for an "easy religion" of our own – and they are easy to find. It is as close as the nearest "Christian Family Center" or Bible-less "Bible Church." For that matter, it is as close as your television remote control. You can always watch the "TV church" in your pajamas at home! Now, you can even buy personal communion sets and take the Lord's Supper from the convenience of your living room! God help us!

Many churches today are catering to the same crowd that Jeroboam catered to – those who think *"it is too much...to go up to Jerusalem"* and do things God's way.

Who did Jeroboam appeal to with his easy religion?

1. He appealed to the Scripturally ignorant.

Those who know the Bible know that this is not the first time a golden calf had appeared among the Jews.

(Exo 32:1-6) "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto

him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Eqypt, we wot not what is become of him. {2} And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. {3} And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. {4} And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a aravina tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Eqypt. {5} And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD. {6} And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."

How did God respond to this golden calf? He was going to exterminate the Israelites, had Moses not interceded. (Exo 32:7-10).

Those who knew their Bibles knew how God expected to be worshipped. They were not fooled by Jeroboam's easy religion. In fact, many of the Levites who would not bow to Jeroboam's gods left Israel and moved to Judah. (2 Chr 11:13-14) "And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts. {14} For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the LORD..." Others followed suit. (2 Chr 11:16) "And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers." The more you learn of your Bible, the better you will be able to recognize the worldliness and the wickedness that is dressed up in religious robes today.

It does not surprise me that churches have cancelled their services. It does not surprise me that the world's music has taken over the services, because I know the music that Christians listen to at home. I am not surprised that churches have contemporary services. I am not surprised that churches have "praise and worship" services instead of preaching services. I am not surprised by the popularity of the Charismatics or the non-denominational denomination. I am not surprised by the apostasy of so many of our former fundamentalists. I've read the Bible. I understand how Satan uses religion to blind men's eyes to the truth.

The Scripturally ignorant are easy prey for an easy religion. Without God's Word to guide them, they must follow their feelings, flawed intellect, and desires. The churches of today are custom-built for "seekers" who are following their feelings. (Doesn't "seeker sound so much less offensive than the Bible term, "sinner?").

Services are designed to make people "feel" something. It is all manufactured. Turn off the million dollar sound system, stop the guitars and keyboards during the prayer and preaching, and shut up the women (1 Cor. 14:34), and you'll have one dead Charismatic service.

2. He appealed to the worldly-minded.

It is not hard to figure out why Jeroboam made two golden calves. The calf was a god of Egypt, where Jeroboam had just returned from. Egypt is always a picture of the world in the Bible.

Jeroboam was a worldly man, and he started a worldly religion. He borrowed from the world. I was in the world for a while, and I recognize the world when I see it. Too many of our churches have borrowed ideas from the world.

I can listen to a Christian or a group sing a special and know within one minute if they learned to sing watching worldly concerts and the "Christian" broadcast programs. Where else do they learn to disfigure their faces for dramatic effect, to raise their hands for impact, to stroke a microphone, and to gyrate their bodies while singing? Trinity Broadcasting Network gets their worldliness from the world, and we get it from TBN. We have turned the church service into a talent show – and it is not even good talent.

Jeroboam designed a religion based on "the lusts of the flesh," "the lust of the eyes," and the lust of the ego ("the pride of life" - 1 John 2:16). The worldly-minded want a religion that feels good, looks good, and makes them look good in their own eyes.

They want a religion that *excites the flesh* (rock-and-roll music, a Hollywood production, and a concert-type atmosphere), *catches the eye* (beautiful 'sanctuaries,' robed ministers, religious ornaments, and beautiful ceremony), *and exalts the worshipper instead of God* (self-help, self-esteem, self-worth, self-love, self-confidence, self-interest, and self-sufficiency).

Bible Christianity always exalts Christ as preeminent (*Col. 1:18*), and shows man for what he is – a depraved sinner (*Rom. 3:1-23*). Bible Christianity is denying self and bearing a cross after Jesus (*Mt. 16:24*). Bible Christianity is bearing scorn, reproach, and persecution (*Mt. 5:10-12*). Bible Christianity is being separated from the world and holy to the Lord (*2 Cor. 6:14-17; 7:1; 1 Peter 1:15-16*). Bible Christianity purifies us and makes us a peculiar people who are zealous of good works (*Titus 2:14*). Bible Christianity teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts (*Titus 2:13*).

The worldly-minded will always prefer the flesh-pleasing services of Jeroboam's easy religion over the holy, disciplined, orderly, authoritative, narrow-minded services of God's Temple.

3. He appealed to the selfwilled.

There are two wills for every person's life: God's will, and your will. The selfwilled person (2 Peter 2:10) lives by the attitude of "Not thy will, but mine be done." The selfwilled Christian does not recognize the final, absolute authority of God's Word. They will always do what is right in their own eyes.

God's will is too narrow-minded for these "free-thinkers." They like the fact that Jeroboam gave them two choices – two calves. God is too strict to make everyone go to the one Temple and do things in a strict, authoritative manner.

Selfwilled Christians will usually go to the churches that give the most choices and evidence the least amount of authority.

Jeroboam sent out his appeal. *"It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem."* And the Scripturally ignorant, the worldly-minded, and the selfwilled all flocked to his new, man-made religion.

III. JEROBOAM'S ALTERNATIVE.

- 1. He replaced the God of heaven with two man-made calves of gold. (1 Ki 12:28-29) "Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. {29} And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan."
- 2. He replaced Jerusalem with Bethel and Dan. Dan was in the northern part of Israel. Bethel was in the south, close to Judah. Thus, it was to be a temptation to the people of Judah to come and worship Jeroboam's idol. It was more deceptive because of it is name, Bethel, which means *"the house of God."* Satan

always attaches a spiritual name to his false religions. The prophet Hosea called it Bethaven (Hosea 4:15) which means "the house of vanity."

- 3. He replaced the Temple with worship centers. (1 Ki 12:31) "And he made an house of high places..."
- 4. He replaced God's ministers with his own priests. (1 Ki 12:31) "And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi."

He chose from among the *"lowest of the people."* He hired these men and ordained them by his own authority, but these were not the sons of Levi. They were not divinely commissioned. (*Heb 5:4*) *"And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."*

Jeroboam hired the welfare bums of his society that could not do any other work, and made them his priests. He hired men of poor character to fill the *"high calling"* of God's work.

A lot of men going through seminaries and calling themselves preachers are not God-called men. They chose a *career* just like others choose engineering, medicine, business, or law. They are career hirelings, who have jobs instead of ministries. Many of these could not do anything else, so they chose the ministry. God help us!

5. He changed the times (1 Ki 12:32-33).

God had ordained a feast on the 15th day of the 7th month, but Jeroboam moved it to the 8th month. Christians have always met on Sundays, the first day of the week, the resurrection day. Now, churches are turning to Saturday night services that won't interfere with people's Sunday schedules (like football games).

Unfortunately, Jeroboam's alternative easy religion was extremely popular. (1 Ki 12:30) "And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan."

Jeroboam stole the loyalty of his people from the Lord.

A lot of preachers have stolen the loyalty of their people from God. These men once stood for God, and God gave them people to lead. Now, these men have compromised and become liberal, but the people are staying with him out of a sense of loyalty. These people should recognize that their first loyalty is to their God.

Israel never overcame the idolatry that Jeroboam introduced. Over and over again, the Bible records that Israel did not depart from the sin of Jeroboam. (2 Ki 10:29) "Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan." All the kings of Israel carried on the state religion of Jeroboam's golden calves. Some added Baal worship.

The nation became reprobate. (1 Ki 14:16) "And **he shall give** Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin." They became forever joined to idols. God finally just left them alone. (Hosea 4:17) "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone."

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God has established ways for things to be done. He wants things done "in order."

- (1 Cor 14:40) "Let all things be done decently and in order."
- (1 Chr 15:13) "For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order."

Beware of Satan's easy religion, his alternative to the Bible way of worshipping and serving God. He wants to steal away your loyalty from God.

I want to be like the Levites and the few Israelites who rejected Jeroboam's golden calves, and went to the Temple in Jerusalem.

Chapter Four

KING ASA

The King Who Faced A Million Man March



(1 Ki 15:8-14) "And Abijam slept with his fathers; and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead. {9} And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa over Judah. {10} And forty and one years reigned he in

Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom. {11} And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did David his father. {12} And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. {13} And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burnt it by the brook Kidron. {14} But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the LORD all his days."

After Rehoboam's death, the kingdom of Judah passed to his son, Abijam. Abijam reigned for only three uneventful years. Despite his pious speech to Jeroboam and a temporary, emergency faith in God (2 Chron. 13:4-18), Abijam continued in the evil ways of his father (1 Kings 15:3). He married fourteen wives and had twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters (2 Chron. 13:21).

At Abijam's death, the throne was passed on to his son, Asa. Asa reigned forty-one years. His reign overlapped seven different kings in the Northern Kingdom, from Jeroboam to the beginning of the reign of wicked king Ahab and Jezebel.



Jehoshaphat

Despite his upbringing, Asa started out as a very good king. We do not know who influenced young Asa. It was not his father. It wasn't his mother, who was also an idolater. Maybe it was a Sunday School teacher. Maybe it was a preacher. Maybe it was a bus route that carried him to the Temple every Saturday. Maybe it was a godly priest. We do not know. But somebody stepped in and made a difference in Asa's life.

You and I must be aware that we might have the opportunity to make a difference in someone's life. That kid with wicked parents might lead in a national revival one day if only one person can step in and make a difference!

I. KING ASA'S CONVICTION.

As a started out as a good man. He did what was good and right. During a time of peace, he sought after God and led in a national revival that purged the land of much of its idolatry:

(2 Chr 14:1-6) "So Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead. In his days the land was quiet ten years. {2} And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God: {3} For he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: {4} And commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. {5} Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him. {6} And he built fenced cities in Judah: for the land had rest, and he had no war in those years; because the LORD had given him rest."

1. Asa was a reformer.

He purged the land of his fathers' idols, groves, and high places. He commanded Judah to seek after the God of their fathers, and to obey the word of God. He used his influence to reach people for God. Asa did not conform to his world – he reformed his world for God.

2. Asa was a builder.

(2 Chr 14:7) "Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about them walls, and towers, gates, and bars, while the land is yet before us; because we have sought the LORD our God, we have sought him, and he hath given us rest on every side. **So they built and prospered**."

He built and fortified cities. He beautified the land. He strengthened the land for battle.

We ought to build something for God. Build a church, build a family, build a ministry, build a class – build something for God.

3. Asa was a warrior.

Asa was ready to fight. He had a large and well-trained army, well-armed and ready for battle. (2 Chr 14:8) "And Asa had an army of men that bare targets and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand; and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand: all these were mighty men of valour."

Christians ought to be ready to fight for the Lord. Our country wouldn't be the spiritual mess it is today if we hadn't gone from "Fighting Fundamentalists" to "Limp-wristed Liberals." The immoral minority is still fighting for their wickedness while Christians have adopted a country club mentality. We ought to stand up and fight for what is right, decent, and holy. We ought to stand up and fight for souls, for our church, for our families, and for our nation.

4. Asa had great faith in God.

Zerah the Ethiopian came with an army of a *"thousand thousand."* That is *one million warriors*. It was the original *"million man march."*

(2 Chr 14:9-12) "And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah. {10} Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. {11} And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee. {12} So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled."

Asa had great faith, and he cried out to God in the face of tremendous odds. He declared his faith and said, *"in thy name we go against this multitude."* By faith he marched against a million men, and God gave him the victory!

5. As a responded well to preaching.

(2 Chr 15:1-3) "And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: {2} And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. {3} Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law." (2 Chr 15:8-12) "And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that was before the porch of the LORD. {9} And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God was with him. {10} So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. {11} And they offered unto

the LORD the same time, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. {12} And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul;"

Because of his response, he led the entire nation into an even greater revival.

How well do you respond to preaching? There are three ways to listen to preaching:

- To listen in faith that God will speak to your heart through the Bible message of the preacher.
- To listen in scorn, because you are just listening to a man (maybe a man you don't like). See Psalm 1:1.
- To listen in indifference, because it does not matter what he has to say anyway. You are not going to change or respond no matter what he says.

Christians backslide when they stop hearing the still small voice of God because they are focused only on the human nature of the man that is preaching. They are focused on his flaws instead of listening for what God is saying. God can speak through flawed men. That is the only kind of man God has to use! Except for the Lord Jesus Christ, every man God ever used was a sinner with his own flaws and failures.

6. Asa even put away his own mother because of her idolatry.

(2 Chr 15:16) "And also concerning Maachah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron."

Asa, at this time, was unwilling to even compromise with his own mother. When she made an idol and worshipped it, he deposed her from being queen, stomped her idol down and burned it. You may have to put God ahead of family members. (Mat 10:37) "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." You may have some family idols that need to be stomped down and destroyed from your own life. Gideon had to cut down the idol of his father before God could use him, and you and I might have some family idols that need to be burned before God can really use us!

Asa, in the 15th year of his reign, was a great king, a good man, a builder, a warrior, a man of faith, a man that responded well to preaching, and who was willing to put God even before family relations. He was a man of convictions.

I wish I could end the chapter here, but now we must discuss:

II. KING ASA'S COMPROMISES.

During the ten years of peace and prosperity, Asa stayed close to God. But between the tenth and fifteenth years, he let things slip. Then he had a revival after the battle with the Ethiopians and cleaned up the country again.

It is easy to serve God when things are peaceful and prosperous. It is when things get tough that we find out what our convictions really are. As a did what many Christians do – he compromised on a few convictions.

There were two great compromises in Asa's life:

1. Asa did not remove all the high places.

(1 Ki 15:14) "But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the LORD all his days."

Those high places were the mark of idolatry in the land. They were places where people went to worship idols. Despite his

early reforms, he apparently allowed some of the high places to stay, or he allowed them to be rebuilt later, after his revival.

Do you have any high places left in your life? Have you allowed any to be rebuilt in your life? (*Eph 4:27*) "Neither give place to the devil."

Are there any high places in your life that you just aren't willing to part with, even though you know you should? They compete with God for your time, worship, and attention?

Study your Bible and you'll find that as long as those high places were allowed to remain, no revival would last for long. Eventually, the country would go back into idolatry.

You can get under conviction and decide to get right with God, but until the high places are gone you'll always slip back again to where you were.

2. As a compromised by hiring the Syrians to fight his battles.

(2 Chr 16:1-5) "In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. {2} Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Benhadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, {3} There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me. {4} And Benhadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abelmaim, and all the store cities of Naphtali. {5} And it came to pass, when Baasha heard it, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease."

This was twenty-one years after Asa's great revival. Twentyone years before, he won a battle against a million men. Now, he is selling out God to hire the heathen to come and fight his battles. *He is looking to the world for solutions instead of looking to God.* His faith has failed.

God is very displeased when we do not trust Him. He is very displeased when we trust in an arm of flesh over His everlasting arms. It must be insulting to Almighty God when we turn to the world instead of calling upon His name!

Christians do this all the time. They look to the world for the solutions to their problems instead of trusting God and acknowledging Him in all their ways. I know Christians that once had strong faith. Now they are worldly in their attitudes and actions, because they started doing things the world's way instead of trusting God and following His way. They listened to the *"counsel of the ungodly,"* sat in the *"seat of the scornful,"* and then started walking *"in the way of sinners."*

Early in Asa's life, he listened to the word of God and to God's men – but now he is scornful of both.

Just a couple of compromises, but notice now:

III. KING ASA'S CHANGE.

His response to Hanani the prophet is very revealing:

(2 Chr 16:7-10) "And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. {8} Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand. {9} For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars. {10} Then Asa was wroth with the seer,

and put him in a prison house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time."

Is this the same man that once listened to God's preacher and led the nation in revival? Now he is locking the preacher up in prison and oppressing the people (probably the prophet's friends).

The fact is that the preacher was right, but Asa was right in his own eyes. He did not want to be told his faults. The man that once listened to the preacher is now spiteful, angry, bitter, and unjust.

The preacher was just telling him the truth about himself, but he did not want to hear it. The preacher was just watching for his soul, trying to bring him back to God for his own good, but Asa did not want to hear the preachers anymore. No doubt, he thought as many of his Christian descendants, "Preachers are all the same – self-righteous, always right, always out to get something - dictators!"

Asa was wrong, but he was right in his own eyes. Asa's attitude was the mark of his backslidden condition.

As a changed for the worse as time went on. We all change as we get older. Change is a constant. We are either growing or dying but we do not stay the same. We either become better as Christians, or we get worse. The circumstances and events in our lives either draw us closer to God or push us further away, depending on our attitude and response.

This change led to:

IV. KING ASA'S CONCLUSION

(2 Chr 16:12-13) "And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: **yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians**. {13} And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign." As a contracted a strange disease in his feet, which became exceedingly awful. Some believe he had an extreme case of gout. He had put God's man in the stocks, so now God has put him in the stocks.

For two years, he suffered from this disease, until he died. He did not seek God in his illness. (2 Chr 16:12) "And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians."

Now, as an old man, Asa is totally out of contact with God. He trusts in physicians instead of the Lord. There was nothing wrong with having a doctor – but he did not seek the Lord at all.

Asa joined many in the Bible who began well, but ended poorly.

- Samson began to deliver Israel, but died in a Philistine coliseum.
- King Saul a great start but a suicide finish.
- King Solomon the wisest man to ever live, but wasted his last years in idolatry.
- Demas began serving with Paul, but finished backslidden and in love with the world.
- Asa began with a perfect heart, but finished backslidden and out of God's will.

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As a could have been one of the great kings in Judah's history, but his record was permanently marred by the last twenty years of his life.

What will the conclusion of your life be?



Jehoshaphat

Chapter Five

KING AHAB

A HELL-BENT KING AND HIS HELLCAT WIFE



(1 Ki 16:25-33) "But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all that were before him. {26} For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD God of

Israel to anger with their vanities. {27} Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he showed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? {28} So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria: and Ahab his son reigned in his stead. {29} And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years. {30} And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. {31} And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. {32} And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. {33} And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."

The Northern Kingdom (Israel) had nineteen kings, all of which were wicked. Many of them came to power by regicide – they murdered the previous king and took over the throne.

The Northern Kingdom lasted about 210 years, and then was conquered by Assyria. We will consider only three Northern kings: Jeroboam, Ahab, and Jehu.

King Ahab is the most prominent of all the Northern kings.

He was the seventh king of the Northern Kingdom. His reign lasted twenty-two years. More information is given about his reign than about any other king in Israel.

His father was Omri. Omri took the throne by killing Zimri, who had killed the previous king, Elah, and reigned for only seven days. Omri came out of top of Zimri's revolution. Omri moved the capital of Israel to **Samaria** (16:24). But Omri was an evil king. (1 Ki 16:25) "But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all that were before him."

When he died, his son Ahab ascended to the throne. Omri had been worse than all that had been before him, but Ahab would even outdo his father for wickedness. (1 Ki 16:30) "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him."

To make things worse, he married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Zidonians.

It seems that Ahab was deliberately trying to provoke the LORD God of Israel. (1 Ki 16:33) "And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him." Everything about his life was an insult to the God of heaven. He spent his life "thumbing his nose" at God and his Word.

God will not be provoked forever.

(Isa 65:2-7) "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; {3} A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of

brick; {4} Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; {5} Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day. {6} Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom, {7} Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the LORD, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom."

(Gen 6:3) "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh..."

In what ways did Ahab provoke the Lord to anger?

I. AHAB PROVOKED GOD BY HIS MARRIAGE TO JEZEBEL.

(1 Ki 16:31) "And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him."

It was not enough to worship the golden calves of Jeroboam. Ahab wanted some **"hardcore" idolatry.** So he married the daughter of a Baal-worshipping king, Eth<u>baal</u>, of the Zidonians.

Jezebel brought with her the filthy worship of Baal and Ashtaroth. Baalism had not been seen in Israel since the days of the Judges.

Baal worship was the filthiest and most depraved of all the religions of Canaan. Matthew Henry called the various Baalim "dung-hill deities." Baal and Ashtaroth were gods of sex and fertility. Their religion was filled with sexual perversion – the priests were sodomites and the priestesses were religious prostitutes.

