



David and Goliath by Rembrandt (1606-1669)

SACRED STORIES

A Study of Joshua through Esther

by

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Covenant Bible Studies

Aurora, Colorado

2012

Dedicated

to

THE CONGREGATION
OF
OUR LORD'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
New Berlin, Wisconsin

I was privileged to be the pastor of this wonderful congregation from 1977 to 1982. It was this congregation that tolerated my Biblical illiteracy, and it was this congregation that helped me find a new path to Biblical literacy. When I admitted my Biblical illiteracy to this congregation and invited people to meet with me to study the Bible, a number of people from this congregation met with me every Sunday evening and every Thursday morning to study the Bible, ask questions about it, and make practical applications from the insights that we had discovered together.

It was also to this congregation that I had to announce one Christmas Eve that I was being appointed to The United Methodist Church of Oconomowoc. The move was too soon, for we had not finished studying the whole Bible, but I accepted the appointment. The insights I gained from this wonderful congregation I took with me and they have enhanced my entire ministry. I can only say that I'm sorry that I left you at such a time and thank you for your love and understanding.

The bishop did offer to rescind the appointment, and I was tempted to continue my ministry at Our Lord's United Methodist Church forever. I'm not sure that would have been good for the congregation or for me. I moved on, but I'll never forget what this congregation did for me. I only hope that I contributed something to them.

Rev. Dr. James T. Reuteler, Ph.D.

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COVENANT BIBLE STUDY

Background

Having majored in the Humanities in College (which had a good dose of Religion and Bible Courses), Systematic Theology and New Testament in Seminary, and Social Ethics and Missiology in Graduate School, I expected to emerge Biblically literate. I was wrong.

One day in my office, I came to the realization that I was Biblically illiterate, after I had earned a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Divinity, and a Ph.D. The first step to becoming Biblically literate is to confess that you are Biblically illiterate. That is precisely what I did in the summer of 1979. My first step out of illiteracy was to read the Bible for an hour each morning before I began my workday, but I found that lonely and unsatisfying.

This led me to a second step that changed me, and my ministry forever. It also enabled me to see how little the Church knows about the Book it claims as its source for faith and morality. The tragic thing is that most people do not recognize that they are Biblically illiterate, and so they go on quoting Scripture as though they know what they are talking about. In my second step I invited members of my congregation to join me in the study of Scripture on Sunday evenings. I was not sure what I was going to do, but I knew that I had to do something. About a dozen parishioners were willing to confess that they were also Biblically illiterate, and so we entered into a Covenant to study the Bible every Sunday evening at 6:00 p.m. It took us six years to study from Genesis through Revelation, taking a major section each year. Below is a list of the way in which we proceeded:

- The Books of Law (Genesis through Deuteronomy)
- The Books of History (Joshua through Esther)
- The Books of Wisdom (Job through the Song of Solomon)
- The Books of Prophecy (Isaiah through Malachi)
- The Gospels and Acts
- The Letters and Revelation
- The Apocrypha

The most difficult part was not working through all those laws, but through one hundred and fifty Psalms. By the time we finished there were two groups meeting with me. The second group met on Thursday mornings at 9:30 a.m. As both groups reflected on our ordeal through the Psalms, we decided not to do that again. There had to be a better way.

Not yet realizing what that better way might be, I moved to another congregation, where I started four groups, the two new ones meeting on Sunday night at 7:30 p.m., following the 6:00 p.m. group, and another one on Wednesday afternoon at 1:00 p.m. As we began our journey through the Bible, some of the participants suggested studying the Apocrypha as well. That gave me an idea. I included the Apocrypha with the Wisdom Books, and began using a Psalm as a meditation prior to beginning each session. Occasionally, I

selected a Psalm to fit what we were studying; but at other times, I just used the Psalm for the week.

In spite of our difficulty with the Psalms, I still believe in studying the Bible just the way it is written. After we have done that, we may begin to explore its themes and topics, but not before. We must first do our homework. This holds for youth as well as for adults. The following reason was given in the October, 1985 issue of *The Christian Herald*:

For teens, studies of Bible books are preferable to studies of topics. Teenagers accustomed to only thematic Bible Studies may find themselves and their friends in a vulnerable and dangerous spot when they get to college. Cults that focus on reaching college students use topical-style Bible studies that select verses throughout the Bible to “prove” their false doctrines. A solid foundation in Bible-book studies will help young people not to be taken in by cultic teachings. Studies on topics are helpful after a group has done a number of Bible-book studies.

The difficulty with Bible Study in the manner that I am proposing is the tendency to get bogged down, or to spend too much time on a few passages. I would like to suggest that you keep moving. That is why I have broken each book into a number of lessons. You should move on, even if you have not finished your discussion. All this assumes, of course, that you are studying with other people, which I believe to be an absolute necessity. Very few people continue studying the Bible on a regular basis without the discipline of meeting with others. This is necessary because others contribute to your understanding and they keep you honest about your conclusions.

Methodology

At first I called what I was doing *In-depth Bible Study*, but after proceeding through the Bible three times, I decided to change the name to *Covenant Bible Study*. My goal had been to take six to twelve chapters in an hour or hour and one-half session. I liked the longer sessions better, but I am aware of the contemporary expectation to finish everything within an hour. Covering that much material in such a short time can hardly be called dealing with it in depth. My goal was however to get the stories or passages on the table, answer questions about them, and apply them to modern life. This required a Covenant between pastor and people. We covered each major section in nine months, meeting around thirty times in the course of that time. I am not worried that we did not spend enough time on a section, for I have found many themes coming up again and again. Our purpose was to study the whole Bible in Covenant together, trying to understand how the various components relate to one another.

One thing I insisted upon from the beginning—everyone has a right to their own opinion without having to fear criticism from anyone in the group. I have also advertised what we were doing in the newspaper, and have managed to pick up people from all kinds of traditions. Their contributions have greatly enriched the Bible Study Groups, keeping us honest about their traditions. Without their presence, we would not have treated their traditions fairly. One tradition that was never represented, although I wish it were, was

modern Judaism. Covenant Bible Study is best done in an Ecumenical context, but that of course, raises some other questions. Does it mean that we are trying to win or convert people of other traditions to our own? My answer has always been, “No!” Their traditions need to be treated with respect, and they are encouraged to stay within their own traditions. The purpose of Covenant Bible Study is to expand our understanding of the whole Bible, and the only way we can do this is to include people of other traditions, without trying to convert them.

Dr. Harrell Beck, from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University suggested some principles I have used. He was addressing a group of pastors at a School for Christian Ministry, and he stressed how important it was to teach the Old Testament to children, believing that it could be done. His methodology was very simple, tell them a story, give them an opportunity to ask questions about the story, and work together on the practical application of that story. This gave me the idea for working with adults.