Worship of Baal also included the sacrifice of babies and little children. The remains of these babies were put in earthen jars and buried outside the temples. Many of these remains have been found by modern archaeologists. Worshippers of Baal would definitely be "Pro-choice" abortion advocates today.

Ahab built a temple for Baal (16:32) and a grove for Ashtaroth (16:33). He became addicted to the filthy, sensual perversion of the worship of these false gods.

Jezebel

Her name is the greatest misnomer in the Bible. "Jezebel" means "chaste" or "pure." She was neither. She was a wicked, manipulative, blood-thirsty, power-hungry she-devil. And she had Ahab wrapped around her little finger, as was seen in the way she handled the business of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21). She maintained 850 false prophets while viciously persecuting the prophets and people of the LORD.

She stirred Ahab up to evil. He would not have been as wicked as he was without her influence in his life. He sold himself to work wickedness. (1 Ki 21:25-26) "But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. {26} And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel."

Ahab's marriage to this woman was the beginning of a lifetime of provoking God to anger.

II. AHAB PROVOKED GOD BY HIS STUBBORN REJECTION OF GOD'S MEN.

In response to Ahab's wickedness, God raised up prophets to stand against the growing corruption in the land. Many of these prophets were persecuted and killed by Jezebel (1 Kings 18:4).

1. Elijah.

However, one of the greatest prophets in Israel's history withstood Ahab throughout his reign – the prophet Elijah.

Elijah was used to punish the land with a three-and-a-half-year drought. (1 Ki 17:1) "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." The drought brought a terrible famine to the land of Samaria. (1 Ki 18:2) "...And there was a sore famine in Samaria."

Finally, Elijah made his tremendous challenge to Ahab to bring his prophets of Baal and Ashtaroth to Mount Carmel for the Showdown of the Century.

(1 Ki 18:16-20) "So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah. {17} And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? {18} And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim. {19} Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. {20} So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel."

At this tremendous showdown, Elijah called down fire from heaven, proving that the LORD is God. (1 Ki 18:21) "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word."

(1 Ki 18:36-39) "And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. {37} Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. {38} Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. {39} And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God."

Elijah then executed all four hundred and fifty of Baal's prophets, and told Ahab to get home before the rain started. (1 Ki 18:41-46) "And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. {42} So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, {43} And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. {44} And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. {45} And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. {46} And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel."

Did Ahab go home and have Jezebel killed for her evil? No. Did Ahab go home and begin worshipping the God of heaven? No. Even in the face of one of the greatest miracles of the Bible Ahab stubbornly refused to turn from his evil ways.

(1 Sam 15:23) "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king." (Prov 29:1) "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

2. Micaiah.

Then, he would not listen to the message of Micaiah. Good king Jehoshaphat, who should not have been in an alliance with Ahab, wanted to get counsel from a prophet before they went to battle. Ahab brought in his four hundred prophets from the local ecumenical council. The Southern Baptists, Catholics, Presbyterians, Charismatics, Pentecostals, a few backslidden Independent Baptists, and some from the non-denominational denomination were all there.

(1 Ki 22:2-8) "And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel. {3} And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria? {4} And he said unto Jehoshaphat. Wilt thou ao with me to battle to Ramothgilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses. {5} And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day. {6} Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. {7} And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might inquire of him? {8} And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good

concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so."

Brother Zedekiah led in a cheerleading pep rally for the king. (1 Ki 22:11-12) "And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the LORD, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them. {12} And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramothgilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the king's hand."

They had their pompoms out and were cheering for the king. "Go up! Go up! Gooooooooo Uuuuppp!" Zedekiah even had iron horns on his head, and was running around like a charging bull! The praise-and-worship band was playing their "fight song." The drama team had everyone stirred up.

Jehoshaphat should not have been there, but he was spiritual enough to know that these four hundred prophets were NOT prophets of the LORD. Maybe their turtleneck sweaters, bluejeans, and tennis shoes gave them away. Maybe it was their worldly, prettyboy hairstyles, long sideburns, and goatees. Maybe it was their silly headset microphones. Maybe it was the crystal pulpit or the drum set on the platform. Maybe it was the "celebration" party atmosphere.

(1 Ki 22:7) "And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might inquire of him?" Jehoshaphat wanted a four-hundred-and-first opinion. **By the** way, I'd rather listen to one man of God than four hundred heathen "experts."

Ahab said, "There's one more guy, **but I hate him**. Micaiah never says anything good about me. He is always negative. I like these other preachers better because they always agree with me. They tell me that I am going to prosper." But, at Jehoshaphat's insistence, Micaiah was brought in. (1 Ki 22:13-14) "And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good. {14} And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak."

That's the attitude God's preachers should have! Forget what the majority is saying. Quit imitating and parroting what "Dr. Big Shot" or "Reverend Bigger Church" or "Pastor Used-to-befundamental" says. What has GOD said? What does the Bible say? Do you quote more from Spurgeon, Calvin, and Augustine than you do from Paul, Moses, and John?

Forget what people want to hear. Forget trying to be popular. Forget trying to *"speak that which is good."* Forget what people think about your preaching. Quit trying to impress people. Speak the truth! Preach the word!

Micaiah did get a little sarcastic with Ahab:

(1 Ki 22:15-23) "So he came to the king. And the king unto him. Micaiah. shall said we ao aaainst Ramothgilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king. {16} And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the LORD? {17} And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace. {18} And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil? {19} And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

{20} And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. {21} And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. {22} And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. {23} Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee."

Micaiah did not mind backhanding the false prophets either, though Brother Zedekiah, the president of the local ecumenical council, "censured" him for it. (1 Ki 22:24-25) "But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee? {25} And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself."

Micaiah preached the truth to Ahab, but Ahab was not interested in the truth. He was only trying to pacify Jehoshaphat. He had Micaiah thrown in prison.

(1 Ki 22:26-28) "And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; {27} And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace. {28} And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you."

Ahab stubbornly rejected God's men, and this time it led to his death, because he was killed in the battle of Ramoth-gilead.
Ahab is like many today who scorn the Word of God, and the messages from God's men. They want preachers who will tell them what they want to hear – even if it is not true.

- (Isa 30:9-13) "That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: {10} Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: {11} Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. {12} Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: {13} Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant."
- (2 Tim 4:2-4) "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. {3} For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; {4} And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

III. AHAB PROVOKED GOD BY HIS UNLAWFUL ACQUISITION OF NABOTH'S VINEYARD.

After winning a great victory against Syria, Ahab was rebuked by another one of God's pesky prophets (1 Kings 20:35-43) for sparing the king of Syria.

He came home to Samaria depressed and down-at-the-mouth. (1 Ki 20:43) "And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria." He thought he would cheer himself up by acquiring a vineyard closer to his house. It just so

happened that a man named Naboth owned a vineyard right next to Ahab's palace.

So, Ahab went and made what he thought was a very reasonable offer to Naboth. (1 Ki 21:2) "And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money."

He was shocked that Naboth would not sell out his father's inheritance. (1 Ki 21:3) "And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee."

Naboth could not be bought off for any amount of money because it was the inheritance of his fathers. It was his heritage. Naboth considered the land his stewardship before God.

- (Lev 25:23) "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me."
- (Num 36:7) "...for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers."

Ahab could not understand that someone would actually have Bible convictions that were not for sale. It is one thing to believe something to a point, but "everyone has their price." Ahab could not understand that this man would let his Bible conviction stand between him and a profit!

Would you have sold out if the price was right? Do you have a price?

I see Christians selling their Bible convictions like they are going out of style. Preachers and churches are selling their convictions at garage sale prices to make room for the new, contemporary, progressive principles of the worldly churches.

Our Bible principles should not be for sale at any price.

My doctrine is "Not for Sale."

- My King James Bible is "Not for Sale."
- My Baptist name and position is "Not for Sale."
- My standards and convictions are "Not for Sale."
- My old-fashioned music is "Not for Sale."
- My pulpit is "Not for Sale."
- My missions program is "Not for Sale."
- My bus ministry is "Not for Sale."
- My old-fashioned preaching service is "Not for Sale."
- My local church position on church ordinances is "Not for Sale."
- My Bible-based position concerning marriage and the home is "Not for Sale."
- My soul-winning is "Not for Sale."

I am not going to sell out the heritage of my fathers so that someone can plant a herb garden. These things are not for sale!

Ahab did not understand that because he himself was a sell-out. (1 *Ki* 21:25) "But there was none like unto Ahab, **which did sell** *himself* to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up."

Ahab went home and pouted. (1 Ki 21:4) "And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread." Jezebel, however, stepped in and said, "Do not worry, honey. Momma will get you that nice vineyard." She then set a wicked plot in motion to have Naboth executed.

(1 Ki 21:7-10) "And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and

let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. {8} So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth. {9} And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: {10} And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die."

Ahab, like a little child getting a present, went down to take a stroll through Naboth's vineyard. (1 Ki 21:14-16). But his pleasure would be short-lived. Elijah was waiting for him.

(1 Ki 21:17-20) "And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, {18} Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. {19} And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. {20} And Ahab said to Elijah, hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee; because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD."

Miraculously, Ahab humbled himself before the Lord after this:

(1 Ki 21:27-29) "And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. {28} And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, {29} Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house." He did not get saved, but even he felt badly concerning Naboth's murder. Because he humbled himself, God determined that the evil pronounced against his house would come in his son's days.

Like Judas Iscariot, he *"repented himself," (Mt. 27:3)* but did not repent towards God. Many a man has felt sorry for his sins, but still, stubbornly, would not repent toward the Lord. Being sorry is not enough.

King Herod was sorry that John was to be beheaded, but he still had it done. (*Mat 14:9-10*) "And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. {10} And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison."

The rich young ruler was very sorry, but he walked away from Jesus. (Luke 18:22-24) "Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. {23} And when he heard this, **he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.** {24} And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"

We are to not jut be "sorry," but to "sorrow to repentance." (2 Cor 7:9) "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance..."

Salvation comes when we repent toward God and put our faith in Jesus Christ. (Acts 20:20-21) "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, {21} Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, **repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.**" You may be sorry for your sins and sorry for your past failures, but have you trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? Have you "sorrowed to repentance?"

IV. AHAB PROVOKED GOD BY HIS SINFUL INFLUENCE ON JUDAH.

Ahab's wickedness was not confined to his own kingdom; he also influenced the Southern Kingdom with his idolatry. He coerced good king Jehoshaphat into an unscriptural alliance. They made peace - (1 Ki 22:44) "And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel." They went together and fought against Ramoth-gilead, despite Micaiah's warning (1 Kings 22). Jehoshaphat also continued these alliances with Ahab's son, Jehoram (2 Kings 3).

He was strongly rebuked for loving the ungodly and joining with those that hated God.

(2 Chr 19:2) "And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, **Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD?** therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD."

(2 Cor 6:14-18) "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? {15} And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? {16} And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. {17} Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, {18} And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Because of his laxity in personal standards, Jehoshaphat's son married Ahab's daughter, Athaliah. Thus, Ahab's influence and Jehoshaphat's compromise led Judah into Baal worship.

(2 Chr 21:4-6) "Now when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword, and divers also of the princes of Israel. {5} Jehoram was thirty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. {6}

And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab: for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD."

After Jehoram's death, his son Ahaziah began to reign, and Ahab's influence was still being felt in the Southern Kingdom. (2 Chr 22:2-4) "Forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Athaliah the daughter of Omri. {3} He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly. {4} Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the LORD like the house of Ahab: for they were his counsellors after the death of his father to his destruction."

Athaliah, Ahab and Jezebel's daughter, even managed to usurp the throne and rule Judah!

We'll have more to say about Jehoshaphat in another lesson, but his compromises with wicked Ahab infected his family and his kingdom for a long, long time.

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Ahab was killed in the battle of Ramoth-gilead. A sinner-seeking missile brought him down.

(1 Ki 22:33-34) "And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. {34} **And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness**: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded."

Psa 9:15-16 "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. {16} The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion. Selah.



Chapter Six

JEHOSHAPHAT

THE KING OF COMPROMISE



(2 Chr 17:1-6) "And Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Israel. {2} And he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his

father had taken. {3} And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; {4} But sought to the LORD God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel. {5} Therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance. {6} And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD: moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Judah."

We are returning now to the Southern Kingdom, Judah. The fourth king of Judah was Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa. His reign in Judah coincided with that of wicked King Ahab in Israel. He came to the throne when he was thirty-five years old, and he reigned twentyfive years.

Overall, Jehoshaphat was an exceptionally good king, but like all men, he had his flaws. The great flaw in the life of Jehoshaphat was his willingness to join in alliances with the wicked, Baalworshipping kings of Israel.

His compromises with Ahab undermined an otherwise impressive reign. The next four kings, and one queen, were wicked, idolatrous

rulers. Jehoram (son), Ahaziah (grandson), Athaliah (daughter-inlaw), Joash (great-grandson), and Amaziah (great-great-grandson), were all wicked rulers who led Judah further and further into idolatry.

When God visited Jehoshaphat's family, he found the fruit of his compromise even to the fourth generation. (Num 14:18) "The LORD is longsuffering...visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation."

If you could look into the future, and see the next four generations of your family, all the way down to great-great-grandchildren, and each of those generations was rebellious to your God, how would you feel about yourself? Would you change the way you are living?

King Jehoshaphat was a good king, and he loved God. But his compromises led to four generations of his family committing evil in the sight of the Lord. How did this happen?

First, we will discuss the highlights of his reign, and then the lowlights.

I. THE HIGHLIGHTS OF JEHOSHAPHAT'S REIGN.

Jehoshaphat sought the God of David, and was blessed by Him. (2 Chr 17:3-6) "And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; {4} But sought to the LORD God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel. {5} Therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance. {6} And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD: moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Judah."

1. He walked in the old-fashioned ways of David.

He walked in the *"first ways"* of David – the best ways of David's life, before his fall in the *"matter of Uriah the Hittite."* David's life was far better in his youth than in his old age.

Jehoshaphat chose to follow the *"first ways,"* the early ways, the faithful ways, of David, when he was first called the man after God's own heart.

Choose the old paths. (Jer 6:16) "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls..."

2. He sought to the Lord.

He "sought to the LORD God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel."

God still desires to be sought out by His people:

- (Prov 8:17) "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."
- (Jer 29:12-14) "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. {13} And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. {14} And I will be found of you, saith the LORD..."

3. He loved the Word of God.

He *"walked in his commandments."* He lived his life in obedience to the commands of God. God's Word was the final authority for all matters of faith and practice for the king.

4. He was, to a degree, separated from the worldliness of Israel .

He refused to seek after Baalim, the wicked "dung-hill deities" of Canaan. In his own personal life, he was separated. He lived clean. He obeyed God's commandments, instead of going after *"the doings of Israel."* Later, he compromised by associating with the ungodly, but he himself never bowed the knee to Baal.

5. His heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord. This means:

- His heart was convinced that the ways of the Lord were right. (Psa 57:7) "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." He was a man of conviction.
- His heart was encouraged in the ways of the Lord. His heart was lifted up above the difficulties that were in the way of his duty.
- His heart was excited about the ways of the Lord. (Rom 12:11) "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord..." (Col 3:23) "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men..."

Because of all of this, God blessed his kingdom marvelously. (2 Chr 17:5) "Therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance."

Jehoshaphat led the nation in a revival through the ministry of some Old Testament "evangelists."

(2 Chr 17:7-10) "Also in the third year of his reign he sent to his princes, even to Benhail, and to Obadiah, and to Zechariah, and to Nethaneel, and to Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. {8} And with them he sent Levites, even Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tobadonijah, Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, priests. {9} And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people. {10} And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat."

Jehoshaphat organized teams of princes, priests, and Levites to travel throughout all the cities of Judah with the *"book of the law of the Lord with them."* As they taught the people the Word of God,

the fear of God fell on the nations around them, and they were afraid to make war against Jehoshaphat.

What we need today is a revival of the Word of God – and it needs to begin with God's people. (Hosea 4:6) "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee..." The worldliness of the world is not nearly as damaging as the ignorance of God's people concerning the Bible.

The reason Christians are ignorant is because they reject the knowledge that is available to them. It isn't that Christians do not have Bibles – it is because they do not read the Bibles they have. It isn't because there is no teaching or preaching at the church – it is because Christians are unfaithful to attend all the services. It is not because there is a shortage of helpful books written about the Bible – it is because reading a book is not as easy as watching a television show. If there is going to be a revival, it is going to happen when God's people get back to the Book and get their lives in line with what the Book says!

Jehoshaphat said, "My people need to hear what God's Word has to say." And he sent men out on a mission to teach the people what God had said.

Would to God that ministers would get back to the simple mission of just telling people what the Word of God says! Enough with psychiatry! Enough with psychology! Enough with "fluff and puff" preaching! Enough of the "power of positive thinking!" Enough with "pulpit counseling!" *"Preach the word*!"

Because of his actions, God blessed his kingdom even more. (2 Chr 17:11-13) "Also some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and tribute silver; and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he goats. {12} And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah castles, and cities of store. {13}

And he had much business in the cities of Judah: and the men of war, mighty men of valour, were in Jerusalem."

The last great highlight of his life was the victory of faith he won against an invasion by Moab and the Ammonites. Unlike his father, Jehoshaphat sought the Lord in his distress. (2 Chr 20:1-4) "It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. {2} Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they be in Hazazontamar, which is Engedi. {3} And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. {4} And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD."

When he did not know what to do, he turned his eyes to the Lord. (2 Chr 20:12) "O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee."

God answered his prayer through the inspired preaching of Jahaziel. (2 Chr 20:15-17) "And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. {16} To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. {17} Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you."

You can't beat the three-fold formula for victory found here:

- 1. Prayer (vs. 3-13)!
- 2. Preaching (vs. 14-17)!

3. Praise (vs. 19)!

Jehoshaphat then led out a very unusual army configuration, his marching *army* being led by a marching *choir*:

(2 Chr 20:20-21) "And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. {21} And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever."

And God gave the victory:

(2 Chr 20:22-30) "And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. {23} For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. {24} And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped. {25} And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much. {26} And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the LORD: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day. {27} Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies. {28} And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the LORD. {29} And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel. {30} So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about."

II. THE LOWLIGHTS OF JEHOSHAPHAT'S REIGN.

The Bible teaches us to be separate from the world:

(2 Cor 6:14-18) "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? {15} And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? {16} And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. {17} Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, {18} And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

We are not to be *"unequally yoked together with unbelievers."* Righteousness should not be in fellowship with unrighteousness. Light should not be in communion with darkness. Christ has no concord with Belial. The believer should not have a part with the infidel. The temple of God should not be in agreement with idols.

As children of God, we are:

1. The temple of God (vs. 16).

- 2. The people of God (vs. 16).
- 3. The children of God (vs. 18).

Therefore, we are to:

- 1. Come out from among them.
- 2. Be separate from them.
- 3. Touch not the unclean thing.

Christians must get back to **Biblical separation** if we are going to be pleasing to God and have an impact on this world. We cannot pull anyone out of the "miry clay" if we ourselves are stuck in it with them. We cannot pull people up unless we are on a higher moral and spiritual level than those we are trying to help. And we will never win the world with a compromised message. To the world, we are either going to be considered fantatics or hypocrites. I would rather be considered a fanatic.

I have a habit of watching church marquee signs. I am constantly amazed by the worldly advertising on these signs. Recently, I saw a sign advertising "Vegas night" at a Baptist church. Around the corner from my church, the sign at a Southern Baptist Church read, "Country and Gospel music, *Elvis style*."

I saw one recently that took the cake. The First Baptist Church in Garland advertised, "Church-wide trip to Hawaiian Falls." Hawaiian Falls is a nearby water theme park! Have all Baptists stopped preaching against mixed swimming – or should I say mixed *nudity*?

What really surprised me was how people in my own church responded to my preaching against it. In fact, one woman and her two daughters walked out of church after I mentioned it. Maybe they went down to Garland and joined. Surely, saved people can understand that Christians should not be 90% naked around the opposite sex! Or 50%! How can you put a bathing suit under the heading of *"modest apparel"* in 1 Timothy 2:9? What could possibly considered modest about a bathing suit?

What Christian *lady* would go out in public in her underwear? Is it somehow different if the underwear is made of bathing suit material and painted different colors? Some compromiser will say, "I wear a one-piece suit." Well, as long as you do not show your belly-button, I guess it is okay. No! It is wrong, and Christians have no business at these water parks! And certainly no church group ought to be advertising to the world that they are going there!!!

Why are churches so full of compromise? The same reasons that Jehoshaphat became the King of Compromise. Jehoshaphat, later in his reign, made a concord with Belial. He started out separate from Ahab, but then joined with him.

1. He made peace with Ahab.

(1 Ki 22:44) "And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel."

He started out his reign by strengthening himself "against Israel" (2 Chron. 17:1). He recognized the danger that Baalworshipping Israel was to his nation. But as he got older, he backed off from his old, hard-line, fundamental stand against the wickedness in Israel.

There are three things that the Christian should never make peace with: the world, the flesh, and the devil. We should *never* make peace with those things that are totally contrary to God.

Christians should never make peace with those people who are determined to destroy Christianity. I will never make peace with the sodomites, the baby-murderers, the liquor crowd, the drug crowd, the Hollywood establishment, the rock music industry, or the ecumenical religious crowd that sells out the Gospel for a false "unity." I will never make peace with the new perversions of the Bible. I will never make peace with the NIV, the RSV, the NKJV, or any of the others. I will never make peace with those who teach salvation by works.

Even if I can't beat 'em, I won't join 'em! I'll go to my grave preaching against them and standing against them. That is the attitude that Christians should have.

Christians should never make peace with the world!

2. Peace led to an Alliance.

(2 Chr 18:1) "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab."

When you make peace with the ungodly, you will eventually join with the ungodly. This is where Jehoshaphat stepped over the line. It did not happen all at once. It took *"certain years"* (18:2). "Affinity" means to join families together through marriage. It was here that Jehoshaphat's son married Ahab's daughter (which we will discuss further shortly).

After making peace and then joining affinity with Ahab, Jehoshaphat opened the door to a dangerous situation. (2 Chr 18:2) "And after certain years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that he had with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramothgilead."

First he flattered him with a great, honorary feast – like some of the honorary doctorates some preachers have sold out for over the years. Or the invitation to speak at the big conference meeting. *It is amazing how fundamental Baptist preachers can be flattered into fellowshipping with men they otherwise would avoid!* And then it is not long until they are part of the crowd they should not have been with in the first place.

He "persuaded" him. The world can be pretty persuasive – but only if you listen.

(2 Chr 18:3) "And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramothgilead? And he answered him, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war." What are you saying, Jehoshaphat? *"I am as thou art?"* Jehoshaphat loved God and walked according to God's commandments. Ahab murdered babies and was involved in the religious orgies of Baalism. These two were nothing alike! But compromise has put them on the same team.

Even after hearing Micaiah's fearful message, Jehoshaphat persisted in his alliance with Ahab, and was almost killed for it (18:28-31). He was simply too polite to be right. He did not have the courage to stand for his convictions. After all, Ahab had been so nice in preparing such a wonderful party for him, and he hated to spoil it by being the lone religious fanatic.

If you can be polite and be right, then please do so. There is no reason to be rude, crude, and in a bad mood. But if you have to choose between politeness and rightness, choose rightness! Do right, and let the chips fall where they may!

We are not called to be diplomats, but ambassadors for the King of kings!

3. His Alliance led to a stern rebuke from God.

(2 Chr 19:1-3) "And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem. {2} And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, **Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD?** therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD. {3} Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God."

It is a good question that every Christian should consider: "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD?"

To his credit, Jehoshaphat responded with humility and repentance, and brought his people back to the Lord again. (2 *Chr* 19:4) "And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beersheba to mount

Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers."

Why did he have to bring them back? No doubt, his alliance with Ahab had caused corruption to come into his kingdom!

- 4. However, he later compromised again with Ahab's son (2 Chr 20:35-37).
- 5. The worst part of his compromise with Ahab was what it did to his family.

His son, Jehoram, married Ahab's daughter, Athaliah. (2 Chr 21:5-6) "Jehoram was thirty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. {6} And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab: for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD."

His son walked in the ways of Ahab. (2 Chr 21:12-14) "And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of David thy father, **Because thou** hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah, {13} But hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, which were better than thyself: {14} Behold, with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy good..."

His grandson, Ahaziah, also walked in the ways of Ahab. (2 Chr 22:2-5) "Forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Athaliah the daughter of Omri. {3} He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly. {4} Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the LORD like the house of Ahab: for they were his

counsellors after the death of his father to his destruction. {5} He walked also after their counsel..."

In fact, after Jehoshaphat, his family and Ahab's family was so close that their kings even had the same names. Jehoshaphat's daughter-in-law, Athaliah, eventually had all of his greatgrandchildren murdered and took over as queen for six years. For four generations, the kings of Judah were as evil and wicked as the kings of Israel.

Why? Jehoshaphat made peace with Israel. Then he joined affinity with Ahab. Then, he helped the ungodly and loved those that hated the Lord. And because he was hanging around with Ahab, his son married Ahab's daughter.

And the same thing is happening in countless Christian homes, because good people start making peace with the enemies of God. They stop fighting the liquor crowd and start drinking a little socially and laughing at the beer commercials. They stop fighting the Hollywood crowd and start watching the worldly, filthy movies and shows that Hollywood puts out. Their kids fall in love with the unsaved or worldly kids in the public school or the secular college, and their grandchildren are raised on the lake on Sunday instead of in church.

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Jehoshaphat – the King of Compromise. May God help us to stand for right!

WHO IS WHO?

Some confusion in the Books of Kings and Chronicles is caused by the names of the kings themselves:

- 1. Several kings shared the same name.
- 2. Some of the kings with the same name reigned at approximately the same time in the two separate kingdoms.
- 3. Several kings had more than one name (Azariah = Uzziah; Joash = Jehoash, etc).
- 4. Some kings had their names changed by foreign powers. Mattaniah became Zedekiah. Eliakim became Jehoiakim.

Here is a list of duplicate names, used by both Northern and Southern kings:

- 1. JEROBOAM: 1st king of Israel; 13th king of Israel
- 2. JORAM

5th king of Judah AKA Jehoram

10th king of Israel AKA Jehoram

3. AHAZIAH

9th king of Israel

6th king of Judah AKA Jehoahaz

4. JOASH

8th king of Judah AKA Jehoash

13th king of Israel AKA Jehoash

5. JEHOAHAZ

12th king of Israel

6th king of Judah AKA Ahaziah

17th king of Judah AKA Shallum

6. SHALLUM

THE KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL

15th king of Israel

17th king of Judah AKA Jehoahaz

Other names are similar in their spelling:

- 1. Jeroboam & Rehoboam
- 2. Jehoahaz; Jehoiakim; Jehoram; Jehoiachin
- 3. Amaziah; Ahaziah; Azariah (Uzziah)
- 4. Joram; Jotham



Chapter Seven

JEHU

AND HIS BLOODY REVOLUTION



(2 Ki 9:6-13) And he arose, and went into the house; and he poured the oil on his head, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the LORD, even over Israel. {7} And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab

thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel.... {9} And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah: {10} And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her. And he opened the door, and fled. {11} Then Jehu came forth to the servants of his lord: and one said unto him, Is all well? wherefore came this mad fellow to thee? And he said unto them, Ye know the man, and his communication. {12} And they said, It is false; tell us now. And he said, Thus and thus spake he to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel. {13} Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king."

We are turning back to the Northern Kingdom, Israel. The last northern king we discussed was Ahab, who led his nation into the depths of depravity through the worship of Baal. After Ahab's death, his son Ahaziah carried on his evil ways, as did his grandson, Joram. God had promised to judge Ahab's family for his wickedness (1 *Kings 21:21-24*). His crimes included the murder of many of God's prophets and servants, which God would avenge (2 *Kings 9:7*).

Elijah's prophecy stated that God would cut off the posterity of Ahab, and destroy his house. Elijah also prophesied that Jezebel would be killed, and her body would be eaten by dogs in Jezreel.

Sixteen years have passed, and Ahab's "enemy," Elijah, had gone to heaven. However, God had not forgotten His Word concerning the family of Ahab. God never forgets His Word. God's Word never fails. (Isa 55:11) "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

When judgment is prolonged, man's heart tends to become hard and impenitent. (Eccl 8:11-13) "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. {12} Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: {13} But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God."

God is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish. However, when His judgment comes, it comes quickly, and with unstoppable force.

The world has become emboldened by the fact that God's judgment has not yet come. They insult His longsuffering and mercy by their persistent rebellion. (2 Pet 3:4-7) "And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. {5} For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: {6} Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: {7} But the heavens and the earth,

which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Judgment is coming, and it will come suddenly. When it comes, it will be unstoppable. There will be no escape. (1 Th 5:2-3) "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. {3} For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

God's judgment is pictured in Jehu's bloody revolution against the kingdom of Joram, the grandson of Ahab.

I. A BOLD TESTIMONY (2 Kings 9:1-13).

Elisha sent one of his preacherboys on a mission to anoint Jehu as the king of Israel. This was in fulfillment of what God had commanded Elijah years before. (1 Ki 19:15-17) "And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: {16} And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. {17} And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay."

Jehu had been a trusted servant of Ahab, and was one of the captains under Joram. However, it is obvious that he had a tremendous disgust for Ahab's evil ways, and for Jezebel's witchcraft (9:22,25-26). Though he was not a godly man, he hated the vile worship of Baal.

The young prophet came boldly to Jehu, and carried out his mission, anointing him in the name of the LORD, and commanding him to destroy the house of Ahab (9:4-10).

It is interesting to note the response of Jehu's men to the young preacher. (2 Ki 9:11-12) "Then Jehu came forth to the servants of

his lord: and one said unto him, Is all well? wherefore came this mad fellow to thee? And he said unto them, Ye know the man, and his communication. {12} And they said, It is false; tell us now. And he said, Thus and thus spake he to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel."

They first called him a "mad fellow," and then stated emphatically concerning his message, which they had not even heard, "It is false." This shows us the contempt that the worldly-minded evidence towards God, His Word, and His men. To the worldly-minded, God's preachers are just "mad fellows." They are automatically prejudiced against men whose messages they have not even heard – "It is false."

Matthew Henry notes, "Those that have no religion commonly speak with disdain of those that are religious, and look upon them as mad. They said of our Saviour, *He is beside himself*, of John Baptist, *He has a devil*, of St. Paul, *Much learning has made him mad.* The highest wisdom is thus represented as folly, and those that best understand themselves are looked upon as beside themselves."

However, once they heard the message, they immediately accepted it as true – because it was what they wanted to hear. (2 Ki 9:12-13) "And they said, It is false; tell us now. And he said, Thus and thus spake he to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel. {13} Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king." Thus we see the vain, double-minded hypocrisy of the ungodly. "It is false" was instantly changed to "Jehu is king." (James 4:8) "...Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, **ye double minded**."

II. A BLOODY TAKEOVER (2 Kings 9:14 – 10:17).

What kind of man was Jehu? He was a man fitted for the job that God needed done. God needed a hard man to do a hard job. Jehu was that man.

Everything that Jehu did, he did with furious enthusiasm (9:20). *Jehu lived "pedal to the metal."* He was fearless, relentless, and without pity. He moved with the fury of a tornado, destroying everything in his path, until his job was accomplished.

God can use men and nations who are far from what they should be, to execute judgment on the wicked. God used Babylon to execute judgment on Judah.

Jehu killed Joram, the king of Israel, and Ahaziah, the king of Judah, at the same time (9:16-29). Jehu killed Joram himself with a bowshot in the back as he tried to get away (9:22-24). Jehu had Joram's body cast into Naboth's vineyard (9:25-26). Ahaziah should have stayed home where he belonged. Because he was related to Ahab, Jehu had him killed also (9:27-29). Then, Jehu had Jezebel killed.

(2 Ki 9:30-32) "And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window. {31} And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master? {32} And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs."

When Jezebel heard what had happened, she painted her face and tired her hair. (By the way, it is one thing for a lady to wear some makeup, and another thing to *paint* her face. I will never understand why some girls want to look like they have black eyes, and others look like something from outer space, with the unnatural colors they paint on to their faces. Makeup should *accentuate*, not *intimidate*.)

How vain! She never had any real beauty to begin with. (*Prov* 31:30) "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised." Any beauty she had came

out of a makeup bag, in her attempt to cover the ugliness of the woman inside.

She said the wrong thing to Jehu when he arrived. (2 Ki 9:31) "And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?" She is like the lost sinner who scorns God's judgment, even in the face of death. The lost sinners in the Tribulation continue to blaspheme God, even in the face of death and hell. (Rev 16:9-11) "And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. {10} And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, {11} And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds."

She may have thought that she was safe. Wrong. Two eunuchs, who had probably suffered from Jezebel's evil ways, threw her down from the window at Jehu's command.

(2 Ki 9:32-37) "And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs. {33} And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot. {34} And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter. {35} And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands. {36} Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, This is the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel: {37} And the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel."

Jehu wasted no time. He gave no quarter – there were no captives taken, no trials. Just throw her down. Judgment will not tarry any longer for this *"cursed woman."*

Jehu walked over her bleeding body and went inside to eat lunch! After all, overthrowing a kingdom will make a man hungry! He wasn't the only one that was hungry, however. While he ate inside, the village dogs were eating Jezebel outside. When they finally decided to bury her, all they found were her skull, her feet, and the palms of her hands. They ate her painted face, but even the dogs did not want her blood-stained hands, or the feet that had been swift in running to mischief (*Prov. 6:17-18*).

Jehu then continued his bloody revolution. He demanded the death of Ahab's seventy sons in Samaria, as well as all that were associated with Ahab (10:1-11). Jehu then came across the brethren of Ahaziah, the recently departed king of Judah, on their way to see the king of Israel, and had them killed as well (10:12-14). No one even distantly related to Ahab was to be spared in the realm of Jehu. He finished his purge in Samaria. (2 Ki 10:17) "And when he came to Samaria, he slew all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the LORD, which he spake to Elijah."

Excessive force?

Jehu wasted no time or effort. God had told him to destroy the house of Ahab, and he did so. If Joshua and the Israelites had used the same force against the Canaanites as Jehu used against the family of Ahab, the history of the nation would have been far different!

Hard jobs require hard men. It is easy for men to sit back in their recliners and condemn soldiers in combat, or the generals who have to make the hard decisions. The job that God needed done was not for the weak at heart, or for the man who could not stand the sight of blood. Leave wars to warriors.

Jehu rooted out the family of Ahab. It was no easy task, and perhaps only a man like Jehu could have done it. Consider what Jehu accomplished in just a short time frame:

1. He took over the army of Israel.

- 2. He executed the king of Israel.
- 3. He executed the king of Judah.
- 4. He executed the wicked queen, Jezebel.
- 5. He executed all of Ahab's sons, relatives, and associates.
- 6. He executed the brethren of Ahaziah.

III. A BRUTAL TRAP (10:18-28).

Jehu wasn't done. He hated Baal worship and determined to eradicate it from Israel. He set in motion a brilliant, brutal trap.

(2 Ki 10:18-19) "And Jehu gathered all the people together, and said unto them, Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much. {19} Now therefore call unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests; let none be wanting: for I have a great sacrifice to do to Baal; whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live. But Jehu did it in subtlety, to the intent that he might destroy the worshippers of Baal."

(2 Ki 10:20-28) "And Jehu said, Proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal. And they proclaimed it. {21} And Jehu sent through all Israel: and all the worshippers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left that came not. And they came into the house of Baal; and the house of Baal was full from one end to another. {22} And he said unto him that was over the vestry, Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal. And he brought them forth vestments. {23} And Jehu went, and Jehonadab the son of Rechab, into the house of Baal, and said unto the worshippers of Baal, Search, and look that there be here with you none of the servants of the LORD, but the worshippers of Baal only. {24} And when they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings, Jehu appointed fourscore men without, and said, If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escape, he that letteth him go, his life shall be for the life of him. {25} And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the

captains, Go in, and slay them; let none come forth. And they smote them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the captains cast them out, and went to the city of the house of Baal. {26} And they brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and burned them. {27} And they brake down the image of Baal, and brake down the house of Baal, and made it a draught house unto this day. {28} Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel."

In one brutal move, Jehu completely destroyed Baal worship in Israel. He had killed Jezebel, who had brought the filthy religion into the land; he executed their priests, and the worshippers; and he destroyed the house of Baal and all the idols of Baal.

Christians could use the zeal of Jehu in their personal lives. I do not mean that we should go around executing people. But we should deal with the sins of our lives with the brutal zeal of Jehu.

Many Christians are far too wishy-washy with their own pet sins. It is easy to condemn others for their sins, while continuing to "struggle" with the same sins year after year. Where is the zeal for the Lord that simply cuts off and destroys the sin and all its presence in our lives? Just get rid of it!

The new Christians of Ephesus showed this kind of zeal. They were more concerned about being right with God than in the monetary value of their Harry Potter books. (Acts 19:18-20) "And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. {19} Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. {20} So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."

Christians will say, "I can't throw that away! That cost money! That would be wasting my money!" Well, you wasted your money when you bought it, if it is sinful to have it. Get rid of it.

It would be an amazing thing if Christians decided to get thoroughly right with God. I mean, clean house. Get rid of the things that you

love but that hinder your spiritual life for Christ. Burn them. Destroy them. Cut them off.

IV. A BEWILDERING TRAGEDY (10:29-36).

God commended him for the destruction of Ahab and Baalism. (2 Ki 10:30) "And the LORD said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel."

Four generations of Jehu's family occupied the throne of Israel, the longest dynasty in the Northern Kingdom. However, Jehu rejected God in favor of Jeroboam's golden calves. (2 Ki 10:29) "Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan."

He put away the grossest evil, Baal worship, but spared the more popular, traditional form of evil, the idolatrous calves. Like Jeroboam, Jehu could not risk turning his nation to the LORD God Whose Temple was in Jerusalem. For the sake of politics, Jehu maintained the worship of the calves. Many a person has sold their soul for political or business advantages.

Jehu was very zealous in putting away evil, but very sluggish in doing right. Staging a revolution and executing people he did not like was one thing – worshipping God and living righteously was another. He took no heed to walk according to the laws of God. He could pursue his desires with all his heart, but he could not obey God with all his heart. (2 Ki 10:31) "But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin."

Because of this, God began to cut Israel short (2 Ki 10:32-33). After a twenty-eight-year-reign, Jehu died (2 Ki 10:34-36).

Chapter Eight

JOASH

& HIS BORROWED CONVICTIONS



(2 Chr 22:10-12) "But when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah. {11} But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah,

and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah,) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not. {12} And he was with them hid in the house of God six years: and Athaliah reigned over the land."

(2 Chr 24:1-3) "Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Zibiah of Beersheba. {2} **And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest.** {3} And Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons and daughters."

(2 Chr 24:15-22) "But Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died; an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died. {16} And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house. {17} Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them. {18} And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. {19} Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear. {20} And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. {21} And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD. {22} Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon it, and require it."

This chapter deals with Joash, the eighth king of Judah. He is also known as Jehoash. He is not to be confused with Joash, the thirteenth king of Israel, who was also called Jehoash.

After Jehoshaphat died, his son, **Jehoram**, became king. He was the one who married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. He was an evil king, and God smote him with an incurable disease. He died horribly (*2 Chron. 21:18-20*).

Jehoram's youngest son, **Ahaziah**, was then made king. The Arabians had killed all of his other sons. He was a momma's boy (Athaliah was his mother and primary counselor) and was also an evil king. He was killed be Jehu for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

When **Athaliah** found out that her son was dead, she killed everyone else in the royal family of Judah (2 Chron. 22:10). But Jehoshabeath took the year-old son of Ahaziah, and hid him in the Temple with the priests. Jehoshabeath was the daughter of Jehoram and the aunt of the little boy. She was also married to **Jehoiada** the priest (22:11).

Athaliah reigned over the land of Judah for six years. She was the only queen of either the northern or southern kingdoms, and she only got to the throne through the cold-blooded murder of her
own grandchildren. She was the only one to rule in Judah who was not of the lineage of David. She was an import from Israel and the family of Ahab. While Jehu was extinguishing Baalism in Israel, she was reviving it in Judah.

During these six years, Jehoiada the priest, who was also Joash's uncle by marriage, raised Joash in the Temple.