Summarizing the Material

In a typical session, I make assignments to those who will accept them. Not everyone is willing to accept an assignment, and that is okay. I try to encourage those who are too shy to take on an assignment, that it is okay just to sit there. I keep assignments to one or two chapters. The breakdown of assignments is listed right below the title to every session, and I generally pass a sheet of paper with the breakdown around the table, asking those who would take an assignment to simply write their name down next to the assignment they would like to choose. Their task is to read those one or two chapters more carefully than the rest of the assigned material for a session. When we begin our session, I ask those who have accepted assignments to simply summarize their chapters to the group. They may refer to a few scriptures now and then, but they are not to read everything in class. They are to highlight the story, or if there is no story, the essence of what they have read. They are to recognize that someone else might handle it differently, but that is okay. Their assignment is to get the story or the essence of the material on the table.

There are always some people who, though they are unwilling to take an assignment, are willing to read in class. In the assignments I handle myself, I try to find a verse or two in each section, which summarizes things. I then ask persons, who do not take assignments, to read those verses. In the charts that accompany the Bible Studies, you will *sometimes* find these brief references, which point to the essence of things. These are the portions I ask people to read in class. The first third of our session is dedicated to the above task. We may run over, but our intention is to get the content on the table for further discussion.

Questions and Answers

In the second third, our purpose is to ask questions. This does not mean that I answer all the questions. Sometimes, while I am thinking, someone else answers the question, having discovered it in a Study Bible, or commentary. While I do not encourage everyone to use commentaries, I do encourage the use of a good Study Bible. I have also written

my own commentary, which I pass out in advance to all participants. I did not do this the first year, but I found people wanting to know where I was getting some of my information, and so I decided to pass the material out. Those who accepted assignments seemed to feel more comfortable when they knew what I knew ahead of time. Some people had a tendency to read only my commentary, but I have always told them, “If you do not have enough time to prepare, read the Bible rather than my commentary.” Most people have done that.

Practical Application

The final third of the session has to do with making a practical application of the material that we have studied together. To help people along, I prepare two things: a one page chart of all the material so that they can see it in its entirety, and no more than two pages of my own thoughts on the practical application of what we have studied. These two things seem to be enough to get the discussion moving. All of my materials are made available prior to our meeting. Everyone has them while they are doing their own studying. It is difficult to give enough attention to this final third when you meet for only one hour. This is why I prefer an hour and one-half. As the discussion moves along, it is difficult to stop and there is a tendency to move beyond the allotted time. The group should stop on time. There will always be some people with other commitments. The issues will come up again, and so they should not force you to extend the time of a session.

Leadership

I have found the above method of studying the Bible with groups very rewarding. This method does not need a clergy person. The problem lies in the willingness of other laity to accept a layperson as their leader. Many of the participants in my Bible Studies were competent people, fully able to lead sessions. You do not need an expert to lead you. All you need is a good Study Bible, a couple of good commentaries, and four or five other people willing to enter into a Covenant to study the Bible. It will be helpful to set up some questions for discussion. *The Serendipity Study Bible*, which contains 20,000 questions, will help you; but even without it, you can assign different persons to think up questions on chapters or sections to be studied. You do not have to aim at becoming Bible Scholars. The purpose of Bible Study is not knowledge, but reverence for God and discipleship. Do not be too worried if you cannot remember everything. “Its authors,” wrote Frederick Herzog, “never expected to provide literalistic guidelines for the 20th century. But they did want to communicate the power of God (cf. I Cor. 4:20).”

Among some groups I have found resistance to taking assignments. When I have felt this resistance, I have used a different approach. Instead of asking people to summarize chapters, I have asked them to mark their Bibles in a certain way. The following scheme has been used, and it always inspires much more discussion than time permits:



Mark those verses with a heart that offer special insight into religious experience.



Mark those verses with a lamp or light bulb, which offer special insight or illumination.



Mark those verses with a star, which might be used to give guidance or application to daily living.



Mark those verses with a cross, which are difficult to follow or obey.



Mark those verses with a check, which are important to you, but do not fall under any other categories.



Mark those verses with a question mark that you do not fully understand.

When I ask people to mark their Bibles as discussed above, I begin each session with an introduction and a brief video segment. We then attempt to answer questions, share insights, talk about applications, and discuss how to deal with the difficult passages.

Final Comments

The Use of Videos and DVDs

Two final comments need to be made. The first has to do with the use of video, which can add much to a Bible Study session. I have found a number of videos helpful, but I always limit the amount of video that I might use to less than fifteen minutes. This requires previewing video sources, which is very time consuming; but I think that it is very important to limit the use of video to illustrating relevant points. I am reluctant to list the most helpful videos because new ones are being introduced all the time.

The Need for Balance

My second comment has to do with balance. John Wesley called for that balance when he said, “Let us now unite the two so long divided, knowledge and vital piety.” This is my purpose in Covenant Bible Study. Some will think that I give too much attention to the academic side of things, while others will say that I do not give it enough attention. The attempt to apply what we learn is aimed at vital piety. I think that the two must be held together, but I do not view the Bible as a book of rules. For me, “The Bible,” to quote Luther, “is the manger in which we find Christ, the swaddling clothes in which he is wrapped.” Covenant Bible Study helps us sort through all that straw in the manger to discover the Christ, who reveals God and his Will to us. For those who only want to use the Bible devotionally, I say, “You must first study it, hear what its characters are really saying, and then learn the lessons of history, in which God really is present.” These are the tasks of Covenant Bible Study.

The Purpose of Bible Study

One participant, overwhelmed by the pessimism of the prophets, asked, “Is there anything that we can do to break the vicious cycle of the rise and fall of nations (and individuals)?” I firmly believe that there is something we can do. Our first obligation is to study the Scriptures to find out what they are really saying. We have spent enough time manipulating them to say what we want them to say, New and Old Testaments alike; it is now time to enter into Covenant with one another to study them completely, allowing them to speak to us. That is a task that will take us the rest of our lives, but we can begin the journey now. The second step in this journey is to begin applying the truths we learn from our study. Jesus, in Matthew 7:24-25, told us that we should be building our houses (nations and lives) on solid rock, on foundations that will stand. Not to do this, says Psalm 73:18, would be to set our feet “in slippery places.” The purpose of Covenant Bible Study is to help us find our way back to the God of the Bible and build our lives and nation on the solid rock. In the Scriptures we can discover the steppingstones of history, which will enable us to walk on the waters of faith.

Discovering the Main Points

As I wrote my commentary on the Bible, I wrote a short article, which can be found at the end of each lesson. My purpose in doing this was to focus on what I thought was the main point in each of the lessons. Obviously, there is more than one point; but I thought it might be helpful for someone to look for a theme. That is what I have attempted to do.