In this chapter, let me lay out the story under five quick headings, and then teach a lesson about developing personal convictions.

I. JOASH'S RESCUE.

When he was just one year old, he was rescued by his aunt from the sword of his own grandmother. His aunt took him and his nurse home to be hidden in the Temple with her husband, Jehoiada. This took tremendous courage. They had to live a super-secret life to raise the king's son unnoticed by Athaliah, or any of her spies or informants. But they took the risk. They rescued Joash.

II. JOASH'S REVELATION.

When Joash was seven years old, Jehoiada began to set in motion a conspiracy to overthrow Athaliah.

(2 Chr 23:1-3) "And in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, and Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, and Azariah the son of Obed, and Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, into covenant with him. {2} And they went about in Judah, and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. {3} And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the LORD hath said of the sons of David."

Jehoiada gathered the men into Jerusalem as though they had come to worship, but secretly he was arming them with the weapons of king David (23:9). These weapons had been forgotten

in the house of God. The men apparently had no weapons of their own. Dictators and tyrants always want to take the weapons away from the citizens. Athaliah apparently had strict "sword control." Judah must not have had an NSA – National Sword Association – to defend their rights to keep and bear arms.

He passed out the old weapons of David. They were still as good as ever. We do not need new weapons. Give us the old weapons that David used to conquer his enemies. We do not need new bibles, new philosophies, new music, or new standards. Give me the oldtime religion! Give me the old weapons of David! It was good for our fathers – it is good enough for me!

In the Temple, they crowned seven-year-old Joash king. When Athaliah found out, the murdering grandmother cried out, *"Treason! Treason!"* But she did not say much more. They took the old *nag* to the *horse* gate and executed her.

Jehoiada then led the people in a revival. They made a covenant with the LORD and with their new king, and then went and destroyed the house of Baal (23:16-21).

Thus Joash began his forty-year reign. (2 Chr 24:1-3) "Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Zibiah of Beersheba. {2} And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest. {3} And Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons and daughters."

III. JOASH'S REPAIRS

Much trouble can be traced back to money. (1 Tim 6:9-11) "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. {10} For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. {11} But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."

Joash determined to start a building program to repair the house of God. (2 Chr 24:4-7) "And it came to pass after this, that Joash was minded to repair the house of the LORD. {5} And he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and said to them, Go out unto the cities of Judah, and gather of all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that ye hasten the matter. Howbeit the Levites hastened it not. {6} And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said unto him, Why hast thou not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and out of Jerusalem the collection, according to the commandment of Moses the servant of the LORD, and of the congregation of Israel, for the tabernacle of witness? {7} For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD did they bestow upon Baalim."

The Levites did not hasten the work. Some could say that it wasn't the Levites' job to go around raising money, and that the king could have sent some of his other servants to do this job. On the other hand, the priests and Levites should have been the most zealous to get the house of God repaired and cleansed from all the damage caused by Athaliah. In any case, this apparently caused contention between Joash and Jehoiada.

Joash continued the project, but used his own servants in addition to the Levites.

(2 Chr 24:8-14) "And at the king's commandment they made a chest, and set it without at the gate of the house of the LORD. {9} And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in to the LORD the collection that Moses the servant of God laid upon Israel in the wilderness. {10} And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end. {11} Now it came to pass, that at what time the chest was brought unto the king's office by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that there was much money, **the king's**

scribe and the high priest's officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to his place again. Thus they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance. {12} And the king and Jehoiada gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and hired masons and carpenters to repair the house of the LORD, and also such as wrought iron and brass to mend the house of the LORD. {13} So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it. {14} And when they had finished it, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, whereof were made vessels for the house of the LORD, even vessels to minister, and to offer withal, and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the days of Jehoiada."

IV. JOASH'S REBELLION

Right after Jehoiada died, Joash turned away from the LORD. (2 Chr 24:17-18) "Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them. {18} And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass."

Joash had borrowed convictions. When his spiritual leader, Jehoiada, died, his convictions died with him. Then, he immediately gave in to peer pressure (*vs. 17*). He left the house that he had helped rebuild, and left the LORD God of his fathers, and served the Canaanite gods of the groves.

When God sent prophets, Joash ignored them. (2 Chr 24:19) "Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear."

When Jehoiada's son preached against him, Joash had him executed. (2 Chr 24:20-22) "And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the

people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. {21} And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD. {22} Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon it, and require it."

What gross ingratitude towards the man that saved his life and promoted him to be the king!

V. JOASH'S REWARD

(2 Chr 24:23-25) "And it came to pass at the end of the year, that the host of Syria came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus. {24} For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the LORD delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. So they executed judgment against Joash. {25} And when they were departed from him, (for they left him in great diseases,) his own servants conspired against him for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and slew him on his bed, and he died: and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings."

CONVICTIONS

Joash had borrowed convictions. They were not his own. Dr. Lee Roberson used to tell the young ministerial students at his college, "If you do not have any convictions, borrow mine until you get some." I agree with Dr. Roberson. That is a good way to get started. That is how I got started. But you had better get your own eventually. **Borrowed convictions simply do not last.** It is one thing to *conform* to what someone expects from you, and another thing to be *transformed* by the truth. As Christians, we get started on other people's convictions, but then we must develop our own.

Our children get started off with our convictions. It is not hard to enforce our convictions on our children when they are five years old. But I want my children to have the same Bible convictions I have when they are thirty years old. That means that they are going to have to come to the same conclusions that I have come to.

Joash folded to peer pressure because he did not have any convictions of his own. Our children are going to grow up and go out in the real world one day, and they need some supports on the inside to deal with the pressures they are going to face. We need to help them to develop some real conviction.

There are five necessary elements to developing your own Biblical convictions:

I. THE RIGHT SOURCE.

What is the source of our convictions? Man, or God? What are my convictions based on? The word of man or the Word of God?

The source of Joash's convictions was Jehoiada. As long as Jehoiada was alive, Joash did right. But when the source of his convictions died, his convictions died with him. Not only that, but the little problem concerning the repair of the Temple probably put some cracks in Joash's opinion of his source of conviction. He found out that Jehoiada was not perfect after all.

When the source of your conviction is man, sooner or later you are going to become disillusioned. No man is perfect. No man should be expected to be perfect. No man is right in every area, and no man is right all the time. (*Psa 118:8*) "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man."

Now, men are used to God to introduce us to Biblical convictions, and to strengthen our convictions. God uses preachers and teachers. God uses Christians to become role models, helpers, instructors, and even heroes. Paul said, (1 Cor 11:1) "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." These Christians were so carnal that they could not yet follow Christ by faith. So Paul said, "Follow me, and you will be following Christ, because I am following Christ. But you need to grow up so that you can follow Him yourself."

The true Source of our convictions needs to come from the Word of God. (2 Tim 3:16-17) "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: {17} That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

Let the principles, commandments, precepts, and examples of the Word of God form the foundation of your convictions. As long as you are interpreting the Word of God *correctly*, you cannot go wrong.

Now, I am not saying that Jehoiada was not a good man or that he did not know the truth. God may have been the Source for Jehoiada, but Joash never cared enough to go beyond Jehoiada to God for his convictions.

Go to the right Source:

- (Acts 17:11-12) "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. {12} Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."
- (2 Tim 2:15) "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Sometimes people have convictions that are not based on the Bible. These are **preferences**. Sometimes our fundamental Baptists can be very strict and intolerant about their preferences, but if you can't back it up with Scripture, I am not interested. I will respect your preferences to a certain degree, but do not judge me by them.

The Pharisees had exalted their preferences to the same level as Scripture. (*Mark 7:7-8*) "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, **teaching for doctrines the commandments of men**. {8} For laying aside the commandment of God, **ye hold the tradition of men**, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do."

A lot of trouble is caused in our churches by Christians who are gung-ho about their personal preferences. I have heard some strange ones – such as how long is "long" for a woman's hair (1 Cor. 11:13)? Some say that "long" means down to the knees! Now, if you are a lady and can grow your hair to your waist, go right ahead! Not every woman's hair will grow that long. But if a lady's hair is to her shoulders, it is still "long." If it was on a man it would be considered "long!"

Some are against Christmas trees. Others are against Christmas altogether. Some are against Easter. Some are against Bible covers. Some are against anything but a black leather binding on their Bibles. Some are against culottes. Some are against owning a television (a machine that only plays what you turn it on to) at all.

Now, you can have those preferences if you want to. I will respect them when I am around you (unless they are ridiculous), if they are not disruptive to my church or hurtful to others. But do not call them convictions. They are preferences. Any opinion you cannot back up firmly with properly interpreted Scripture is merely a preference.

Some of the most judgmental Christians in the history of our church have been those with strong preferences, which they used to criticize everybody else. Some of the finest Christians in my church have been unjustly criticized by those who have elevated their preferences to convictions, and then judged those who did not share their preferences.

Oddly these Christians often had glaring inconsistencies in their own lives in more important areas. Again, they are like the Pharisees, who strained at gnats while swallowing camels. (*Mat 23:24*) "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." These blind, Pharisaical Christians will criticize others over little insignificant gnats, while they themselves swallow camels – hooves, hides, and humps!

II. SINCERITY.

(James 1:8) "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."

A double-minded man never gains any spiritual stability. He wavers like water. There is no substance to what he is or what he believes. He halts between two opinions. He can go either way – Baal or Jehovah. He does not have the sincere desire necessary to learn the truth. (*Prov 18:1*) "Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom."

III. SURRENDER.

When I have found the truth in the Bible, I must surrender my life to that truth. Knowing the truth means nothing. Satan knows the truth. Many unsaved people know the truth.

The Christian who comes face to face with the truth must yield to that truth before it will become any sort of a conviction. I must surrender to the principle or the command before it can become a part of my life.

A conviction is not so much something you would die for, as much as it is something that you will live for.

Do not tell me about your beliefs. Tell me about your convictions. The true level of your Christian life is not what you know, but what you do about what you know. The Christian life is knowing the *Word* and doing the *work*:

- (James 1:22) "But be ye doers of <u>the word</u>, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."
- (James 1:25) "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of <u>the work</u>, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

IV. A STAND.

A conviction is not worth much if you are not going to stand up for it. And Joash did not. He yielded to peer pressure. Without Jehoiada's presence, he gave in to the flattery of the princes, and went out and served the gods of the heathen.

Your convictions are going to be tested. The world loves to try to get a Christian to slip up on their convictions. Your family, unless they believe as you do, will constantly test your convictions.

Our children are going to be in this world one day, when they are grown, and you will not be there to defend them. The pastor will not be there in college, at the factory, or in the office. If they do not have their own convictions, they will probably fold to the pressure of this world.

V. STANDARDS.

Standards are the practical implementation of my convictions.

Everyone has standards. Everyone has ideas of what should be allowed and what should not be allowed. These standards come from their own ideas of what is right and wrong. My standards should come from what the Bible says is right and wrong.

For example, if you surrender to what the Bible teaches about modesty, it is going to cause you to develop Biblical standards

concerning what you and your family should wear. If you surrender to what the Bible teaches concerning separation, it is going to cause you to develop some Biblical convictions concerning where you go, what you do, how you talk, with whom you associate, and what you watch. If you surrender to what the Bible teaches about faithfulness, it is going to cause you to rearrange your schedule.

When you have high convictions, you will have high standards. If you have strong convictions, you will have strong standards. If you have few convictions, you are going to have few standards, and probably your standards will match the society in which you live.

A church shows its proximity to the world by its standards. When a church has standards similar to the world's, it is a worldly church.

But we ought to have high standards in our personal lives, too. And if we do not have high standards in our own homes, it will not be long before we do not have high standards in the House of God.

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Joash never saw beyond Jehoiada. Jehoiada was his source of truth, and he found out that Jehoiada was an imperfect source of truth. When Jehoiada died, Joash's god died. His source of conviction died. He fell to peer pressure and turned his nation towards idolatry. He even killed the son of Jehoiada for preaching the truth.

May God help us to develop convictions of our own, from the right source – the Word of God.

Five essentials:

- The right Source.
- Sincerity.
- Surrender.
- A Stand.
- Standards.



* - Indicates kings with the same names.

Chapter Nine

UZZIAH

THE LEPER KING



(2 Chr 26:1-5) "Then all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah. {2} He built Eloth, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers. {3} Sixteen years old was

Uzziah when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. {4} And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did. {5} And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper."

After the death of Joash, his son **Amaziah** reigned over Judah for twenty-nine years. Amaziah started out well, but he later abandoned God for the false gods of the Edomites, whom he had defeated in battle. Amaziah was *half-hearted* in his obedience, and *half-witted* in his obstinacy to the Lord. He worshipped the gods of the people he had defeated. God sent a prophet to Amaziah with a simple question: (2 Chr 25:15) "...Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand?" Amaziah's favorite song would have been, "I am on the Losing Side!" He beat them and joined them!

Amaziah became lifted up in pride (a sin which his son would repeat). (2 Chr 25:19) "Thou sayest, Lo, thou hast smitten the Edomites; and **thine heart lifteth thee up to boast**: abide now at

home; why shouldest thou meddle to thine hurt, that thou shouldest fall, even thou, and Judah with thee?"

Amaziah then challenged the king of Israel, who came down and soundly defeated him. The king of Israel broke down a large section of the wall of Jerusalem and looted the city, including all the gold and silver in the house of God.

Amaziah was eventually killed by his own servants, and his sixteenyear-old son, **Uzziah**, was promoted to the throne of Judah.

Uzziah is also called **Azariah**. He was the ninth king of Judah. He reigned longer than any other king in either kingdom had up to that time – fifty-two years.

The prophet Isaiah began his ministry during the reign of Uzziah. (Isa 1:1) "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." The death of Uzziah was a turning point in the ministry of Isaiah. (Isa 6:1) "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." However, there is no indication that Uzziah ever listened to Isaiah or sought his counsel.

I. UZZIAH'S INCREASE.

Uzziah enjoyed tremendous prosperity at the beginning of his reign, and he was a wise and productive king. His kingdom benefited from his works.

God blessed him and helped him to defeat his enemies. (2 Chr 26:6-8) "And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines. {7} And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gurbaal, and the Mehunims. {8} And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad even

to the entering in of Egypt; for he strengthened himself exceedingly."

He was a great builder, and strengthened the defenses of Jerusalem. He also loved farming, and dug many wells for his agriculture and cattle (2 Chr 26:9-10). He gathered a tremendous army, and kept them well-armed. (2 Chr 26:11-14). Uzziah was definitely for a strong army and a strong defense. Uzziah understood that he lived in a world ruled by force and military power. He had the most advanced, state-of-the-art weapons of his time. (2 Chr 26:15) "And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong."

His prosperity was a direct result of seeking the LORD God of Israel. (2 Chr 26:4-5) "And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did. {5} And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, **God made him to prosper.**"

He did what was right. He sought God. He listened to a preacher, Zechariah, who had understanding in the Word of God. (This was not the Zechariah that wrote the Biblical Book with this name, which was written during the Post-Captivity period). As long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper.

The only problem was that he was too much like his father. (2 Chr 26:4) "And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did." Amaziah sought God half-heartedly, and eventually turned from God to worship the idols of his defeated enemy. Uzziah sought God at first, and was marvellously helped. But when he reached the zenith of his power, he also turned away from the Lord.

(2 Chr 26:15-16) "...And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong. {16} But when he was

strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God..."

Uzziah was destroyed by prosperity.

There is an old Jewish saying that "Religion gave birth to prosperity, and the daughter devoured the mother." (Job 15:21) "A dreadful sound is in his ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him."

"His heart was lifted up" means that he became filled with pride. His great-grandson, Hezekiah, developed the same problem when he became rich and prosperous.

(2 Chr 32:25-26) "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for **his heart was lifted up**: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. {26} Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for **the pride of his heart**..."

All of Uzziah's prosperity was brought about simply because "God helped him" (vs. 7) and "he was marvellously helped, till he was strong" (vs. 15). Yet he did not give God the glory for this, but stole it for himself.

We have a fleshly tendency to take the credit for what God does in our lives, instead of giving Him the glory. Nebuchadnezzar later learned this same lesson. (Dan 4:29-32) "At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. {30} The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of <u>my</u> power, and for the honour of <u>my</u> majesty? {31} While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. {32} And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." Paul warned us of this prideful attitude of ingratitude. (1 Cor 4:7) "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, **why dost thou glory**, as if thou hadst not received it?" If we are honest, what do we have to be proud of anyway?

If you seek the Lord and live by His Word, you will be blessed. But will you be able to handle the blessings when they come, or will you be destroyed by the blessings?

When pride starts to come up in your life, deal with it right away. (*Prov 11:2*) "When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom." Deal with pride when it starts, because destruction is coming soon after. (*Prov 16:18*) "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

II. UZZIAH'S INTRUSION.

(2 Chr 26:16-18) "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. {17} And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: {18} And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God."

God had established both the kingdom and the priesthood, and had put boundaries around both. Only the sons of Aaron could serve as priests, and only the sons of David could serve as king. King Uzziah thought that he was above the law. He intruded into the office of the priesthood.

Azariah and eighty brave priests withstood the king, and refused to allow him to offer incense in the Temple. Thank God for brave

ministers who will stand up for what is right, even at the risk of their own lives and fortunes.

Uzziah was not satisfied with what God had allowed him to have. God had given him the kingdom, but he wanted the priesthood too. God had given him success and prosperity, but it was not enough. He wanted what he could not have, and tried to break the law of God to get it. Uzziah refused to stay inside the boundaries. He did not want to stay in his role.

This was the same spirit that filled Korah in his rebellion against Moses. (Num 16:1-3) "Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: {2} And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: {3} And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, **Ye take too much upon you**, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?"

Moses had not lifted himself up above the congregation. He was filling his God-given role. It was Korah that was lifting himself up. Moses asked, "Hasn't God been good to allow you to be Levites? Do you have to have the priesthood as well?" (Num 16:8-11) "And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: {9} **Seemeth it but a small thing unto you**, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? {10} And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: **and seek ye the priesthood also?** {11} For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the LORD: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?"

God settled the issue in Moses' day: (Num 16:28-33) "And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all

these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. {29} If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me. {30} But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. {31} And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: {32} And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. {33} They, and all that closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation."

A memorial was made to remind the people that they were not to intrude into the priesthood. (Num 16:39-40) "And Eleazar the priest took the brazen censers, wherewith they that were burnt had offered; and they were made broad plates for a covering of the altar: {40} To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the LORD; that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the LORD said to him by the hand of Moses."

When a person if lifted up with pride, they have a tendency to intrude in other people's offices. When someone has a Godappointed office, those who are not in that office need to stay out of it. Here are three divinely-appointed offices that are often intruded into these days:

1. The office of husband is not to be intruded into.

No one has a right to come between a man and his family. The wife also should be careful to stay out of her husband's office, no matter what the feminists say. Let the husband be the husband.

By the way, parents and in-laws need to stay out of the husband's office, too. There was a day when a man's home was his castle and other men minded their own business.

2. The office of a pastor is not to be intruded into.

If you are not the pastor, then do not try to do the pastor's job. Yet how often are churches disrupted or ruined because a deacon is not satisfied to serve as a Biblical deacon, but wants to intrude into the pastor's business? How many churches have been ruined by a woman who thought that she knew the pastor's job better than the pastor did?

Some believe that pastoring is so easy that anyone can do it. If you believe that, there are plenty of churches that need pastors. Go and get the job legitimately, and maybe you will find out what the ministry is really like.

3. The office of a parent is not to be intruded into.

The State is saying that the children are really their property. Many forces in our country want to destroy parental authority in the home. But no one has a right to intrude into the office of a parent over their child. Mind your own business when it comes to other people's children.

We have a talk-show mentality. Everyone wants to "call in" and give their two cents worth of wisdom of what other people ought to do. Every arm-chair Monday-morning quarterback knows what the coach should have done the day before. Well, if you know it all, why aren't you a coach? It seems such a shame that your vast knowledge of football is being wasted!

I believe that we as Christians would do well to learn our roles in life and stay in the boundaries that God has for us. To put it another way, **MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS**. (1 Th 4:11) "And that ye study to be quiet, and to **do your own business**, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you..."

Intruders tend to be busybodies. People with too much time on their hands tend to busy themselves in other people's business.

- Paul mentioned male busybodies in (2 Th 3:11) "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are **busybodies**." His solution was for these men to get jobs so that they wouldn't have as much time to meddle in other people's business.
- Paul mentioned female busybodies (young widows) in (1 Tim 5:13) "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not." Paul's solution was for these young widows to get married and have some kids so that they would be too busy to meddle in other people's business.

Quit talking about others. Quit judging others. Quit criticizing others. Quit giving unsolicited advice. Just take care of your own business. Raise your own children. Nurture your own marriage. Serve in your own ministry. Worry about your own finances (except if you want to give to others to help them). Do not go intruding into matters that are none of your business. It is evidence of a lifted up, prideful heart!

III. UZZIAH'S INFECTION.

Uzziah was struck with leprosy. (2 Chr 26:19-21) "Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, **the leprosy even rose up in his forehead** before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar. {20} And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him. {21} And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land."

God can abase those who exalt themselves. I mentioned Nebuchadnezzar earlier. He learned this lesson well. (Dan 4:37) "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

Uzziah spent the rest of his life in seclusion, suffering from the disease of leprosy. His son Jotham began to reign as a co-regent with his father until Uzziah's death, but Jotham would not go into the house of God. (2 Chr 27:2) "And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah did: howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD. And the people did yet corruptly."

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Uzziah started off right, seeking the Lord. And the Lord made him to prosper. But prosperity ruined him. He stole the glory from God, became puffed up with pride, and intruded into the priesthood.

He spent the rest of his life literally *rotting away* under the punishment of God.

Give God the glory! (1 Chr 16:29) "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."

Chapter Ten

THE FALL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM



(2 Ki 17:1-6) "In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years. {2} And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of

Israel that were before him. {3} Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents. {4} And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. {5} Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. {6} In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes."

The Northern Kingdom, which began with Jeroboam, lasted approximately 210 years. Nineteen kings reigned over the Northern Kingdom. They were all wicked, evil men. Jeroboam broke his kingdom's ties to the God of Israel when he made the two molten calves and instituted his "easy religion." Later, Ahab brought Baal worship into the kingdom. Jehu destroyed the worship of Baal, but the kingdom remained idolatrous to the very end.

THE KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL



The destruction of the Northern Kingdom is a fulfillment, on a national scale, of (*Prov 29:1*) "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

I. THE ASSYRIAN INVASION AND THE FALL OF SAMARIA (17:1-6).

(2 Ki 17:1-6) "In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years. {2} And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him. {3} Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents. {4} And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. {5} Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. {6} In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes."

The last king of Samaria was **Hoshea** (not to be confused with the prophet Hosea). Hoshea was not as bad as the kings that were before him, but he was bad enough.

Shalmaneser, the king of the Assyrians, came against Samaria, and Hoshea submitted to him and agreed to pay tribute. However, after a few years, Hoshea decided to withhold his taxes and secretly sent to Egypt for help. When this conspiracy was discovered, Shalmaneser marched his armies against Samaria and besieged it for three years. Without God to protect them, Samaria fell into the cruel hands of the Assyrians.

Assyria was a cruel, barbaric, military kingdom. They were fierce warriors and merciless conquerors. Unlike later empires which were often tolerant of their subjects, the Assyrians reigned with terror. Men were slowly flayed alive, and then their skins were hung on the city walls to inspire fear. Some had their ears, noses, tongues, hands, or feet cut off. They put out their eyes, or cut off their heads and made pyramids of skulls outside the city gates. Some prisoners were impaled and left to die slowly. Children were burned alive or sold as slaves.

The majority of the surviving Jews in the Northern Kingdom were carried off into captivity. (2 Ki 17:6) "In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes."

Exactly what happened to these Israelites throughout the centuries after their dispersion is unknown. There were probably still some godly people among them, as was indicated to Elijah when God told him that He still had 7000 men that had not bowed to Baal (1 Kings 19:18). Not everyone had followed the king into idolatry.

Most likely, the ungodly Jews became assimilated by the heathen culture, while the godly remnant was later reunited with the Jews that would later be carried off by the Babylonians. The Assyrian empire was later conquered by the Babylonian, which in turn was later conquered by the Medes and Persians. Later, the Jews were scattered back east by the Greek and Roman Empires.

In Ezra, at Zerubbabel's return to Jerusalem, there was a group of Jews who could not prove their lineage. These could have been descendants of those deported from the Northern Kingdom. (Ezra 2:59-60) "And these were they which went up from Telmelah, Telharsa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer: but they could not show their father's house, and their seed, whether they were of Israel: {60} The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two."

However, God knows where they are. In the Tribulation, the 144,000 are made up of 12,000 from each Tribe. Nine of the ten northern Tribes are listed. Dan is left out while Ephraim is called the Tribe of Joseph. (*Rev 7:4-8*) "And I heard the number of them

which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. {5} Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of **Reuben** were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of **Gad** were sealed twelve thousand. {6} Of the tribe of **Aser** were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of **Nephthalim** were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of **Manasses** were sealed twelve thousand. {7} Of the tribe of **Simeon** were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of **Issachar** were sealed twelve thousand. {8} Of the tribe of **Zabulon** were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of **Joseph** were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand."

II. GOD'S CASE AGAINST ISRAEL AND HIS TERRIBLE JUDGMENT (17:7-23).

The seven-fold case against Israel:

- 1. They rejected the God of their fathers. (2 Ki 17:7) "For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods,"
- 2. They embraced the ways of the heathen. (2 Ki 17:8) "And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made."
- 3. They insulted God by their "secret" sins. (2 Ki 17:9) "And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city."
- 4. They served idols instead of the Lord. (2 Ki 17:10-12) "And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: {11} And there they burnt incense in all the

high places, as did the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger: {12} For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing."

5. They ignored God's prophets. (2 Ki 17:13-14) "Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. {14} Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God."

These prophets included Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Hosea, Amos, Jonah, and Micah.

- 6. They rejected God's Word. (2 Ki 17:15-16) "And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them. {16} And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal."
- 7. They sold themselves to do evil. (2 Ki 17:17) "And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger."

God's judgment was severe:

(2 Ki 17:18-23) "Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. {19} Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. {20} And the LORD

rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight. {21} For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin. {22} For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; {23} Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day."

III. THE BEGINNING OF THE SAMARITAN PEOPLE (17:24-41).

The king of Assyria brought captive men from various countries, including Babylon. (2 Ki 17:24) "And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof."

Because they did not fear the LORD, God sent a plague of lions, which killed some of them.

The pagan, superstitious men thought that each land had their own god, and therefore they needed to know how to appease the god of this new land. (2 Ki 17:26-28) "Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land. {27} Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land. {28} Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD."

The king of Assyria sent back one of the priests that he had taken captive. This priest was not a son of Aaron, but one of Jeroboam's calf-worshipping priesthood (1 Kings 12:31).

The Babylonians had no intention of discarding their own gods. They only wanted to add *"the God of the land"* to their other gods, so that He would not kill them off with lions.

(2 Ki 17:29-33) "Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt. {30} And the men of Babylon made Succothbenoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima, {31} And the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. {32} So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. {33} **They feared the LORD, and served their own gods**, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence."

Matthew Henry called this a "mongrel religion." They *feared* the LORD but they *loved* their idols. **They lacked true repentance.** They thought that God was just another localized god to add to their collection. They incorporated Him into their religion, but did not discard their paganism.

This is what the Roman Catholic institution did in 321 A.D. When Constantine united the pagan state with the apostate churches, the Romans did not discard their paganism. They merely incorporated their paganism into the apostate version of Christianity. The old gods became "saints." Mary became the "Mother of God" and the "queen of heaven," which are pagan titles (Jerem. 7:18, 44:17-25). The *Pontificus Maximus* of the pagan religions became the Pope of

Catholicism. The "celibate" priesthood and temple priestesses of the pagan temples became the "celibate" priests and nuns of the Roman Catholics. Any serious, impartial study of the Roman Catholic Church will reveal its paganism.

Catholicism today could be considered a paganized version of Christianity, or a Christianized version of paganism, but it is *not* Biblical Christianity. It is a "mongrel religion."

Many other people will give lip service to the Lord, while continuing in their own sinful ways. (*Mark 7:6*) "He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

Soul-winners need to take care that they bring people to the truth about the Lord. A Hindu will pray to Jesus – in addition to a hundred million other "gods." A Buddhist will do the same thing. But will they turn from their dead religion and trust Christ alone?

Let us not forget the importance of repentance:

- (Acts 20:20-21) "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, {21} Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."
- (Acts 26:19-20) "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: {20} But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."

This was the beginning of the Samaritan people. (2 Ki 17:40-41) "Howbeit they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner. {41} So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day." In Nehemiah's day, approximately three hundred years later, they were the enemies of God's people. (Neh 4:1-2) "But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. {2} And he spake before his brethren and the army of **Samaria**, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?"

Their idolatry continued until around 300 B.C., when they discarded their idols and built their temple on Mount Gerizim. However, they did not repent of their superstitions. Matthew Henry writes:

"This medley superstition is here said to continue unto this day (v. 41), till the time when this book was written and long after, above 300 years in all, till the time of Alexander the Great, when Manasse, brother to Jaddus the high priest of the Jews, having married the daughter of Sanballat, governor of the Samaritans, went over to them, got leave of Alexander to build a temple in Mount Gerizim, drew over many of the Jews to him, and *prevailed with the Samaritans to cast away all their idols and to worship the God of Israel only; yet their worship was mixed with so much superstition that our Saviour told them they knew not what they worshipped, John 4:22.*"

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In Jesus' day, the Samaritans were despised and hated by the Jews, who considered them half-breed dogs, worse than Gentiles. One of the worst insults that the unbelieving Jews could hurl at Christ was that He was a "Samaritan," which was as bad as being devilpossessed. (John 8:48) "Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?"

Jesus, however, did not share their racist hatred. He went out of His way to win a Samaritan woman, who in turn brought many of

the men of Sychar to see Him. The conversation Jesus had with this woman revealed that the Samaritans knew about the coming Messiah, and many believed on Jesus while the Jews rejected Him.

- (John 4:25-29) "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. {26} Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he. {27} And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? {28} The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, {29} Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"
- (John 4:39-42) "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. {40} So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. {41} And many more believed because of his own word; {42} And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

Jesus included Samaria in the Great Commission, to remind the early church that no one was to be excluded. (Acts 1:8) "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

In the Book of Acts, many Samaritans were saved and churches were started (Acts 8:5-17; 9:31). This shows us the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is for all men, everywhere!

THE KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL



Chapter Eleven

HEZEKIAH

AND A REVIVAL OUT OF NOWHERE



(2 Chr 29:1-3) "Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. {2} And he did that which was right in the sight

of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done. {3} He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them."

(2 Chr 29:36) "And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: **for the thing was done suddenly**."

Hezekiah was the great-grandson of Uzziah, the king who had intruded into the office of the priesthood, and had died as a leper because of his pride. Hezekiah's father was Ahaz, a wicked king. He worshipped Baal, and the false gods of Syria. Up to this point, Ahaz was the most idolatrous king in the history of Judah.

(2 Chr 28:23-25) "For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. **But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel.** {24} And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. {25} And in every several city of Judah he made high places

to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers."

In sixteen years, Ahaz "made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD" (2 Chron. 28:19). He filled Judah with idolatry and abominations. When he died, Hezekiah was made king. Hezekiah was twenty-five years old, which means that he was only nine years old when his father became king. Throughout Hezekiah's childhood, teenage years, and young adulthood, Hezekiah was surrounded by idolatry, rebellion, and wickedness. He was raised by a man who hated God and did everything he could to provoke the LORD to anger.

Yet Hezekiah became one of the greatest kings in the history of Judah. (2 Chr 29:1-2) "Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem...And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done."

Despite his upbringing and the society in which he lived, Hezekiah *"did that which was right in the sight of the LORD."*

By the way, God expects us to do right, with no excuses. It does not matter how you were raised, or by whom. It does not matter what kind of society you live in. God expects us to do what is right. Too many people are excusing their habitual sins, their rebellious attitudes, their sinful ways of life, and their acts of disobedience because of the circumstances of their lives. If Hezekiah could overcome his circumstances and do right, then so can we.

Hezekiah led his nation is one of the greatest revivals in the Bible.

1. It was a needed revival.

The nation had been deteriorating for a long time before Ahaz took the throne. They had not had a spiritual revival since the days of Jehoshaphat – 188 years before!

Sixteen years of Ahaz's absolute wickedness had changed the culture and society of Judah. The Northern Kingdom had been
destroyed by Assyria, but Judah was following in their footsteps. (2 Ki 17:18-19) "Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. {19} Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made."

How long has it been since America had a spiritual revival? Our nation was born after the Great Awakening in the 1700's. There was a great revival in 1800 in the West, often called the Second Great Awakening. The Fulton Street Prayer Revival shook our country just before the Civil War in the 1850's and 60's. Billy Sunday and D.L. Moody had great revivals in the last part of the nineteenth century.

The revival of the independent Baptist movement in the twentieth century and the return to personal soul-winning and missions definitely impacted our nation.

But we are in the 21^{st} century now. We need a revival for our time.

Perhaps the real reason that our nation and culture has so drastically changed is because we have not had a real, spiritual, national revival in such a long time. We *need* a revival.

2. It was a sudden revival.

Hezekiah put God first. (2 Chr 29:3) "He in the **first** year of his reign, in the **first** month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them."

Sixteen years of wickedness were washed away in sixteen days. (2 Chr 29:17) "Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the LORD: so they sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end." It was sudden and unexpected. (2 Chr 29:36) "...for the thing was done suddenly."

God was ready. It just took one man to put God first and determine to do something about the problem. And the revival came suddenly – out of nowhere. God can do it again.

3. It was a timely revival.

Not long after, Assyria invaded Judah. The king and the people were right with God when this desperate situation arose in their land. Tough times and trouble is going to come anyway. It is so much better to face desperate situations when you are right with God.

I believe that we can find a definite formula for a true revival in these passages. Here is the formula under four headings:

- 1. Repentance leads to revival.
- 2. Revival leads to renewal.
- 3. Renewal leads to righteousness.
- 4. Righteousness leads to reform.

I. REPENTANCE LED TO REVIVAL.

Revival always starts with repentance. We need a change of mind and heart concerning God and concerning our sins. (2 Chr 7:14) "If my people, which are called by my name, shall **humble** themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and **turn from their wicked ways**; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

After all those years of backsliding, apathy, lukewarmness, idolatry, and wickedness, the people needed repentance. Some preparations had to be made before the people would be ready for revival. It started with Hezekiah, went to the ministers, then the house of God, then the rulers, and finally to the people of the land.

1. First, Hezekiah reopened the doors of the Temple, and repaired them. (2 Chr 29:3) "He in the first year of his reign, in the first

month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them."

Ahaz had padlocked the doors of the house of God to keep everyone out (28:24). The first thing that Hezekiah did was reopen the doors, and then he repaired them so that they would stay open.

There is not going to be a revival if the church doors are closed. We aren't going to have a revival with churches canceling their services. We are not going to have revival when we look for any reason to cancel the services and miss church. All over the country, churches are canceling their evening services. If the weather looks bad, they cancel services. If the Super Bowl is on, they cancel the service, or rearrange their schedule around it. *If preachers were paid by the service, they would never cancel one again.*

Keep the church doors open. Let people come in. Do not shut the doors to the poor, the lame, the maimed, or the blind. Go out in the highways and hedges and fill the house of God up! (Luke 14:21-23) "So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. {22} And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. {23} And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

2. Secondly, Hezekiah encouraged the ministers of God.

(2 Chr 29:4-5) "And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street, {5} And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place." (2 Chr 29:10-11) "Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us. {11} My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense."

He encouraged them the priests and Levites to sanctify themselves, and to sanctify the house of God.

Do you know why a lot of preachers have gone liberal, contemporary, and "progressive?" Do you know why a lot of preachers have compromised their stands? Because people are always trying to pull the preacher away from what is right, away from holiness, away from righteousness, and away from the old paths. And many preachers finally get tired of fighting, tired of wrestling with budgets and insufficient funds, tired of watching people leave – and they surrender to the wants of the worldly-minded people in their churches. I am not saying they are right to do so. It is no excuse. But it is a reality.

Every old-fashioned, sin-fighting, Bible-preaching, right-living, fundamental Baptist preacher needs some men like Hezekiah who will speak up and say, "Preacher, we want an oldfashioned church. We want old-fashioned music. We do not want the contemporary stuff. We want the King James Bible, and high standards, and soul-winning, and bus routes, and missions. We want the right kind of people teaching our kids. We want hard preaching, and we want an altar call, and we want to give our tithes and offerings. We want what God wants for our lives, our family, and our church."

These priests and Levites seemed willing enough, but they needed some encouragement. The previous king had beaten them down and pushed them aside. They needed someone to say, "Come on, fellas. We are going to have revival. We are going to do things right."

When someone gets mad at the preacher and walks out, someone else needs to say, "Good sermon, preacher." When

the preacher tries to have a program that will help the church, he needs someone to get behind him and say, "Let's do it." He does not need a hundred men. He may just need one. Hezekiah was just one man, but he used his influence to help encourage the ministers of God. He helped them get the ball rolling.

3. Thirdly, the ministers cleaned out the house of God.

They came to cleanse the house of God. It had collected a lot of junk, dirt, and filth over the years of apathy. A church that suffers years of apathy and lukewarmness is going to collect a lot of junk and filth in its programs and property. A Christian who suffers years of apathy and lukewarmness is going to collect a lot of worldliness in his life that a real revival is going to clean out.

They started at the innermost point and worked their way out to the porch (vs. 16-17). We need to start deep inside ourselves – in our heart. (*Psa 51:6-7*) "Behold, thou desirest truth **in the inward parts**: and **in the hidden part** thou shalt make me to know wisdom. {7} Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

If we fix the problems down deep inside, a lot of the outer problems will be fixed in the process. We like to mow the weeds instead of uprooting them. They just keep growing back because we do not get down deep inside to the roots of the problem.

They cleaned out ALL the uncleanness (vs. 16). Nothing was spared.

It had become so filthy that it took eight days to clean, and eight more days to get it ready for worship again (vs. 17-18). But in sixteen days, sixteen years of apostasy, backsliding, apathy, and sinfulness was washed away in the tidal wave of repentance and revival. All of these things were necessary for the great revival that was about to take place. The doors of the house of God had to be reopened. The ministers had to repent and get themselves and the Temple ready for service. The house had to be cleansed out and repaired.

There will be no revival until we have repentance. Do not wait for your neighbor to get it. Start with yourself.

II. REVIVAL LED TO RENEWAL.

1. They returned to the House of God.

(2 Chr 29:20) "Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD."

We must renew to practice of faithful church attendance. (*Heb* 10:23-25) "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) {24} And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: {25} Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

- I will not hold the profession of my faith without wavering if I am forsaking the church assembly.
- I will not be able to consider one another or encourage others to love and good works if I am not in the church assembly.
- ➤ I can't exhort anyone if I am not in the church assembly.

Christians who are not faithful to attend church are not much help to the cause of Christ. They do not serve. They discourage the pastor and the other members. They cannot be counted on. They set a bad example for others.

We need a renewal of the practice of faithful church attendance – Sunday School, Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, and any special meeting. Whenever the

church is assembling together, be there with them. If the doors are open, be in attendance.

2. They returned to the altar.

(2 Chr 29:21-24) "And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven lambs, and seven he goats, for a sin offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah. And he commanded the priests the sons of Aaron to offer them **on the altar of the LORD.** {22} So they killed the bullocks, and the priests received the blood, and sprinkled it on the altar: likewise, when they had killed the rams, they sprinkled the blood **upon the altar**: they killed also the lambs, and they sprinkled the blood **upon the altar**. {23} And they brought forth the he goats for the sin offering before the king and the congregation; and they laid their hands upon them: {24} And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood **upon the altar**, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel."

We need to renew the practice of confessing our sins before the Lord.

We do not offer a sacrifice for forgiveness of sins. Jesus is our once and forever sacrifice for sins. But we need to come to the altar and confess our sins on a daily basis. (1 John 1:9) "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

It is humbling to have to stop and confess my sins to God, and apologize to Him for my failures. But it is good for the soul, and it cleanses us from unrighteousness.

When was the last time you confessed your sins to God?