Studying the Bible is like looking at the many sides of a diamond. Light comes from unexpected places. I would recommend that everyone in a Bible Study Group look for that which sparkles most and attempt to describe what they see. That is what I am attempting to do here. It is only one person’s opinion, but it is worth doing, even if only for that one person.

Not everyone will feel capable of doing what I have done, but everyone should be able to raise a couple of questions about the section to be studied. If that is all you can do, go with it. You will be surprised at how much you will learn, even by asking questions. Remember how, according to Luke 2:46-47, Mary and Joseph found Jesus, “...sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.” As you grow in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, people will be amazed at your questions and answers as well.

My only advice is that my commentary and these articles are not to be studied in place of the Bible. Your textbook should be *the Bible*. If this commentary and these articles can help you understand and apply what you read there, then they will have contributed to their purpose. Just keep in mind that they do not represent the last word on the subject. They are but descriptions of the light shining from the diamond, which is God’s Word as it has been communicated through human authors.

The Purpose of Bible Study

When we read the Bible, we are really asking two questions:

1. Do I expect to meet God?
2. Am I willing to obey God?

Applying the Bible

1. Is there an example for me to follow?
2. Is there a sin for me to avoid?
3. Is there a command for me to obey?
4. Is there a promise for me to claim?
5. What does this passage teach me about God or Jesus Christ?
6. Is there a difficulty for me to explore?
7. Is there something in this passage I should pray about today?

A Covenant for Studying Together

Entering into Covenant to Study the Bible together is one of the most important decisions we can make in our lives, and it requires a special Covenant, which will not be easy to follow. Of all the Covenants I have read concerning studying together, I like the one proposed by Augustine:

Let us, you and I lay aside all arrogance.
Let neither of us pretend to have found the truth.
Let us seek it as something unknown to both of us.
Then we may seek it with love and sincerity
when neither of us has the rashness nor
presumption to believe that he (she) already
possesses it.
And if I am asking too much of you,
allow me to listen to you at least,
to talk with you as I do with beings whom,
for my part,
I do not pretend to understand.

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

After the death of Moses, the Jews were led by Joshua and then by various judges, as related in the books by their names. The people wanted a king, and so the other historical books give accounts of the kingdom in Israel through Saul, David, and Solomon. After Solomon there is a division of the kingdom into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. The story continues with the capture of Israel in the North by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.E. and the capture of Judah in the South by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. Following an Exile in Babylonia, Ezra and Nehemiah tell of the return after captivity of the descendants of Judah to rebuild the temple and wall around Jerusalem. The descendants of the northern kingdom of Israel wanted to help, but their offer was rejected. They had not kept the faith pure and came to be known as Samaritans.

The books that make up the Historical Books, with the exception of Ruth, have been regarded, as one complete historical work. Some call it the Deuteronomic history because the theological viewpoint is similar to that expressed in the Book of Deuteronomy. The reason why Ruth is excluded is because the Book of Ruth belongs to the Writings. In Christianity the following books are all considered to make up the Historical Books:

Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 and 2 Samuel
1 and 2 Kings
1 and 2 Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther

In the Hebrew Scriptures, these books are included in the Former Prophets. This distinguishes them from the Latter Prophets, which include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve Minor Prophets. Ruth is included in the Writings of the Hebrew Scriptures. Why are they considered prophetic books? The reason is because they are not so much the simple history of the nation as much as they illustrate how God's message was fulfilled in the nation's life. There are at least four key themes that are developed in these Historical Books.

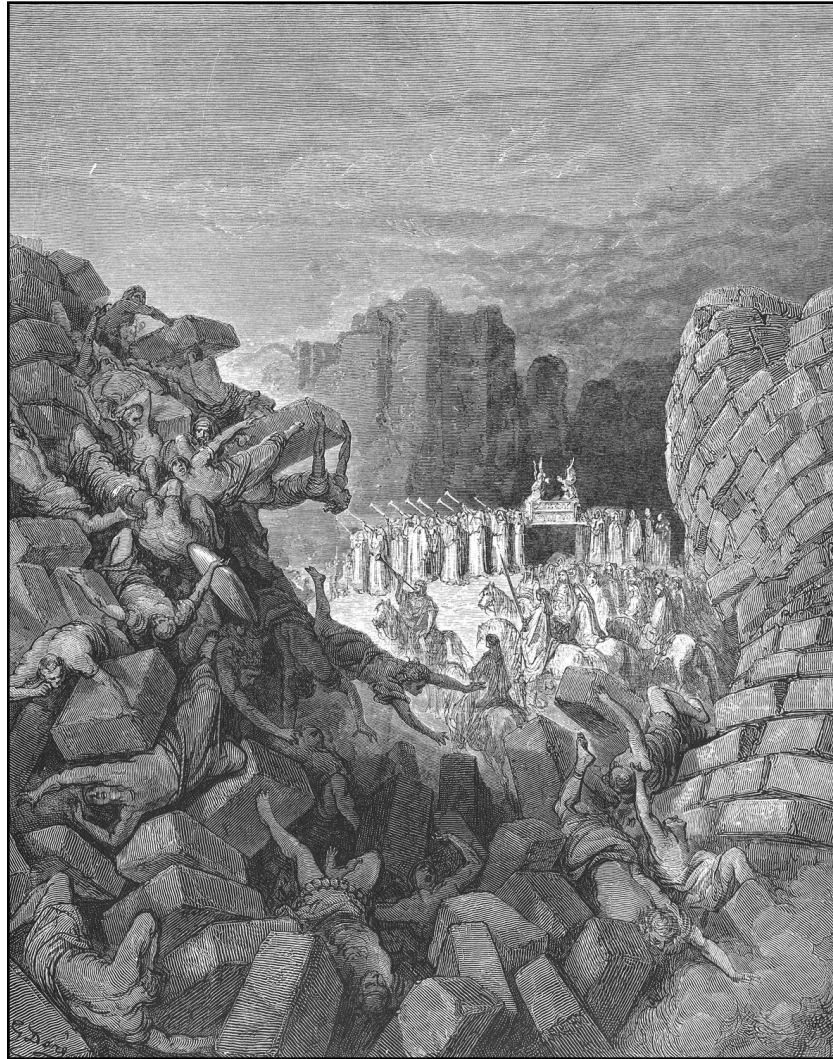
1. **Kingship.** One of the main points of interest in these books is kingship, and in particular the dynasty of King David. David's personal morality may leave much to be desired, but the high point of his reign was God's promise of an everlasting succession (2 Samuel 7)
2. **The Prophets.** The treatment of Deborah and Samuel, Nathan and Gad, Ahijah and Micaiah, Elijah and Elisha, bears witness to the importance accorded to the office of prophet. These men and women could make or break kings. They acted as court

advisers and political watchdogs. The major prophets also make appearances in some of these books.

3. **The Temple.** From the beginning of 1 Samuel we can trace a special concern over the welfare of the Ark of the Covenant, as it was moved from Shiloh to Philistia, back to Kiriah-jearim and eventual taken into Jerusalem, where David wanted to give it a more permanent home. That provided the occasion for Nathan's prophecy of the hereditary kingship. In Solomon's time, the Temple was finally erected as permanent house for the Ark of the Covenant.
4. **Worship.** Finally there was the issue of worship. Was the Lord to be worshiped in Jerusalem in purity, or were foreign, idolatrous influences allowed in? All the kings of Israel fell short because they permitted worship at the Bethel and Dan sanctuaries, which King Jeroboam had set up. Most of the kings of Judah were also found wanting because they tolerated foreign religious practices for political reasons. Only Hezekiah and Josiah receive unqualified commendation. It is reasonable to conclude that the historian's theological perspective was influenced by their reforms.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of Joshua



The Walls of Jericho Fall Down by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

1. The Conquest of Canaan

Joshua 1:1 — 12:24

1. THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN (1:1 – 12:24)						
THE PREPARATION (1:1 – 5:12)						
The Commission of Joshua (1:1-9)			The Orders of Joshua (1:10-18)			
The Sending of the Spies (2:1-24)						
From Shittim (Acacia Trees)		To Jericho (City of Palms)		To Rahab (Innkeeper or Harlot)		
The Crossing of the Jordan (3:1 – 5:1)						
The Crossing (3:1-17)			The Memorial Stones (4:1 – 5:1)			
The Beginning of a New Era (5:2-12)						
The Circumcision (5:2-9)			Passover (5:10-12)			
THE CENTRAL CAMPAIGN (5:13 – 8:29)						
The Fall of Jericho (5:13 – 6:27)			The Fall of Ai (7:1 – 8:29)			
The Angelic Commander (5:13-15)	The Embargo of Jericho (6:1-14)	The Fall of Jericho (6:15-27)	Achan's Sin (7:1-26)		Victory at Ai (8:1-29)	
THE SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN (8:30 – 10:43)						
The Altar on Mount Ebal (8:30-35)		The Covenant with Gibeon (9:1-27)		Victory over the Amorite Alliance (10:1-43)		
				<u>The Kings</u> Adonizedek Hoham Piram Japhia Debir	<u>The Cities</u> Jerusalem Hebron Jarmuth Lachish Eglon	
THE NORTHERN CAMPAIGN (11:1 – 12:24)						
Victory at Mermon (11:1-23)		The Defeated Canaanite Cities (12:1-24)				
The Alliance organized by Jabin	<u>Defeated Tribes</u> Hittites Amorites Canaanites Perizzites Hivites Jebusites	1. Jericho 2. Ai 3. Jerusalem* 4. Hebron 5. Jarmuth 6. Lachish	7. Eglon 8. Gezer 9. Debir 10. Geder 11. Hormah 12. Arad	13. Libnah 14. Adullam 15. Makkedah 16. Bethel 17. Tappuah 18. Hopher	19. Aphek 20. Lasharon 21. Madon 22. Hazor 23. Shimron Meron 24. Achshaph	25. Taanach 26. Megiddo 27. Kedesh 28. Jokneam 29. Dor 30. Goyim 31. Tirzah

1. THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

Joshua 1:1—12:24

ASSIGNMENTS					
A New Leader and Two Spies 1:1—2:24	The Crossing of The Jordan 3:1—5:12	The Fall of Jericho 5:13—6:27	The Fall of Ai 7:1—8:29	The Campaign in The South 8:30—10:43	The Campaign in The North 11:1—12:24

INTRODUCTION TO JOSHUA

The Name

Joshua means “Yahweh Saves” or “Yahweh is Salvation.” The Greek word for Joshua is Jesus. Following are a few things that can be said about Joshua as a person.

1. He was born in Egypt.
2. He was Moses’ right hand man during the Exodus and the desert wanderings.
3. He was a military commander.
4. He was one of the twelve spies.
5. He was Moses’ successor. (Deuteronomy 34:9)

The Authors

Joshua was written from a variety of sources. There is disagreement about whether these sources are related to J and E and the first four books of the Pentateuch, or whether the compiler is the same as that of Deuteronomy. The material seems to be similar to that of Deuteronomy, or the D source.

The Date

There are two dates to consider. When did the events of Joshua take place, and when were they written down? The Book of Joshua took place over a period of 25 years beginning in about 1250 to 1240 B.C.E. It may have been written down in the early days of the monarchy (1045 B.C.E.); but most likely, it was written down during the Exile (586-539 B.C.E.).

The Purpose

For Christians Joshua belongs to the historical books. In the Hebrew Bible Joshua is listed with the Former/Early Prophets, which include those books from Joshua to Kings. One reason for this kind of listing was that Joshua is more than history. It is primarily a theological interpretation of history, which bears witness to Israel's faith in a God who intends to establish his kingly rule on earth. Joshua tells how the land of Canaan was conquered and divided among the people; hence it is both a climax and a new beginning. It is the fulfillment of a promise made to Abraham and the beginning of a new life for the people of Israel in the Promised Land.

Theology for Joshua is more important than history, and so one should not be bothered when some of the historical events of Joshua cannot be verified. Archaeological research has been able to confirm that several important cities in Canaan were indeed destroyed in the latter half of the thirteenth century. The verified cities are:

Bethel (Beitin)
Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir)
Eglon (tell el-Hesi)
Debir (tell Beit Misim)
Hazor (tell el-Qedah)

Among the cities, that cannot be verified, are Jericho and Ai, the first to be destroyed in the Book of Joshua. Apparently they were destroyed much earlier, and evidence cannot even support their existence in the time of Joshua. Historical accuracy was not and is not the purpose of the book of Joshua. According to Joshua the conquest was organized and quick, but this disagrees with Judges, which describes it as disorganized and slow. While these two books disagree on historical facts, they agree on theological interpretation. God took the land away from the Canaanites, and gave it to the Israelites.

This raises another difficult question. Why does God seem to condone the violence in Joshua and Judges? The reason is clearly spelled out, even if it does not satisfy our moral sensitivities. The Canaanites were to be destroyed because of their immoral religious practices, which would corrupt the Israelites. It is difficult for us to accept this in the light of Jesus' teachings, but in the end, we are told by Revelation 19:11-16 that Jesus will close history with a similar kind of violence. Jesus is the second Joshua, and he too will lead us into the Promised Land, but unfortunately, it will not happen without violence. It could, if all of humanity would submit to God; but we know from experience, that will not happen.