3. They returned to Scriptural music and singing.

(2 Chr 29:25-28) "And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according

to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets. {26} And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. {27} And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, **the song of the LORD** began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel. {28} And all the congregation worshipped, **and the singers sang**, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished."

(2 Chr 29:30) "Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the LORD with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped."

They were not singing the contemporary songs of their day. They were not singing the heathen songs of Ahaz's time. They sang *"the song of the Lord"* with the instruments that David had ordained. They sang *"praise unto the LORD with the words* of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises..."

They sang the old words to the old songs, with the old instruments, and the old music. They sang the old Psalms of David and Asaph. They sang Scriptural music.

Dr. Bob Smith says, "You live on the level of the music you listen to." Nothing shows the carnality and apostasy of churches as clearly as the move away from the old hymns and the old, Scriptural music, replacing them with band performances, meaningless choruses, and a presentation atmosphere instead of congregational singing to the Lord.

4. They returned to Scriptural Worship.

(2 Chr 29:28-29) "And **all the congregation worshipped**, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. {29} And when

they had made an end of offering, **the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped**."

The Charismatics, Pentecostals, and other religious groups claim to have returned to Scriptural worship. It is peculiar, however, that their idea of worship raises them to their feet, with their hands outstretched.

In the Bible, real worship put people on their knees, bowing before the Lord. Bowing and worshipping is a pattern throughout the Bible:

- (Gen 24:26) "And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD."
- (Gen 24:52) "And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth."
- (Exo 4:31) "And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped."
- (Exo 34:8) "And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped."
- (1 Chr 29:20) "And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the LORD, and the king."
- (2 Chr 7:3) "And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever."

- (2 Chr 20:18) "And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD."
- (Neh 8:6) "And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground."
- (Psa 95:6) "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker."
- Even the Roman soldiers, desiring to make a mockery of worship, bowed their knees before Christ. (Mark 15:19) "And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him."

I dare say that most people who come to church never truly worship the Lord while they are in church. They do not bow their head, their knees, or their heart. They come to get and get out.

5. They renewed the practice of giving offerings to the Lord.

(2 Chr 29:31-33) "Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the LORD, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD. And the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings; and as many as were of a free heart burnt offerings. {32} And the number of the burnt offerings, which the congregation brought, was threescore and ten bullocks, an hundred rams, and two hundred lambs: all these were for a burnt offering to the LORD. {33} And the consecrated things were six hundred oxen and three thousand sheep."

We might have a revival if we can get Christians to love God more than they love their money. We might have a revival if our offerings in a month's time were more than what we spend on entertainment and dining out. We might have a revival if we quit tithing to the penny and looking for tithing loopholes to make sure that we do not give God too much.

Some missionaries might actually get to the field, and churches might not be closing their doors and selling their property, and preachers might be able to serve full-time, and church properties might actually be in better shape, if Christians loved God more than their money.

6. They returned to fellowship and service.

(2 Chr 29:34) "But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was ended, and until the other priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests."

These priests and Levites had not served in a long time. Now, they got back to work. There was so much to do that the Levites helped the priests with their work.

Every believer today is a priest (Rev. 1:6). Every saved person should be a member of a local church and look for some way to serve God in their church. We need to get back to the practice of serving, and not just coming to be served - fellowshipping together in service, and not just for fun.

7. They returned to the joy of their salvation.

They determined to keep the Passover.

(2 Chr 30:1-5) "And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel. {2} For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month. {3} For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem. {4} And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation. {5} So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written."

The Passover feast was designed to remind the Jews of God's deliverance of their forefathers from Egypt. It was to remind them of how God miraculously saved them from the death angel, because they had been under the blood of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12).

(1 Cor 5:7-8) "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: {8} Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

We need to return to the joy of our salvation. We need a return to sincerity and truth, and the love of our Savior. When David got backslidden, he prayed, (*Psa 51:12*) "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit."

We ought to rejoice in the salvation that we have in Jesus Christ! They did. (2 Chr 30:21) "And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days **with great gladness**: and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the LORD." (2 Chr 30:26-27) "So there was **great joy** in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem. {27} Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven."

8. They returned to soul-winning.

Hezekiah did not keep the revival to himself. He wanted to share it with everyone in Jerusalem. Then, he sent out invitations for everyone in Judah. And he sent invitations to the remnant of Jews still living in the recently conquered regions of Israel.

Hezekiah sent out soul-winners to invite the people to come to the Passover. (2 Chr 30:5-10) "So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written. {6} So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. {7} And be not ve like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see. {8} Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. {9} For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him. {10} So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them."

Some laughed them to scorn, and mocked the soul-winners. There will always be those out there. But some came from the northern Tribes, and all of Judah came. (2 Chr 30:11-13) "Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem. {12} Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD. {13} And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation."

(2 Chr 30:18) "For a multitude of the people, even **many** of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written..."

Not all came, but some came from seven of the northern Tribes. Not everyone will come to our Gospel invitation. Some will mock and scorn. But some will come. We know this – if we do not go, no one will come!

It is up to us to get back to the Great Commission.

- (Mark 16:15) "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."
- (Luke 14:23) "And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

Go out and invite people to come to our Passover – Jesus Christ!

Repentance led to Revival. Revival led to Renewal.

- 1. A renewal of attendance to the house of God.
- 2. A renewal of confession of sin.
- 3. A renewal of Scriptural music and singing.
- 4. A renewal of Scriptural worship.

- 5. A renewal of the faithful giving of offerings.
- 6. A renewal of fellowship and service.
- 7. A renewal of the joy of salvation.
- 8. A renewal of soul-winning.

III. RENEWAL LED TO RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The king, priests, Levites, and people all wanted to do what was right. The revival had stirred them up to doing the right thing.

(2 Chr 30:1-4) "And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel. {2} For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month. {3} For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem. {4} And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation."

The people did not say, "No, Hezekiah, that's too much trouble. We'll just wait until next year. We do not want to interrupt our schedule." The plan pleased the people. They wanted to do what was right. They wanted to be pleasing to the Lord.

Amazing things can happen when God's people are more concerned with doing right than doing what is convenient or comfortable.

(2 Chr 30:17-21) "For there were many in the congregation that were not sanctified: therefore the Levites had the charge of the killing of the passovers for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto the LORD. {18} For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon every one {19} That prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. {20} And the LORD hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people. {21} And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the LORD."

God accepted their worship because their hearts were right. In fact, I believe God enjoyed what He was seeing. (2 Chr 30:27) "Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven." They had a childlike joy that God loved.

True revival is going to lead to personal righteousness. It is going to result in a change in a Christian's way of life.

IV. RIGHTEOUSNESS LED TO REFORM.

(2 Chr 31:1) "Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned, every man to his possession, into their own cities."

Repentance, revival, renewal, and righteousness came before the reform of the country. The revived people went out with great zeal and destroyed all vestiges of idolatry – not only in Jerusalem and Judah, but also in Ephraim and Manasseh.

Righteousness must always precede reform, just as revival precedes righteousness.

America is the way it is because we have lost our righteousness. (Prov 14:34) "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach

to any people." God's people have failed. The salt has lost its savour. The light is not shining, because Christians are apathetic, backslidden, worldly, carnal, and ignorant of God's Word.

We cannot reform an unrighteous people.

An unrighteous nation is going to abort babies, legalize gambling, legalize liquor and drugs, euthenize its old, sick and feeble, and outlaw God from its schools. An unrighteous nation is going to accept homosexuality, divorce, shacking-up, fornication, and promiscuity. An unrighteous nation is going to be profane, selfish, violent, and dishonest.

And Christians think that they can change it through politics and elections. We are not going to change our nation by yoking up with *"the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Ph. 3:18).* We are not going to change our nation by yoking with the Catholics, who teach that salvation is through their Church and not through Christ alone. We are not going to change our nation by yoking up with unbelievers, infidels, apostates, and heretics for the sake of political clout. We are not going to change our nation with carnal weapons. (2 Cor 10:3-4) "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: {4} (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)"

Bible-believing Christians ought to be winning souls. We ought to be running bus routes. We ought to be influencing our families, neighborhoods, and job sites. We ought to be praying and building our churches. We ought to be starting new churches in America. We ought to be standing for righteousness and shining our light. We ought to be trying to turn people to the righteousness of God, one by one.

Now, we ought to be voting, and voting like Christians. Christians should not be guilty of neglect when it comes to our civic responsibilities. I am not saying that we should join the Moral Majority (which is made up of a *majority* of Catholics). I am saying that we should be informed, and we should vote.

But voting alone will not change our country. We need repentance and revival. Righteousness preceded reform. Billy Sunday's revivals shut down saloons and caused counties to go dry – not through politics, but through regeneration. The drunks got saved, the saloon keepers got saved, and the liquor business went bankrupt. The Prohibition that was started because of righteousness was overturned when righteousness went away.

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Hezekiah's reign got started with a bang – a revival out of nowhere. We can have revival today. God has not changed.

- Repentance leads to Revival.
- Revival leads to Renewal.
- Renewal leads to Righteousness.
- Righteousness leads to Reform.

Let it begin with us!

Chapter Twelve

HEZEKIAH

AND THE ASSYRIAN INVASION



(2 Chr 32:1-5) "After these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself. {2} And when Hezekiah saw that

Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, {3} He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city: and they did help him. {4} So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water? {5} Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance."

Hezekiah's revival was needed, sudden, and timely. In 16 days, 16 years of wickedness and 188 years of apathy, backsliding, and lukewarmness (since Jehoshaphat's last revival) was washed away in a spiritual revival.

It was a timely revival. It preceded the fearful invasion of Judah by the blood-thirsty Assyrian armies.

I. DESPERATION.

(2 Chr 32:1) "After these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself."

As mentioned in a previous lesson, the Assyrians were unspeakable brutal. Ten years before, they had conquered the Northern Kingdom. No doubt, some of the survivors had told horror stories of the cruelty of the Assyrian conquerors. It seems strange that desperate times would come immediately after a great spiritual revival. No sooner had Hezekiah's revival taken effect and the reinstituted worship of God been established, that the enemy invaded the land. (2 Chr 32:1) "After these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came..."

This is the opposite of how we think that it should work. We think that if we get right and start doing what is right, things should get better for us, and not worse. *"After these things, and the establishment thereof,"* I expect God's overflowing blessings, and not an overflowing army of bloodthirsty Assyrians.

Now, the Assyrians were going to come down anyway. They had recently conquered the Northern Kingdom. It made perfect sense to go ahead and conquer Judah, thus controlling the region, and the entrance to the continent of Africa. They would have come anyway. But it is far better to face desperate situations in the will of God than to have to face the same situations out of the will of God. Problems, troubles, difficulties, and heartache are going to come whether we are right with God or not. I believe that being right will spare us a lot of trouble, but not all of it. It is going to come. As long as we live in this sin-cursed world in a sin-cursed body in a society of other sinners, we will have trouble. This is not the Millennium. This is not an ideal world. The Bible gives us a realistic view of life.

We must also remember that we have an enemy that hates us and wants to destroy us. Satan was not happy about the revival that had taken place in Jerusalem. The devil will not be happy if people get saved, or if saved people get right. He does not just give up and go away. He will immediately launch a counter-attack to discourage, defeat, or disturb the spiritual revival that has taken place.

As we live the Christian life, grow in grace, and begin to obey God's Word, we must expect the devil's invasions. If we do what is right, we must not be surprised if things do not turn out as we hoped. I believe that God will bless His people for doing right, but sometimes Satan's curses arrive before God's blessings.

When we get on fire for God, Satan is going to come along with his fire extinguisher to put it out. When we start moving forward for God, Satan is going to try to trip us up. When we start serving God, Satan is going to try to discourage us. When we start winning souls, he wants to silence us. When we start believing God's Word, he wants to disturb our faith.

It is time that Christians remembered that we serve God in the enemy's territory. This is not an ideal world. We are not ideal people. Life is not ideal. God is perfect, good, benevolent, and kind, and blesses obedience. But our adversary the devil is vicious, hateful, and heartless, and he wants to destroy the Christian who tries to do what is right.

II. DETERMINATION.

Hezekiah was determined to stand against the Assyrians. He made ample preparation to defend the city. He encouraged his people with words of faith.

(2 Chr 32:2-4) "And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, {3} He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city: and they did help him. {4} So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water?"

(2 Chr 32:5) "Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance."

(2 Chr 32:6-8) "And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying, {7} Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him: {8} With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah."

The Christian must have determination in the face of the enemy. *(Eph 6:10-11) "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. {11} Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."*

The Christian also needs the proper preparation in order to withstand his attacks. (*Eph 6:13*) "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Be prepared. Be encouraged. Get ready to stand. The devil is going to attack, and when he does we have to be determined to stand and withstand!

III. DISCOURAGEMENT.

Unfortunately, Hezekiah's faith began to waver as the Assyrians began conquering the fenced cities of Judah. The Assyrians conquered *every* city except Jerusalem.

The Chronicles do not reveal this truth, but it is recorded in 2 Kings. (2 Ki 18:13-16) "Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did

Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them. {14} And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. {15} And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house. {16} At that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and gave it to the king of Assyria."

As each city fell, Hezekiah began to lose his determination. He became discouraged. Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines "discourage" as "to extinguish the courage of; to dishearten; to depress the spirits; to deprive of confidence."

With news of each falling city, Hezekiah's courage wavered and eventually faltered. He backed off. He backpedaled on his convictions. He tried to buy off the enemy. He went so low as to give not only his own treasures, but also the silver in the Temple treasury. He even stooped to cutting off the golden door handles from the doors of the Temple, and the freshly overlaid golden pillars in the Temple, to give it to the king of Assyria. I believe that we can safely say that Hezekiah lost his courage.

Many a Christian has lost their courage in the face of setbacks, defeats, and hindrances. Many a Christian has started out to serve God, and then given up in the face of unexpected obstacles or apparent defeats.

Hezekiah learned the hard way that you cannot bribe the enemy. Backing up before the devil only encourages him to press the battle. We are told to stand and withstand, but we are never told to back up or retreat from the devil.

As soon as Sennacherib received his bribe, he sent his emissaries to try to persuade the rest of the people of Jerusalem to surrender. Sennacherib's message through Rabshakeh contain the subtle hiss of the serpent. Satan comes to the Christian with the same message.

- 1. He tried to make them **doubt** their faith. (2 Chr 32:10) "Thus saith Sennacherib king of Assyria, Whereon do ye trust, that ye abide in the siege in Jerusalem?"
- 2. He tried to **discredit** their leadership. (2 Chr 32:11) "Doth not Hezekiah persuade you to give over yourselves to die by famine and by thirst, saying, The LORD our God shall deliver us out of the hand of the king of Assyria?"
- 3. He tried to **disturb** their confidence with fear. (2 Chr 32:11) "Doth not Hezekiah persuade you to give over yourselves **to die by famine and by thirst**, saying, The LORD our God shall deliver us out of the hand of the king of Assyria?"
- 4. He tried to **discourage** them with a show of strength. (2 Chr 32:12-15) "Hath not the same Hezekiah taken away his high places and his altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall worship before one altar, and burn incense upon it? {13} Know ye not what I and my fathers have done unto all the people of other lands? were the gods of the nations of those lands any ways able to deliver their lands out of mine hand? {14} Who was there among all the gods of those nations that my fathers utterly destroyed, that could deliver his people out of mine hand, that your God should be able to deliver you out of mine hand? {15} Now therefore let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you on this manner, neither yet believe him: for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of mine hand, and out of the hand of my fathers: how much less shall your God deliver you out of mine hand?"

Satan comes to the Christian with the same tactics today:

He wants you to doubt the Word of God, which is our trust. His first recorded words to mankind were: *"Yeah, hath God said?"*

He wants to discredit the leadership in your life. God's gift to the local church is the Pastor, but he is no good to you if you are not going to listen to him or let him minister to you. Satan always tries to embitter the church member against his spiritual leaders. The devil wants you to sit in the *"seat of the scornful"* so that the message from God through His man does not affect your life.

He wants to disturb your confidence with sudden fear. (*Prov 3:25*) "Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh." Sudden fear is like the lion's roar – it is designed to paralyze your faith.

He wants to discourage you with a show of strength. I received a threat letter this week from a so-called reverend representing the "Americans United for the Separation of Church and State." His organization would more properly be named, "A Few Anti-American Communists for the Separation of God from Their Lives." His letter was an unveiled threat to religious leaders that they had better not interfere in the upcoming elections. He reminded us concerning tax laws which prohibit churches from endorsing any particular candidate or party. It was a threat letter that reminded me of the letters that the king of Assyria was sending around Jerusalem to discourage the people (2 Chron. 32:17). These groups, along with the homosexuals, the atheists, the liquor industry, and others of the same Satanic origin, are trying to intimidate Christians so that they can push their agenda in our government.

IV. DELIVERANCE.

After a painful lesson in faith, Hezekiah turned to the Lord.

(2 Chr 32:20) "And for this cause Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven." (2 Ki 19:1) "And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD."

If you fall back, make a comeback. Hezekiah was like us, just flesh and blood. But at least Hezekiah was willing to recognize his errors, and turn back to the Lord. He went and got the preacher and they prayed together.

After this, God gave Hezekiah a message of hope. (2 Ki 19:6-7) "And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. {7} Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land."

I am glad that God did not say, "Forget it Hezekiah. You do not reach my ideals. I will not answer your prayer." Thank God that He is a merciful God. I am glad that He is not like us. We as sinners are often less merciful with other sinners than our holy God is with sinners. It seems to me that if a thrice-holy God could have pity and mercy and forbearance with sinners, then surely sinners can be that way with each other!

The king of Assyria started having some trouble of his own. He wanted to end this trouble with Jerusalem quickly, so he sent another threat (2 Ki 19:8-13).

Hezekiah took it and spread the letter before the Lord and prayed. (2 Ki 19:14-15) "And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and **spread it before the LORD**. {15} And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD..." Sometimes, we do not know what to do. Spread out the problem before the Lord. Cast your cares upon Him!

God gave Isaiah a personal message to send back the Sennacherib. (2 Ki 19:20-28) "Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah,

saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard. {21} This is the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. {22} Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel...{27} But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. {28} Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest."

God heard all the blasphemous insults that Sennacherib had said concerning Him. God could handle the Assyrians with ease. He only had to send one angel. In one night, 185,000 Assyrians were killed by that one angel. The next day, Hezekiah and the Jews looked out and saw the Assyrians packing up and going home!

(2 Ki 19:35-37) "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: **and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.** {36} So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. {37} And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead."

God blessed Hezekiah afterwards. (2 Chr 32:22-23) "Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side. {23} And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth."

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Can you imagine how differently the story would have been without the spiritual revival in chapters 29 through 31?

In the passage which we studied, we have seen a graphic illustration of what will often happen in our own lives. A revival will be followed by a desperate attack from the devil. Sometimes we can be discouraged by the events in our lives. But when you fall back, make a comeback. Hezekiah humbled himself and prayed, and God gave them a great deliverance.

Chapter Thirteen

HEZEKIAH

AND THE AMBASSADORS OF BABYLON



(2 Chr 32:31-33) Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart. {32} Now the

rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. {33} And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead."

Despite the overall goodness of his character, and the goodness of his reign as king, Hezekiah died at a relatively early age. He began to reign at age 25, and reigned 29 years. He was only 54 years old when he died. The major events of these last fifteen years include a postponement with death, a miraculous sign, and a visit by ambassadors from far-off Babylon. These events are covered in three passages: 2 Kings 20, 2 Chronicles 32, and Isaiah 38-39.

I. HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS

(2 Chr 32:24) "In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the LORD: and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign."

In the fourteenth year of his reign, at age 39, he saw the miraculous defeat of the Assyrian army. That same year, and apparently either during or after this tremendous victory, Hezekiah was smitten with an illness that was going to take his life. We do not know what the illness was, except that it involved some sort of boil as a symptom (2 Kings 20:7).

(2 Ki 20:1) "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." It is one thing for a doctor to say that you may not live; it is another when God Himself tells you to set your house in order, "for thou shalt die, and not live."

Isaiah the prophet had brought him messages of peace, comfort, and hope before; this time he was sent with a negative message. The preacher does not get to choose the content of the message he delivers. We should expect both kinds from true men of God.