The Outline

- A. The Conquest of Canaan. (1:1—12:24)
- B. The Division of the Land. (13:1—21:45)
 - 1. The Land East of the Jordan. (13:1-33)

2. The Land West of the Jordan. (14:1--19:51)
3. The Cities of Refuge. (20:1-9)
4. The Cities of the Levites. (21:1-45)

C. Final Acts of Joshua. (22:1—24:33)

1. Joshua sends the Eastern Tribes Home. (22:1-34)
2. Joshua’s Farewell Speech. (23:1-16)
3. The Covenant Renewal at Shechem. (24:1-33)
4. The Death of Joshua. (22:29-31)
5. Concluding Notes. (22:32-33)

1:1—12:24	13:1—21:45	22:1—24:33
Conquest of Canaan	Division of the Land	Final Acts of Joshua

What We Learn from the Book of Joshua

1. God chooses a special people for particular situations, and He works through them, even though they are not perfect.
2. God acts through people who trust in Him. He expects these people to put legs on their faith, but God also uses people outside of the covenant community to accomplish his will.
3. God expects his people to make a definite decision about Him and live for Him. We must make a specific stand, as did Joshua himself when he said: “...choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” (Joshua 24:15)
4. God fulfills his promises, but we don’t always claim those promises. Our disobedience gets in the way.
5. God demands obedience from his people. A higher level of morality is expected from them. Obedience to God’s will results in spiritual success and blessing. Success is never achieved simply by military might, nor is it measured according to human and earthly standards. His greatest blessing is his own presence with his people.

6. God is all-seeing and all-knowing. He is aware of disobedience, and the disobedient will pay for their disobedience. God cannot be fooled.
7. God is very persistent. Even when his people go astray, He acts to bring them back to Himself.
8. God expects the family to be united in its religious faith and forbids intermarriage, which interferes with faithfulness to Himself.

JOSHUA TAKES OVER AS LEADER (1:1-18)

The Commission to Joshua (1:1-9)

The death of Moses signals the beginning of the invasion. The following boundaries are given: (1) East - The Great River, the Euphrates; (2) South - The Wilderness or Desert; (3) North - The Lebanon Mountains and the Land of the Hittites in Northern Syria; and (4) West - The Great Sea, the Mediterranean. This Book of the Law refers to the legal provisions of the Book of Deuteronomy (1:8). (See also Deuteronomy 31:24-26)

Joshua gives Orders (1:10-18)

Within three days the conquest will begin. Three days either assumes that the events of Chapter Two have already taken place or else it simply means “soon.” All the tribes are to get ready, including the two and one-half tribes, which have settled in the Transjordan, Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. Anyone who disobeys Joshua’s orders is to be put to death (1:18). It must be pointed out however that the authority to give orders depended upon Joshua’s submission to God.

JOSHUA SENDS SPIES INTO JERICHO (2:1-24)

Jericho, “the City of Palm Trees,” was a strategic city. It was the gateway into western Palestine, located about five miles west of the Jordan River. Archaeologists have concluded that modern Jericho was not inhabited in 1220 B.C.E. when the Israelites entered Canaan, and they have not turned up any concrete evidence of the remains of the city of Joshua’s time.

Two spies were sent into Jericho from Shittim, a city east of the Jordan. Shittim means “acacia trees” and has been identified with “Tell el-Haman.” Upon arriving in Jericho, the spies were given lodging by Rahab, the prostitute. According to Josephus she was an “Innkeeper,” but the Bible identifies her as a prostitute. As a prostitute she was in a position to know the “seedy” side of Jericho’s upstanding citizens, and people might not notice the comings and goings of strangers. Her house was conveniently located, with a window on the outer wall of the city. The King of Jericho, more like the mayor, discovered that they were there and sought them out, but Rahab hid them and helped them to escape. She had heard of what God had done for them in other places; and for her kindness, they offered to protect her during the coming conflict. They gave her a scarlet

cord to tie in the window of her house. The red cord in her window symbolizes the red blood on the doorposts. As long as everyone stayed inside, they would be safe. The Israelites kept their promise (6:2ff.). Rahab was naturalized, married Salmon (Ruth 2-4), and through her Son, Boaz, became an ancestress of David, and of Jesus himself (Matthew 1:5). Hebrews 11:31 lists her as one of the heroines of the faith, but it does not do so on the basis of her previous morality, for she had been a prostitute. According to James 2:25, her reception of the spies was good works.

THE CROSSING OF THE JORDAN (3:1—5:1)

The Crossing (3:1-17)

They set out from Shittim. After three days the Ark was to be carried over first, with the people following behind. They were to remain at least 3000 feet behind the Ark (2000 Cubits). When the priests stepped foot into the Jordan, the waters at Adam stopped flowing, and the people crossed over on dry land. Some commentators say that a land slide occurred at Adam, about 16 miles upriver, which created 20 to 30 miles of dry riverbed. Even so, the Israelites interpreted this event as an act of God. In 1927 the high clay riverbanks collapsed from an earth tremor, and the Jordan was similarly dammed up for 21 hours. The crossing probably took place in April when the melting snows of Mount Hermon and the spring rains caused the Jordan to swell up to a near flood stage.

The crossing of the Jordan parallels the crossing of the Red Sea, but there are two important differences. The enemy now lies before them and there are many. The Ark leads them across the Jordan to conquer the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. The task before them is certainly not easier than leaving Egypt. One could only say that it is much more difficult, but the miracle of the crossing indicates that God leads them.

The Memorial Stones (4:1—5:1)

Joshua seems to order the twelve men to set up the stones in the midst of the Jordan (4:9) and in the place where they camp (4:8). Are these two separate incidents, or two separate traditions? No one knows, but it was an important event. They named the place *Gilgal*, which means “circle.” It was on the 10th day of the 1st month that they did this, which would be Nisan/Abib (March/April). Some scholars identify the ruins at Khirbet el-Mafjer as ancient Gilgal. The site would be reasonable in that it is located two miles northeast of Jericho, and Gilgal was used as a major base camp for the invasion of Jericho.

The precise location however remains uncertain, but it was very important in their history. Saul was crowned the first King of Israel there; and David, the second King, was reconciled with his rebellious subjects there (1 Samuel 11:15 and 2 Samuel 19:15, 40). It was also in this general area that John the Baptist baptized Jesus.

THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA (5:2-12)

The Circumcision of Israel (5:2-9)

The Israelites who were born in the wilderness were circumcised at Gilgal (Circle of Stones). Gibeath-haaraloth (hill of the foreskins) was a well-known site near Gilgal. One reason why circumcision might not have been practiced is because the covenant was in suspension for 40 years as a result of the people's disbelief and disobedience (Numbers 14). Now the circumcision of the new generation marks the renewal of the old relationship between God and his people. Its purpose is twofold: to unite them together and to prepare them for the celebration of Passover. No uncircumcised male could participate in Passover.

Celebration of the Passover (5:10-12)

On the plains of Jericho the people observed Passover. This marks the beginning of the renewed covenant and a new era in their history, just as the first Passover marked the beginning of the Exodus.

THE FALL OF JERICHO (5:13—6:27)

The Angelic Commander (5:13-15)

Before the battle for Jericho begins, the Commander of the Lord's army appears to Joshua, who asks him whose side he is on. The angelic being has not come to take sides, but to give orders. This incident signifies that God is at the head of the army. The scene is reminiscent of the burning bush (Joshua 5:15 and Exodus 3:2-5), but just who is this Commander? Is he God, Christ, or an Angel? No one can say. The point is that God intends to lead them into Canaan just as he led their ancestors out of Egypt.

The Embargo of the City (6:1-14)

For six days the army was to march around the city, with some priests carrying the Ark and others blowing on trumpets.

The Fall of the City (6:15-27)

On the seventh day the army marched around the city seven times, and on the seventh time, the walls fell down. They went in and destroyed everyone and everything (6:21) except for Rahab and her family (6:23). Rahab eventually married Salmon, bore Boaz, and through him became the ancestress of David and Jesus. Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 list her as one of the heroines of the faith.

The city was to be a sacrifice to the Lord, who had given them victory over it. No booty was to be taken for personal use and all the valuable articles were to be placed in the treasury of the Lord (6:18-19). A curse was put on anyone who would violate this law,

and on anyone who might attempt to rebuild Jericho (6:26). Jericho lay in ruins for more than 400 years. Under the reign of Ahab, a man named Hiel attempted to rebuild Jericho in 869 B.C.E. and fell heir to the curse, losing his two sons Abiram and Segub (1 Kings 16:34).

Conclusions about how Jericho fell are difficult to make because archaeology has revealed little trace of habitation in the city at the time of the Israelite conquest. What John Garstang (1930-36) thought was part of the original wall was shown in excavations done by Kathleen Kenyon (1952-57) to be from a much earlier time, perhaps as many as three hundred years earlier.

THE FALL OF AI (7:1—8:29)

Modern Et-Tell, a city 15 miles west and a little north of Jericho, is considered to be the modern Ai. That this is the same city, however, cannot be verified.

Achan's Sin (7:1-26)

Some spies were sent to Ai to help decide how to take the city. They reported that Ai was weak and could be taken with a small force of around 3,000 men (7:3); but in the battle for Ai, they lost because of something that had happened in Jericho. Achan had sinned against the Lord by taking a mantle from Shinar (a Babylonian cloak), 200 shekels of silver (5 pounds), and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels (1 pound). His sin was the cause of the defeat at Ai. They discovered the guilty person by casting lots (7:14), and his punishment was death by stoning and burning both him and his family (7:25). They were buried under a pile of rocks, which became known as the Valley of Achor (Trouble).

Victory at Ai (8:1-29)

The evidence of the mound at modern Et-Tell is difficult to reconcile with the Biblical record here. It suggests that this may not be the correct site of Ai, for it was unoccupied from 2400 to 1200 B.C.E. Archaeologists have established that Bethel suffered destruction in the period of the conquest, but there is no Biblical account of any battle with Bethel. Could it be that Bethel used Ai as a military outpost to check the advance of the Israelite army? Joshua 8:17, indicates some kind of alliance between Bethel and Ai, but it also distinguishes the two cities, even though they are located close together. In the Bible the two cities are usually mentioned together, such as they are in Ezra 2:28 and Nehemiah 7:32.

The battle itself is also confusing. An ambush force of 30,000 men is sent to the west of Ai (8:3-4); meanwhile, the main force under Joshua's leadership moves to a valley, north of the city (8:5). The size of the main force is not given. A second ambush force of 5,000 is mentioned (8:12). Is this the same ambush force as mentioned before, or do we have two of them west of Ai? It is not clear. What is clear is that the men of Ai, accompanied by the men of Bethel pursue Joshua and the main force to the east; and while that is going on, the ambush force of 30,000 enters Ai, sets it on fire, and then pins the men of Ai and

Bethel between itself and the main force directed by Joshua. All 12,000 of the men from Ai and Bethel are killed, and the King of Ai is hung on a tree (8:29). Since the Jews did not hang people, this probably means that he was dead before they strung him up for everyone to see.

THE CAMPAIGN IN THE SOUTH (8:30—10:43)

The Altar on Mount Ebal (8:30-35)

Next, Joshua carried out the command given by Deuteronomy 27:4-5 to build an altar and set up a copy of the law. The blessings were to be read from Mount Gerizim and the curses from Mount Ebal. These twin peaks flanked the pass of Shechem in central Palestine and were about 20 miles North of Ai. This story may not be in proper chronological order, but it does fit symbolically at this transitional point. Canaan has been divided, and the next phase of the conquest can begin.

The Covenant with Gibeon (9:1-27)

Gibeon, a city (modern El-Jib) located about 7 miles southwest of Ai and 6 miles northwest of Jerusalem has heard what happened in Jericho and Ai. Anticipating trouble, they sent some men to meet with Joshua to convince him that they were not natives of the land; hence, they tricked Joshua into forming a covenant with them so that they would not be killed, as were the people of Jericho and Ai. Once the Israelites made such a covenant, they could not get out of it, even if it were made in deception. The best they could do was to make slaves out of the people of Gibeon, and so that is what they did. The Gibeonites became hewers of wood and drawers of water, and eventually merged with the Israelite population.

More than Gibeon was involved in the above deception, but Gibeon was the main city. Other cities were Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim, which were located nearby (9:17). Representatives from these cities claimed to be ambassadors from far away. They knew of the Lord's command to Joshua to kill all the natives throughout Canaan; and so, they used stale food, cracked wineskins, ragged clothes, and worn out shoes to convince Joshua that they had come from a great distance. When the deception was discovered, the solution was to make them into slaves. Wood and water was needed in abundance at the tabernacle (later at the temple) for sacrifices and washing. When Solomon became king, the tabernacle was at Gibeon (2 Chronicles 1:3-5). This story explains why Gibeonites were being used as slaves at the time that the Book of Joshua was being written down.

Victory over the Amorite Kings (10:1-43)

Five Amorite Kings got worried when they heard what Gibeon had done in making a covenant with Joshua. The following Kings then formed an alliance:

Kings	Cities
Adonizedek	Jerusalem
Hoham	Hebron
Piram	Jarmuth
Japhia	Lachish
Debir	Eglon

They attacked Gibeon, which appealed to Joshua for help. With the help of the hail (10:11) and the long day (10:12-14) when the sun and moon stood still the Israelites won. Many explanations have been given for the sun standing still. Two are that it ceased shining or that there was an eclipse. The miracle is difficult to explain, but should be understood in terms of divine intervention. In this time many people worshiped the heavenly bodies, and this miracle demonstrates that God has power over nature. The presence of the hail, which kills more enemy soldiers than the swords of the Israelites, is another example of divine intervention. The Book of Jashar, which cited the miracle of the sun standing still, was a Book of Hebrew Poetry, which praised national heroes. The book is now lost, and so we do not know what else it might have said.