We should also take measures to prepare for the day of death. Only a fool ignores the reality that death is a certainty. (*Rom 5:12*) "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and **so death passed upon all men**, for that all have sinned..."

Death is an appointment that all must keep. (*Heb 9:27*) "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"

It is irresponsible to know the certainty of death and yet not make proper preparation for it.

1. Set your *heart* in order.

Have you been born again? Are you still in your sins? Are you ready to die and go into eternity? Are you ready to give an account?

Thank God, when I was fifteen years old, I set my heart in order. I trusted Jesus Christ as my Savior. I do not want to die, but I am ready to die. I know that heaven is my home. I know that my sins are forgiven. I have *eternal life* insurance (John 3:16, 3:36; 5:24, etc).

2. Set your *house* in order.

Make sure that your responsibilities are taken care of after your death. Do not leave a mess of confusion, heartache, unanswered questions, and financial distress behind.

First, make sure that your house knows where you are after you die. Give them a salvation testimony to cling to after you are gone. If you are saved, make sure that your family knows it, without doubt. This will give incredible comfort to them as they grieve their loss.

Then, every Christian man needs to make sure that his responsibilities are cared for after he is gone. (1 Tim 5:8) "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." It is a man's responsibility to provide for his own while he is alive, and it is his responsibility to take care of them after his death.

Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion in the Book of Ruth were worse than infidels. They died and left their families destitute. Ruth had to go out and glean the leftovers from the fields just to provide food for herself and Naomi. I do not want my wife and children to be destitute if I should die.

A good man leaves an inheritance, even to his grandchildren. (Prov 13:22) "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children..." I do not have much, but I do have a life insurance policy that will adequately take care of my family should something happen. I often joke with my wife that I am worth more dead than alive (she never appreciates that joke).

We need to take our responsibilities seriously. Set thine house in order.

When Hezekiah heard the message, he turned his face to the wall and prayed that God would change His will. (2 Ki 20:2-3) "Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying, {3} I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore."

God sent Isaiah back with another message in answer to Hezekiah's prayer. (2 Ki 20:4-6) "And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, {5} Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD. {6} And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake."

God promised:

- 1. To heal Hezekiah, so that within three days he would be able to return to the house of God.
- 2. To add fifteen years to Hezekiah's life.
- 3. To deliver Hezekiah and Jerusalem from the hand of the king of Assyria, which could indicate that this happened during the Assyrian siege.
- 4. To defend Jerusalem.

God also gave him a sign to confirm His Word. (2 Ki 20:8-11) "And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third day? {9} And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees? {10} And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees. {11} And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz."

God gave Hezekiah a choice: the shadow on Ahaz's sundial could go ten degrees forward, or ten degrees backward. Hezekiah chose to have the shadow go backwards, which is against nature and therefore the greater miracle. God granted this also. The shadow went back ten degrees. How God performed this miracle is a mystery, but it most certainly happened.

This may be the wonder that brought the Babylonians into Judah. (2 Chr 32:31) "Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of <u>the wonder</u> <u>that was done in the land</u>, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart."

Hezekiah became the only man in the Bible who knew how long he had to live. From that day forward, each day drew him closer to the fifteenth year, in which he knew that he would die. If you knew that you had fifteen years to live, how would you live? What would you do? What would your priorities be? Would you get busy and live for God? Would you focus in on raising your children and preparing them for life without you? Would you get busy laying up treasure in heaven? (*Psa 90:12*) "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

II. HEZEKIAH'S SIN

He became lifted up with pride, as was evidenced during the visit by the ambassadors of Babylon. The king of Babylon had heard of Hezekiah's illness and miraculous recovery (and probably his miraculous victory over the Assyrians), and sent a group of ambassadors to flatter him, and apparently to seek an alliance with him against Assyria.

This was an opportunity for God to test Hezekiah's heart. (2 Chr 32:31) "Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart."

Unfortunately, He found pride and vanity. (2 Chr 32:25-26) "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. {26} Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah."

In a display of proud vanity, Hezekiah showed off the glory of his kingdom – as though the glory of his kingdom was gold and silver, and not GOD. (2 Ki 20:12-13) "At that time Berodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick. {13} And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and showed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not."

Hezekiah's sin in this matter was not blatant or obvious. It was not like David's obvious crimes with Bathsheeba. But it was sin nonetheless. Sin does not always have to be obvious and blatant. Some sins are, but there are sins of the heart, which are not always obvious to the observer. But they are observed by God, and they are just as displeasing in His sight.

His heart was lifted up with pride. This sin is not as obvious as others, but it is certainly not a minor sin. "A proud look" is an **abomination** that is **hated** by the Lord. (*Prov 6:16-19*) "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: {17} **A proud look**, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, {18} An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, {19} A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."

He did not render to God what was due for the benefit of answering his prayer and prolonging his life. And God left him alone, and used this situation to try him, to know all that was in his heart.

There was no need for an alliance with Babylon. God had promised to deliver and defend Jerusalem from their enemies, and especially from Assyria. Hezekiah did not need to trust in an arm of flesh when He had the mighty arm of the God of Jacob with him. He did not need to make an alliance with the world.

With great vanity, Hezekiah showed off everything that he had to the ambassadors. I do not read that he gave the LORD God of Israel any glory or credit for his wealth or blessings. I do not read that he shared with these men the true riches of his kingdom – the law of God or the knowledge of God and His ways.

Adam Clarke wrote: "To be lifted up with pride and vain glory in the possession of any blessings, is the most direct way to lose them; as it induces God, who dispensed them for our benefit, to resume them, because that which was designed for our good, through our own perversity becomes our bane."

It was also very unwise, for it wetted the appetite of the Babylonians to come back and take away the riches of Hezekiah's kingdom – which they eventually did.

Isaiah questioned and then rebuked the king for his impropriety. (2 Ki 20:14-18) "Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, even from Babylon. {15} And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them. {16} And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD. {17} Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. {18} And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."

Apparently, Hezekiah humbled himself, which spared his own generation from judgment. (2 Chr 32:26) "Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah."

Hezekiah's reply to Isaiah, however, revealed that he was shortsighted. (2 Ki 20:19) "Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, **Is it not** good, if peace and truth be in my days?"

He was not concerned about the future. He was content to pass his judgment on to the next generation and let them deal with it. When he had faced death, he prayed and wept for God's mercy, and was granted life. But when he heard about the coming destruction of his people in the years to come, he did not even whisper a prayer.

Hezekiah is like many Christians today, with a "Buy now, pay later" attitude. As long as there is peace and truth in our days, let the next generation fend for themselves.

Hezekiah left his nation in great material prosperity, but in spiritual danger. He built and prospered in many ways, but as soon as he
was dead his kingdom slid into the wicked reign of his own son, Manasseh. And Babylon was growing stronger and stronger to the east.

III. HEZEKIAH'S SUMMARY.

(2 Chr 32:32-33) "Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. {33} And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead."

Overall, Hezekiah was a very good king. He had trouble with pride, and vanity, but in the context of his times he was an exceedingly good king. His reign was not marked by scandals such as David's, or idolatry such as Solomon's, or by compromise such as Jehoshaphat's. Rather, his reign began with a tremendous revival, saw a tremendous victory over the Assyrians, and was extended through a miraculous healing. He was buried with great honors as a beloved king.

Unfortunately, the goodness of his reign ended with his death. His twelve-year-old son Manasseh took over the kingdom, and plunged it into fifty-five years of appalling wickedness.

THE KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL



Chapter Fourteen

MANASSEH

AND HIS JAILHOUSE CONVERSION



(2 Chr 33:1-6) "Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: {2} But did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had

cast out before the children of Israel. {3} For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. {4} Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. {5} And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. {6} And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger."

The story of king Manasseh is one of the greatest testimonies of the saving grace of Jesus Christ to be found in all the Word of God. I for one am thankful that God included this passage in 2 Chronicles, because the parallel passage in 2 Kings makes no reference at all to Manasseh's repentance and salvation. Based on what we read of Manasseh's character and wickedness, we would have assumed that he had lived in his life in total rebellion and unrepentance, and then died lost and bound for hell. But such is not the case. God humbled the proud heart of king Manasseh, and gave him the wonderful gift of repentance (2 Tim. 2:25). Manasseh turned to the Lord of his father Hezekiah, and was forgiven of all his sins. God looked forward to the day when the Son of God would die on the cruel cross of Calvary for the sins of Manasseh, and on the merits of Christ's righteousness and the shedding of His blood, God in His great mercy forgave even so great a transgressor as Manasseh.

God is still saving sinners today. Christ did not die for the righteous, as if there were any, but for the ungodly.

- (Rom 5:6) "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."
- (1 Tim 1:15) "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."
- (Luke 5:32) "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

There are a lot of people all around us who are like Manasseh – hell-bent and reckless, wild and blasphemous, bold and brash in their sins – yet God can save them!

And Christians must not ever give up on any sinner. If God could bring a Manasseh to repentance, or a Saul of Tarsus, or the Maniac of Gadera, or the fallen woman of Sychar, then He can deal with and save sinners today. We must not forget that underneath a wild or hard exterior is a soul that God loves and Jesus died for. Underneath a reckless, careless, blasphemous, or hateful exterior is a heart that God can break and deal with and save.

The story of Manasseh is one of hope and mercy. There are no depths to which God's salvation cannot reach. (*Heb 7:25*) "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." He can save from the guttermost to the uttermost!

Manasseh was the son of good king Hezekiah. Hezekiah was a very good king, despite some flaws and some failures. (2 Chr 29:2) "And he (Hezekiah) did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done."

There came a point when Hezekiah was told that he would die, but he prayed and God added fifteen years to his life. Three years later, his son Manasseh was born. It appears that Manasseh was his only son. Twelve years later, Hezekiah died, and Manasseh was promoted to the throne of Judah. The majority of his fifty-five year reign was filled with outrageous wickedness against the LORD God of Israel.

I. MANASSEH'S CRIMES

1. He sinned against his father and the upbringing that he had received.

(2 Chr 33:2-3) "But did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. {3} For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them."

He rebuilt what his father had broken down. He tore down what his father had spent a lifetime to accomplish. He rebuilt the idolatrous temples that his father had destroyed, and overthrew the revival that his father had brought to Judah.

He turned against his father's faith and sought to destroy it. His father, Hezekiah, had earned a good name as a good man, one who loved God and served him well. Manasseh did everything he could to earn a bad name.

Manasseh was like many who have rejected great light, turning their backs on their family and their faith to embrace the sinful living of the world. Charles Spurgeon said this: "Now, it is a notorious fact, that men who go wrong after a good training are the worst men in the world... You will find amongst the greatest champions of the camp of hell, men who were brought up and educated in our very ranks... And such men make the very worst of infidels; while the best of Christians often come from the very worst of sinners."

The hardest people I have ever dealt with were not raised by satanists. The hardest people I have ever tried to deal with are those who "grew up in church," and then rejected the light and opportunity that they had to live a wicked, sinful, Godless life. Manasseh is like the Prodigal Son, who grew up in the father's house, but rejected his father for the fleeting pleasures of the far country.

2. He sinned greatly against the God of Israel.

(2 Chr 33:4-7) "Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. {5} And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD...also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. {7} And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever..."

Manasseh was extremely bold in his pursuit of sin. He was not covert about his sin, nor ashamed of it. He was impudent and brazen. He did not put on a pretense of religion and whitewash his life, which living in wicked sin behind closed doors. *If he had been that kind of sinner, he probably would have never been saved.* I believe that God would rather deal with an bold sinner who knows what he is and is at least honest with himself, than one of these self-righteous hypocrites who lives a double-life. Oh, but Manasseh was a God-hater. He rebuilt the high places and brought in the filthy worship of Baal. He worshipped the stars of heaven. He even built altars to heathen gods inside the Temple of Jehovah. He set a carved image in the very house of God. He practiced witchcraft, and dealt with a devil called "a familiar spirit." He "wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger."

3. He sinned against God's people.

(2 Ki 21:16) "Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD."

In context, this was after God sent His prophets to preach against Manasseh and Judah for their crimes. Then Manasseh began filling Jerusalem with innocent blood. He began to persecute and destroy the worshippers of the God of Israel.

Jewish tradition tells us that the prophet Isaiah was martyred by Manasseh at this time. Tradition says that Manasseh had Isaiah put into a hollow log, and then sawed him in half.

Those who hate God are going to automatically hate God's people. Preachers are not going to rank real high on their list, either. And there is a significant number of Manasseh's in our country that would like to see all Bible-believing Christians or preachers killed off or imprisoned simply because we are against their wicked way of life!

4. He sinned against his own family.

(2 Chr 33:6) "And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom..."

He sacrificed some of his children to the false gods of the heathen. He allowed them to be burned to death. He dedicated his children to the devil.

If you turn from God and turn to a life of sin and God-hating, what is going to happen to your children? They might grow up, die, and go to *hell*. Are you willing to send your children "through the fire" because you love your sins too much to come to God for His salvation? Are you going to dedicate your children and grandchildren to the devil because you refuse to serve the God of the Bible?

His life influenced his living children as well. His son, Amon, grew up to be just like his dad. But even though Manasseh got saved later and turned his life around, Amon continued on in the way that he had been raised. When he became king, he was just as wicked and hated God just like his dad had.

Parents, we had better consider how our actions are going to influence our children!

5. He exerted a sinful influence on others.

(2 Chr 33:9) "So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel."

Manasseh used his influence to pull people away from God and away from righteousness. Through his influence, the people of Judah did worse than the heathen.

Many people are using their influence for evil instead of good. Many college professors are going to stand before God for destroying the faith of young students. Many a pseudointellectual infidel will have to answer for God for turning people away from the truth.

Paul dealt with a sorcerer of this kind, named Elymas, when he was preaching the Gospel to Sergius. (Acts 13:8-10) "But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. {9} Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, {10} And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy

of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?"

It is not enough for some to hate God and hate His Word. They must convince others of their error, and spend their lives turning people away from their Maker. Thank God, we have here one example of such an infidel who later got saved!

II. MANASSEH'S CONFINEMENT

He would not listen to God's warnings. He refused to repent. (2 Chr 33:10) "And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken."

Why would Manasseh refuse to repent from his evil ways? For many of the same reasons that men today will not repent towards God.

1. He was corrupted by unlimited power and riches.

Many a man has too much prosperity for his own good.

(Mark 10:23-25) "And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, **How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!** {24} And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that <u>trust</u> in **riches to enter into the kingdom of God!** {25} It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

It is not harder for God to save a rich man. It is just harder to get a rich man to realize that he needs to be saved.

Manasseh was corrupted by unlimited power and riches – which he received at too young an age. In the tender years of his life, his heart was captured by the trappings of power and wealth.

2. He was hardened through pride. He "would not hearken."

(Psa 10:4-7) **"The wicked, through the pride of his** countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. {5} His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. {6} He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity. {7} His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity."

(Prov 16:18) "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

The proud man will not humble himself to receive God's mercy. The proud man will not even recognize that he needs God's mercy. His pride will keep him from God's mercy and salvation, and send him to hell.

(Mat 18:3-4) "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. {4} Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." God's requirement is a child-like humility and a child-like faith.

3. He loved his sin too much to part with it for God's sake.

He enjoyed the pleasures of the broad way too much to turn to the strait and narrow way that leads to life. His idols and pagan worship did not bother his conscience, like the Word of God did, and the preaching of God's servants. He did not want to feel guilty because of his wicked ways, yet he did not want to part from them either.

Men reject God because God interferes with their lusts. If God was a sinful, permissive God like the gods of the heathen, they could believe and still maintain their ways. But the call of a thrice-holy God is to repentance.

It is easier to say, *"There is no God,"* than to acknowledge that we must give an account to Him one day at the judgment.

Many will not listen to God's warnings, and will even persecute and hate the messengers, because they love their sin too much to part with it for God's sake. Give them a preacher who will not mention their sins, and they will listen to him and support him. Give them preachers that tell them that they can be wicked and Christians too; that they can be drunkards and Christians, too; that they can be whoremongers and homosexuals and still be Christians, too; that they can be wretched and perverted and be Christians too, and they will listen to that preacher.

But this Book tells us to turn, to repent, to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts. This Book tells us to choose the reproach of Christ over the pleasures of sin for a season. And that is why the Manassehs of this world hate the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Because Manasseh would not repent at God's warning, God delivered him into affliction, to soften his prideful heart. (2 Chr 33:11) "Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon."

Manasseh was captured by the vicious Assyrians, who wrapped him in thorns like barbed wire, and bound him with fetters, and marched him to Babylon.

There, in his affliction, separated from his gods and riches, Manasseh turned to the Lord. (2 Chr 33:12-13) "And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, {13} And prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God." The greatest aspect of this is that God "was entreated of him, and heard his supplication." God heard his prayer! And God was willing to answer his prayer, and save him, and He did so! (Isa 1:18) "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

After all the sins and crimes which Manasseh committed, why would God be willing to save him? Why would God extend mercy to such a sorry reprobate like Manasseh? I'll tell you why – because God loved him. Now, if you want to know why God loved him, I do not have an answer. I do not know why God loves sinners like us, but I am glad that He does!

- (Isa 38:17) "...thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back."
- (1 John 4:8-10) "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. {9} In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. {10} Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Manasseh, humbled and broken, finally repentant, was forgiven and saved by the very same grace of God that can forgive and save you!

III. MANASSEH'S CONVERSION

(2 Chr 33:13-16) "...and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God. {14} Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah. {15} And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. {16} And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel."

Can you imagine what happened when Manasseh went home? His old friends did not know that he had turned to the Lord God of Israel. No doubt, they immediately tried to get him involved again in the worship of their false gods, and back into his wicked way of life.

But Manasseh did not have a mere "jailhouse religion." He was converted. He was going to change his ways, because God had changed his heart. He took away the strange gods and their altars, and cast them out of the city. He repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed offerings to the LORD. He commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel only.

Why do not you go home and clean out your lives like Manasseh did? Would to God that people would get thoroughly right with God as Manasseh did after he got saved!

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Manasseh died, and with the pardon he received from God through the merits of Jesus Christ, Manasseh is now in heaven. Thank God for the wonderful grace of Jesus! Thank God for the redemption that is in Christ! Thank God that Calvary was sufficient for even the worst and wickedest of offenders!

Let me conclude this chapter with an appeal to those readers who might not be saved. You might not be a God-hater like Manasseh, but you need the same Savior and the same salvation that Manasseh needed. God does not have one salvation good folks, one salvation for bad folks, and yet another for the really, really bad people of the world. He has *one* salvation for all men, because all are sinners.

His salvation is not through a church, religion, baptism, or good works. His salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ.

Believe on him! Trust Him! Turn from your self-righteousness, your church-righteousness, and your unrighteousness, to receive the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ!

(John 6:35-37) "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: **he that cometh to me** shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. {36} But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. {37} All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; **and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.**"

(Acts 16:30-31) "And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? {31} And they said, **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved**, and thy house."

Chapter Fifteen

JOSIAH

THE LAST GREAT KING



(2 Chr 34:1-3) "Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years. {2} And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father. and declined

neither to the right hand, nor to the left. {3} For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images."

Josiah was the grandson of Manasseh, and the great-grandson of Hezekiah. Hezekiah had died fifty-seven years before, and the majority of those years had been filled with apostasy and wickedness. Manasseh was unspeakably wicked until his salvation at the end of his life, and Amon had continued that wickedness for two more years before being killed by his own servants.

Josiah, at the tender age of eight, was promoted to the throne of Judah. (2 Chr 34:1-2) "Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign... And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD..."

I have to believe that Grandpa Manasseh had a tremendous influence in the life of young Josiah. He certainly did not learn to love God from his father, Amon. Perhaps Manasseh, realizing that he could not influence his own son for the LORD, concentrated on his grandson instead. Godly grandparents should take note of this and do all that they can to influence their grandchildren for Christ.

Josiah became the last great king in the history of Israel. His life was the final ray of sunlight in a kingdom that would soon be conquered by Babylon. Within twenty-five years of his death, Judah ceased to be a nation.

I. A DESCRIPTION OF THE KING.

(2 Chr 34:1-2) "Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years. {2} And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left."

Though the law of God (the Pentateuch) was lost at this time, God had not left Himself without a witness in Israel. Apparently the historical Scriptures covering the life of David, as well as the Psalms, were still preserved and available.