The five Amorite kings were captured at the cave of Makkedah, where they had hidden themselves. Joshua instructed his men to put their feet on the necks of the kings as a symbol of their defeat. They were then hanged in five trees and publicly displayed. The campaign was then taken to Libdnah, Lachish-Gezer, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir. Southern Canaan was then taken all the way to Kadesh-barnea and to Gaza. Joshua interpreted the victory as being due to God's help rather than to their military capabilities. Joshua 10:42, seems to indicate that the victory in the south was complete; but we know that although Adonizedek, the King of Jerusalem, was killed, Jerusalem was not taken until the time of David. Destruction of some of these cities can be confirmed, such as Eglon and Debir, and especially Lachish. There is some question as to whether Eglon is a city or the King of Debir, and in Joshua 12:12-13 Eglon and Debir are both listed as cities.

THE CAMPAIGN IN THE NORTH (11:1—12:24)

The Victory at Merom (11:1-23)

Jabin, King of Hazor, organized a tremendous military alliance of the Northern kings; much more powerful than that among the five kings of the South. The battle took place at the waters of Merom, and Joshua wiped them all out. Excavations have demonstrated the importance of Hazor in that time and confirmed the fact that it was captured at about the time indicated in the narrative. It was the largest and best fortified of all the cities. Y. Yadin in 1955 estimated that it had a population of about 40,000 people, and that upper Hazor, the older city, contained 25 acres, with lower Hazor, the newer city, containing 150 acres.

When all these kings joined forces, their horses were as numerous as the sand on the seashore. How could the Israelites deal with them? The Lord told Joshua to hamstring their horses and burn their chariots (11:6). They crippled the horses so that they could not

walk, cutting the tendons above the ankles. The only way that Joshua and his troops could win was by the use of guerrilla tactics, which even enabled them to defeat the Anakim (the Giants referred to in Deuteronomy 2:10-11).

The Defeated Canaanite Kings (12:1-24)

This is not just a summary of what has been written, for some of these kings have not been mentioned before. Many of them are local chieftains. Thirty-one names are listed in all. This is an independent record of the conquered kings from both sides of the Jordan, and its purpose is to make clear that Israel is united, possessing territory on both sides of the Jordan.

THE ENTRY

Entering Canaan was similar to leaving Egypt only the major events take place in reverse. First, there is the parting of the Jordan River so the Ark and the Israelites can pass over on dry land (3:1-17), then there is the celebration of Passover at Gilgal, (5:10-12) and finally the experience of the burning bush (5:15). All of this indicates that as God led them out of Egypt, he is leading them into Canaan.

We would have trouble with this idea today. We would probably call upon the United Nations to support the Canaanites, and we would send our troops in to help defend the country against the Israelites. How does one know whose side God might be on and whether God is leading the battle? As Christians we simply cannot conceive of God leading troops into battle, for we follow Jesus, who seems to reject violence of this sort, or does he?

When he was being crucified, he did suggest in Matthew 26:53 that he had twelve legions of angels at his disposal. He did not call upon them because he saw the necessity of his own death upon the cross. It was a divine strategy to win the hearts of the people he came to save. This does not mean that he will not use violence in the future.

The Book of Revelation portrays Jesus leading the final battle against human evil at Armageddon. While this may be more of a spiritual battle than the kind we are used to, the consequence is to put an end to all human and spiritual evil, with Satan being cast into the Lake of Fire. All obstacles to the Promised Land, or the Kingdom of God, will be removed, and Jesus is portrayed on a white horse leading the final battle (Revelation 19:11-21). One cannot say that Jesus will never lead his legions of angels into battle.

It is an angel who leads Joshua and his troops into the promised land, or the land of Canaan. The Battle against Canaan is portrayed as a divine battle, or to use modern terminology, a holy war. The war is being waged in order to make space for the people God has delivered from slavery in Egypt, and as they enter into the new land they are told to behave in a certain manner and to avoid relating to the people who are being driven out. To violate God's rules for conducting this war leads to the defeat of God's people, and to relate to those being driven out leads to the corruption of God's people. God may

be leading the battle, but he still needs people who will fight according to his rules, and victory is not assured when those rules are violated.

One question that has always nagged me in light of the story of Joshua leading the Israelites into Canaan is, “Why did they not simply drive the Egyptians out of Egypt?” Why do they have to go to another land to drive other people out of their land?” It seems to make more sense to me to deal with those who have oppressed the Israelites rather than with those who live somewhere else. While I raise the question, I have no good answer to it, other than the Canaanites are being driven out for idolatry, child sacrifice, and sacred prostitution. Their land seems to be better than Egypt, and since they do not seem to respond to God’s call, God has decided to give their land to those, who have responded—Joshua and the Israelites.

One might see some brilliant military strategy being used by Joshua in the stories of his entry and conquest of Canaan. He cut off the North from the South, defeated the southern alliance, and then turned to conquer the northern alliance. In spite of his brilliant strategy and the fact that an angel was leading him, he never took the most important city of all—Jerusalem.

The most important thing Joshua did took place just prior to the southern campaign, and that was to renew the Covenant by setting up an altar on Mount Ebal (8:30-35). There, as half the people stood in front of Mount Ebal, he read the blessings for obeying the covenant, and as half the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim, he read the curses for disobeying. As they entered the land, they were told that they could only keep it if they kept the covenant itself. To insure that everyone understood, Joshua read all the words of the Law. “There was not a word,” says Joshua 8:35, “of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the aliens who resided among them.”

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of Joshua

*These are the inheritances
that the priest Eleazar and Joshua son of Nun
and the heads of the families of the tribes of the Israelites
distributed by lot at Shiloh before the LORD,
at the entrance of the tent of meeting.
So they finished dividing the land.*

Joshua 19:54

1. Division of the Land

Joshua 13:1—21:45

2. DIVISION OF THE LAND (13:1—21:45)

LANDS THEY COULD NOT TAKE:
The Most Important being the Jebusites (15:63)

Philistines (13:2)	Geshurites (13:2)	Sidonians/Phoenicians (13:4)	Maacathies (13:13)
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THE DIVISION OF THE LAND ON THE EAST BANK (13:8-14)
Agreed to by Moses

Reuben (13:15-23)	Gad (13:24-28)	1/2 of Manasseh (13:29-33)
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THE DIVISION OF THE LAND ON THE WEST BANK (14:1—19:51)

Leaders

Eleazar	Joshua	Heads of Tribes
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Various Claims

Caleb: Hebron (14:6-15)	Othniel: Debir (15:15-17)	Joshua: Timnath-serah (19:49-50)
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Zelophehad and his Five Daughters; Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Micah, and Tirzah (17:3ff) (Manasseh)