Young Josiah had a **hero** – the greatest king in Israel's history, David. He wanted to walk in his ways. He wanted to be like David. He *"declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left"* from the righteous ways of David.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with having heroes and following the good ways of their lives. Paul encouraged his converts to follow his example, as he followed Christ.

- (1 Cor 4:16) "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me."
- (1 Cor 11:1) "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

Little children especially need good men and women that they can look up to and follow. F.B. Meyer wrote in his study of the life of David, *"What marvels may be wrought by the inspiration of a single* *life!"* Josiah's hero was David, the great king who, despite his flaws and failures, loved God with all his heart.

When he was sixteen years old, he began to seek after the God of David. (2 Chr 34:3) "For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images."

First, he sought after the *ways* of David. As he got older, he began to seek after the *GOD* of David. May God help us to be the right kind of examples for those around us, so that our lives direct them to God, and not away from Him!

As a young man, he began to zealously purge Judah and Israel of their idolatry. (2 Chr 34:4-7) "And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images, that were on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strowed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. {5} And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. {6} And so did he in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, with their mattocks round about. {7} And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem."

He was not content to just remove idolatry from his own kingdom. He went up among the remnants of Israel (remember that the majority of the people had been carried away by Assyria) and destroyed their idols as well.

Josiah, as a young boy and a young man, fell in love with the God of David. He began to zealously pursue Him, as a certain young shepherd boy had done centuries before.

II. THE DISCOVERY OF THE BOOK.

After purging Judah of their idols, Josiah determined to cleanse and repair the Temple. He was twenty-six years old at this time. (2 Chr 34:8) "Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land, and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God."

As they were cleaning out the Temple and beginning the repairs, Hilkiah the priest made an amazing discovery. (2 Chr 34:14-15) "And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the LORD given by Moses. {15} And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan."

He found a copy of the *"book of the law of the LORD given by Moses."* This was a copy of the Pentateuch, the first five Books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). The law of God had been lost for these many years, because of the persecution caused by Manasseh and Amon. Apparently, this was the only copy left in existence.

Thank God, He has promised to preserve His Word! (*Psa 12:6-7*) "The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. {7} **Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever**."

God knew where that one copy was, and preserved it, and allowed it to be found again. God has always preserved His inspired Word. In the English language, His Word is preserved in the King James Bible.

It is also interesting that the Book was found in the house of the LORD. That means it was also lost in the house of God. If you visit many churches these days, you will wonder where the Bible is. It has been lost! It has been filed away in the back somewhere,

replaced by psychiatry, self-help, worldly entertainment, and "fluffn-puff" preaching.

Hilkiah said, "I have found the Book!" Thank God for the Book!

- I have found the Book which tells me the truth about God and His Son Jesus Christ.
- I have found the Book which tells me of my sinfulness and need for salvation.
- I have found the Book which tells me of God's love for sinners, and His provision for their salvation through the shed blood of Christ on Calvary.
- I have found the Book which tells me of the empty tomb of the risen Savior.
- ➤ I have found the Book which tells me how to be saved.
- I have found the Book which describes heaven and how to get there, and which describes hell, and how to avoid it.
- I have found the Book which tells me how to live right and have good success.
- I have found the Book which tells me how to have a Godhonoring marriage and how to properly raise my children.
- I have found the Book which tells me about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Josiah's appropriate response to the reading of the Book: (2 Chr 34:18-21) "Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. {19} And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes. {20} And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying, {21} Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon

us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book."

They went and sought counsel from Huldah the prophetess. Her message was both fearful and comforting:

(2 Chr 34:23-28) "And she answered them. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell ve the man that sent you to me, {24} Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah: {25} Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be auenched. {26} And as for the kina of Judah. who sent you to inquire of the LORD, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard; {27} Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the LORD. {28} Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again."

God had taken note of the tender heart of Josiah. Josiah's obedience had spared his generation the wrath of God. But Huldah told him that after he was dead, God's judgment and wrath would come.

Compare Josiah's response to this with his great-grandfather, Hezekiah. When Hezekiah was given a similar message, he shrugged his shoulders and said, (2 Ki 20:19) "Then said Hezekiah

unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, **Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?**"

Josiah responded by leading his nation back to God in a great revival! (2 Chr 34:29-33) "Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. {30} And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, areat and small; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD. {31} And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book. {32} And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. {33} And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the LORD their God. And all his days they departed not from following the LORD, the God of their fathers."

He went further and kept the Passover at its appointed time.

- (2 Chr 35:1) "Moreover Josiah kept a passover unto the LORD in Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month."
- (2 Chr 35:17-19) "And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days. {18} And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. {19} In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept."

Josiah was serving God with all his heart. I believe that he was doing everything he could to turn his nation back to God, and to turn away the wrath of God from his nation. He was not content to enjoy peace and prosperity in his days only. He wanted his children and grandchildren to enjoy peace and prosperity as well.

III. THE DEATH OF JOSIAH.

When he was thirty-nine years old, thirteen years after the Book was found and the Passover kept, Pharaoh was going to pass through Israel to go fight against Assyria (see 2 Kings 23:29). In fact, it appears that Pharaoh-Necho intentionally circumvented Judah, going through the northern part of the country (2 Chron. 35:22).

When Josiah saw this, he determined to stand against Pharaoh and fight against him. (2 Chr 35:20) "After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Charchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him." Pharaoh sent ambassadors which basically said, "I am only passing through. I do not plan to fight against you. Do not meddle with this business. Do not meddle with God. Mind your own business and stay out of my fight."

Josiah had no business fighting the king of Egypt. Josiah was warned that this was God's will, but he ignored the warning. After great victories, he made a fatal mistake. He meddled with the will of God. The Bible is clear that the words of Pharaoh were from the mouth of God. (2 Chr 35:22) "...and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo."

He was cut off in the middle of his years, at age 39. Future years of usefulness were cut off because he meddled with a fight that was not his.

Josiah strove with a man that had caused him no harm. (*Prov 3:30*) "Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm." Josiah became a living illustration of Solomon's proverb:

(Prov 26:17) "He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears." There is not even any mention that Josiah sought the will of God in this matter. He was just being stubborn. Josiah went up and fought a battle that was not his to fight, and he was killed.

Beware of:

1. Meddling with God's will.

Josiah was warned that this was God's doing, but he took no heed. It cost him his life.

2. Fighting in the wrong battles or with the wrong enemy.

Our enemy is not flesh and blood. Our enemy is the devil, and the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. We need to make sure that we fight the right battles. My marching orders are the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15; Acts 1:8). Those are the battles I need to be involved in.

3. Getting involved in battles that are not your business.

Mind your own business. Do not interpose yourself in other people's affairs. Josiah was just plain arrogant to think that he could police these other nations and interfere in their business.

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Josiah was the last great king in Judah. He died in Jerusalem, and the people mourned his death. (2 Chr 35:25-27). After, the kingdom of Judah slipped into its twilight years. The once great kingdom of David, which had been broken by Rehoboam, was on its last leg. The Northern Kingdom had fallen to Assyria, and the Southern Kingdom was about to be conquered by Babylon.

THE FINAL FIVE KINGS OF JUDAH

The number beside their names indicates the order of their reigns.



Chapter Sixteen **THE FALL OF JUDAH** & THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY



(2 Chr 36:11-16) "Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. {12} And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and humbled not

himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD. {13} And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel. {14} Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. {15} And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: {16} But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

Twenty-two years and six months after the death of Josiah, the kingdom of Judah ceased to exist. Josiah, despite the greatness of his reign, made the fatal mistake of meddling with God. He interfered in the business of the king of Egypt. In the ensuing battle, not only was Josiah killed, but the kingdom was left in such a weakened state that she was unable to stand against her

enemies. Judah was first overcome by Egypt, and then conquered by Babylon.

There were four kings in Judah during those last 22 ½ years. Three were sons of Josiah, and one was a grandson. Sadly, all did evil in the sight of the Lord, despite the goodness of their father's testimony.

This final lesson will cover the fall of Judah and the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity – which is one of the most important events in the long history of God's chosen people, the Jews. The Babylonian Captivity lasted from 606 to 536 B.C. – exactly seventy years.

The Babylonian Empire.

Who was this Nebuchadnezzar? His name occurs 91 times in the Bible – mostly in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. He was the *"head of gold"* of the Babylonian Empire (Dan. 2:37-38). He was a tremendous empire-builder and military genius. His father, Nabopolassar, had rebelled against the Assyrian empire and established the kingdom of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar extended the kingdom into an empire.

He succeeded his father as king in 606 B.C. and reigned for 45 years. Through the ministry and testimony of Daniel, it certainly appears that Nebuchadnezzar was saved (see Daniel 4, especially verse 37).

Nebuchadnezzar also built the famous Hanging Gardens of Babylon for his wife. These Gardens were considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The incredible Gardens and the beauty of his capital city caused Nebuchadnezzar to become prideful as he walked through his palace. (Dan 4:29-30) "At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. {30} The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"

His empire lasted another twenty-seven years after his death, ending during the reign of Belshazzar. The Babylonian Empire

lasted only seventy years – the exact time of the Captivity of the Jews. God raised them up, and God put them down.

I. THE LAST FOUR KINGS OF JUDAH.

1. Jehoahaz (608 B.C.)

After the death of Joash, his son Jehoahaz was made king. He was only 23 years old, and was actually younger than his brother Eliakim. He was probably chosen because he was a better man than Eliakim, though the Scripture states clearly that *"he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kings 23:32).*

His reign only lasted for three months (23:31). Pharaoh-Necho, still upset about Josiah's interference, and seeing the opportunity for conquest, came and captured Jerusalem. Jehoahaz was taken down into Egypt, where he died.

He was also called Shallum (Jer 22:11-12).

2. Jehoiakim (608 – 597 B.C.)

Pharaoh-Necho then set up Joash's oldest son, Eliakim, as his king. He changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim.

Jehoiakim was left with the responsibility of raising the required taxes to pay tribute to Egypt. (2 Ki 23:34-35) "And Pharaohnechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there. {35} And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaohnechoh."

Jehoiakim ruled for eleven years (608 B.C. to 597 B.C.). He also "did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done" (2 Kings 23:37).

He was the bitter enemy of Jeremiah, whose prophetic ministry was during these final days of the kingdom. Jeremiah described the wickedness and corruption of Jehoiakim's reign:

(Jer 22:13-19) "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unriahteousness. and his chambers by wrona: that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; {14} That saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. {15} Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? {16} He judged the cause of the poor and needy: then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the LORD. {17} But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it. {18} **Therefore** thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! {19} He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem."

Jehoiakim also had the prophet Urijah murdered for his message (Jeremiah 26:20-23).

He showed his hatred for the Word of God by cutting up and burning Jeremiah's book. (Jer 36:21-23) "So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. {22} Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. {23} And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth." For this, God made a terrible pronouncement concerning Jehoiakim.

(Jer 36:27-32) "Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, {28} Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned. {29} And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast burned this roll, saving. Why hast thou written therein. savina. The kina of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? {30} Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. {31} And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not. {32} Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words."

Thank God for the miraculous preservation of Scripture (Psalm 12:6-7)! Jehoiakim could destroy Jeremiah's book, but he could not destroy the Word of God.

In the third year of Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar swept down and conquered the land of Palestine and everything that had belonged to Egypt in the region. Jehoiakim surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar. He was bound in fetters to be taken to Babylon, but his life was spared by swearing an oath of loyalty to the Babylonian king. He was left in charge of gathering the tribute money.

Nebuchadnezzar also looted the Temple of its lighter golden vessels, which he carried to Babylon. He also took the best and brightest of the young men of the city – including a young man named **DANIEL**. This was in 606 B.C.

(Dan 1:1-7) "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. {2} And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god. {3} And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; {4} Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. {5} And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. {6} Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: {7} Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego."

Jerusalem was not destroyed at this time. They surrendered. This began the Babylonian Captivity. It is from this date that the seventy year period is counted (606 B.C. to 536 B.C., when Cyrus' decree was given).

After three years, Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. However, it appears that he died of natural causes before Babylon could overcome the city. (2 Ki 24:1-6) "In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him. {2} And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets. {3} Surely at the commandment of the LORD came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; {4} And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon. {5} Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? {6} So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead."

3. Jehoiachin (597 B.C.).

Jehoiachin then took the throne, but only for three months. Jehoiachin surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar's besieging armies. This caused the city to be spared, but the king's family was taken to Babylon, along with ten thousand captives – including **EZEKIEL**. Nebuchadnezzar left only the poorest people in the land. Nebuchadnezzar also took ALL of the remaining treasures of the Temple.

(2 Ki 24:8-16) "Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. And his mother's name was Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. {9} And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done. {10} At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. {11} And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it. {12} And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. {13} And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the kina's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said. {14} And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. {15} And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. {16} And all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all that were strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon."

Jehoiachin was imprisoned in Babylon for over 37 years, but was later released by king Evil-Merodach (Jeremiah 52:31-34). Jehoiachin was the ancestor of Jesus Christ (See 1 Chronicles 3:15-17, where he is called Jeconiah, and Matthew 1:12). *Despite the coming destruction of Judah, God protected the family line of the Promised Seed from Abraham through David!*

4. Zedekiah (597 – 586 B.C.).

In Jehoiachin's place, Nebuchadnezzar set up Mattaniah, and changed his name to Zedekiah. Zedekiah was the last son of Josiah. He also did evil in the sight of the Lord.

(2 Ki 24:17-19) "And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah. {18} Zedekiah was twenty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. {19} And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done."

Zedekiah has the dubious honor of being the last king of Judah. He was the last of the family of David to sit on the throne of Israel. Thank God, the next Son of David will sit on the throne forever and ever – Jesus Christ (Acts 2:29-30)!

Jeremiah's prophecy mentioned Zedekiah 47 times. It was he who had Jeremiah thrown in prison for his messages.

After Jerusalem was overcome by Babylon, Zedekiah was taken to see Nebuchadnezzar. His sons were killed before him, and then Nebuchadnezzar had him blinded. He was then carried to Babylon as a slave. (Jer 39:5-7) "But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him. {6} Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah. {7} Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon."

II. THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

Zedekiah withstood the siege for two years, but it was a hopeless cause. God had already pronounced his judgment on the city.

Why did all this terrible destruction take place?

(2 Chr 36:11-16) "Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. {12} And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD. {13} And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel. {14} Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. {15} And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: {16} But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, <u>till there was no remedy</u>."

(Prov 29:1) "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

The destruction of Jerusalem is a vivid, frightening illustration of the judgment of God against His own people when they sin against Him and refuse to get right. He had warned them that He would do so if they turned and worshipped other gods.

- (1 Ki 9:6-7) "But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: {7} Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people..."
- (Deu 28:45-52) "Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: {46} And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. {47} Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the

abundance of all things; {48} Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a voke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. {49} The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; {50} A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young: {51} And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee. {52} And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the LORD thy God hath given thee."

(Deu 28:63-67) "And it shall come to pass, that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. {64} And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. {65} And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: {66} And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: {67} In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see."

The Word of God was fulfilled exactly – as always. Consider the awesome destruction of that day:

(2 Chr 36:17-21) "Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. {18} And all the vessels of the house of God, areat and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. {19} And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. {20} And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: {21} To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten vears."

Jeremiah wrote the Book of Lamentations through tears of sorrow as he looked upon the remains of the smoldering city.

- (Lam 1:1) "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!"
- (Lam 1:16) "For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed."
- (Lam 3:48-51) "Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people. {49} Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any

intermission, {50} Till the LORD look down, and behold from heaven. {51} Mine eye affecteth mine heart because of all the daughters of my city."

- (Lam 4:1) "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street."
- (Lam 5:16) "The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!"

III. THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY (606 – 536 B.C.).

The Captivity was to last for seventy years. (Jer 25:11-12) "And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. {12} And it shall come to pass, **when seventy years are accomplished**, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations."

The Captivity was for punishment and purification. God was not done with the Jews. He is not done with them today. Just as God had to move Jacob and his family to Egypt in order to separate them from the influence of the Canaanites (if they had not been moved, Jacob's family would have been assimilated by the heathen culture), God moved Judah out of the Promised Land to purify them of their idolatry. While in Captivity, cut off from their land and Temple, and surrounded by the worst forms of paganism, the Jews separated themselves and developed the close-knit religious observances with have preserved their identity throughout the centuries.

"The captivity of Judah is one of the greatest events in the history of religion. With the captivity the history of Israel ends, and the history of the Jews commences," Dr. Foakes-Jackson (*Biblical History of the Hebrews*, 316; quoted in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia). The Jews returned to a strict obedience of the laws of God. The sacrificial priest, lacking a Temple in which to serve, was replaced by rabbis and scribes. Local synagogues replaced the destroyed Temple. In this way, Judaism could be observed by Jews scattered throughout the world. Perhaps most importantly, the Jews returned to a very strict observance of the Sabbath day. It became the focal point of Jewish religious observance. It has been well said that "The Jews preserved the Sabbath, and the Sabbath preserved the Jews."

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After the seventy year period had passed, God overthrew Babylon before the Medes and Persians. Cyrus then gave his divinelydirected decree: (2 Chr 36:22-23) "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, {23} Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up."

The return of Zerubbabel (the grandson of Jehoiachin) to rebuild the Temple marked the end of the Babylonian Captivity, though the majority of Jews remained in Persia.

Chapter Seventeen THE COMING KING



(Isa 9:6-7) "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. {7} Of the increase of

his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

The time period of the kings of Israel and Judah reveal the frailty and folly of humanity. Man, even at his best state, is altogether vanity. (*Psa 39:5*) "Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah."

The people of God had demanded a king. They did not want God to rule over them. (1 Sam 8:5-9) "And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: **now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.** {6} But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. {7} And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. {8} According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. {9} Now therefore hearken unto their voice:

howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them."

God gave them kings. Some kings were very, very good. Some were mediocre, some were bad, and some were terribly wicked. Ultimately, the evil kings led in the destruction of the nation.

The kingdom age of Israel ended in failure – the people of the once proud kingdom of David scattered to the winds, and the *"exceeding magnifical"* temple of Solomon reduced to ashes.

Thank God, there is coming a renewal of the kingdom of David.

The tabernacle of David will be raised up again, and the people of God will permanently inherit the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is spoken of by the Old Testament prophets:

- (Isa 16:5) "And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness."
- \geq (Amos 9:11-15) "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: {12} That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this. {13} Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. {14} And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. {15} And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God."

This is the Greater Son that was promised to David, Who will set up an everlasting kingdom. (2 Sam 7:12-16) "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son... And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."

Who is this coming King? Who is the Messiah?

Isaiah spoke of a Child that would be born Who would also be a Son that was given. Isaiah said that the government would be on this Man's shoulder, and that He would rule from the throne of David. Who is this Child? Who is this King?

(Luke 2:10-12) "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. {11} For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. {12} And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

The King has already come! He was born two thousand years ago in Bethlehem! He was born of a virgin, as Isaiah said, and yet He was the Son of God, given for us. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became a Man through the miracle of the Incarnation, and dwelt among men. For thirty-three years, He lived a perfect, sinless life, and then He willingly gave Himself to die on the cruel cross of Calvary to pay for the sins of the world. He fulfilled Genesis 3:15; Genesis 22; Exodus 12; Psalm 22; Psalm 69; Isaiah 53, and multitudes of other promises concerning the vicarious death of the Messiah to *"save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).*

The King was buried, but three days later He arose again! The King conquered the greatest enemies of man – sin, death, the grave, and hell! Then He ascended back to the right hand of the Father.

But one day – and hasten the day! – He is coming back again! The Lord Jesus Christ, the next and last King of Israel, will rule the world from Jerusalem, sitting upon the throne of David!

In that day, the divided kingdom will be permanently united under the *"many crowns"* of the King of kings (Rev. 19:12).

(Ezek 37:21-28) "And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: {22} And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: {23} Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. {24} And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. {25} And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. {26} Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. {27} My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. {28} And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore."

Have you received the Messiah, the King, as your personal Savior?

(Rom 3:9-11) "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that

they are all under sin; {10} As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: {11} There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God."

- (Rom 1:16-17) "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. {17} For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
- (Rom 10:8-13) "But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; {9} That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. {10} For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. {11} For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. {12} For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. {13} For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."