THE DISTRIBUTION: Assembly at Shiloh (18:1)
Three Representatives (13:3); Casting of Lots (13:6); and Instructions (13:8)

1. Judah (15:1-63) 2. Manasseh (Joseph) (16:1—17:18) 3. Ephaim (Joseph) (16:1—17:18)	4. Benjamin (18:11-28) 5. Simeon (19:1-9) 6. Zebulun (19:10-16) 7. Issachar (19:17-23)	8. Asher (19:24-31) 9. Naphtali (19:32-39) 10. Dan (19:40-48)
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CITIES OF REFUGE (20:1-9)

West Bank	1. Kedesh (20:7) 2. Shechem (20:7) 3. Hebron (20:7)	East Bank	1. Bezer (20:8) 2. Ramoth (20:8) 3. Golan (20:8)
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THE LEVITICAL CITIES (21:1-45)

Kohath (13 Cities) Descendants of Aaron 1. Judah 2. Simeon 3. Benjamin	Kohath (10 Cities) Other Kohathites 1. Ephraim 2. Dan 3. Manasseh (1/2)	Gershon (13 Cities) 1. Mansseh (1/2) 2. Issachar 3. Asher 4. Naphtali	Merari (12 Cities) 1. Zebulun 2. Reuben 3. Gad
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2. DIVISION OF THE LAND

Joshua 13:1—21:45

ASSIGNMENTS				
East of The Jordan 13:1-33	Caleb and Judah 14:1—15:63	The Tribes of Joseph 16:1—17:18	The Remaining Tribes 18:1—19:51	Cities of Refuge and Levitical Cities 20:1—21:45

THE LAND EAST OF THE JORDAN (13:1-33)

Land Still Unconquered (13:1-7)

The Philistines, Sidonians (Phoenicians), Geshurites, and Maacathites were not conquered. See Joshua 13:13 for the problem with the Geshurites and Maacathites. From this we can see that the conquest was less thoroughgoing than we have been led to believe.

The Land East of Jordan (13:8-33)

The land East of the Jordan was divided among the tribe of Reuben (13:15-23), the tribe of Gad (13:24-28), and one-half of the tribe of Manasseh (13:29-33). The tribe of Levi was to receive no inheritance (13:14), other than the cities to which they were later assigned. The Rephaim (13:12), like the Anakim (11:21) were regarded as an aboriginal race of giants. (See Deuteronomy 3:11)

THE LAND WEST OF THE JORDAN (14:1—19:51)

The Method of Distribution (14:1-5)

According to Chapter 14, the land was distributed to the tribes by lot under the leadership of Eleazar, Joshua, and the heads of the fathers' houses while they were in Gilgal. In Chapter 18 the distribution takes place while they were in Shiloh. The two locations suggests that we might be dealing with two different sources weaved together.

The Claim of Caleb (14:6-15)

For his faithfulness (Numbers 13:24, 30; Deuteronomy 1:36) Caleb receives the reward Moses promised him (Numbers 14:24). He claims Hebron, but there are still some Anakim with which he has to deal.

Two interesting facts about Caleb are discovered. The first is that he is a Kenizzite. Kenaz was the son of Eliphaz, the first-born of Esau, Jacob's (Israel's) twin brother. This means that Caleb was not an Israelite; instead, he was an Edomite. God accepts and rewards whoever is faithful to him, whether they are Israelites or not.

The second interesting piece of information is Caleb's age. Caleb was 40 years old (14:7) when Moses sent him into Canaan to spy out the land; and now, 45 years later, he is 85 (14:10).

The Allotment to Judah (15:1-63)

Caleb's claim is within the land given to Judah, and so his claim is mentioned a second time. Caleb also focused his attention on Debir, and offered his daughter Acsah to the man who could capture it. That man was Othniel, a member of the Kenaz Clan, Caleb's kinsman (15:17). We now have two men claiming cities within the land allotted to Judah, and neither of them, come from the tribe of Judah. In fact they are not even Israelites, but Edomites.

A detailed description is given of the four areas of Judah, beginning with the extreme south (15:21), moving to the lowland (Shephelah) (15:33); then to the hill country (15:48); and finally into the wilderness (15:61). The Chapter ends by stating that the Jebusites, who occupy Jerusalem, have not yet been conquered (15:8 and 63). It is interesting to note that Hebron, Debir, and Jerusalem are all located in the hill country, and Hebron and Jerusalem go on to become the two main centers in which David operates.

The Tribes of Joseph (16:1—17:18)

The portion given to the descendants of Joseph consisted of the Central Highlands (16:1-4). Since Manasseh was Joseph's firstborn, his descendants obtained more territory than did Ephraim. Ephraim's allotment is described in Chapter 16:5-10 and Manasseh's in Chapter 17:1-18. It was in Manasseh's allotment that Zelophehad's five daughters, Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah, received their inheritance (17:3ff.). Zelophehad had no sons, and so his daughters made a special request to Moses, who had approved it before he died. Joshua carries out the request.

Both tribes demanded a double portion because they were so numerous (17:14-18). They were granted it, but they had to drive out the Canaanites to get it, which they had difficulty doing (16:10 & 17:12-13). Part of the difficulty was that the Canaanites lived on the plain and had the advantage of iron chariots. Joshua did not think that was too

much of a problem, and so he encouraged them to at least take the forested hill country from them (17:18).

The Remaining Tribes (18:1—19:51)

The Assembly at Shiloh (18:1—19:48)

Moving on to Shiloh, Joshua ordered three representatives from each of the remaining seven tribes to survey the land and divide it into seven portions. He then cast lots before the Lord to see who would inherit the various portions. What follows is a description of the land inherited by the various tribes, beginning with the first allotment and ending with the seventh.

The Allotment to Benjamin (18:11-28)

The Allotment to Simeon (19:1-9)

The Allotment to Zebulun (19:10-16)

The Allotment to Issachar (19:17-23)

The Allotment to Asher (19:24-31)

The Allotment to Naphtali (19:32-39)

The Allotment to Dan (19:40-48)

The Danites ultimately lost their territory and migrated north, where they fought against Leshem. In the Book of Judges (18:2-10, 27-29) Leshem is referred to as Laish. Upon capturing the city, they renamed it Dan.

The Gift to Joshua (19:49-50)

They gave Joshua the city, which he asked for, Timnath-serah, which was located in the southwestern corner of the hill country of Ephraim, his own tribe. He rebuilt the city and settled in it. The city was not given by lot, but as a reward for his services.

Conclusion (19:51)

The distribution was accomplished in the presence of the Lord at the entrance to the Tabernacle. This was to insure that everything was being done according to the Lord's Will.

THE CITIES OF REFUGE (20:1-9)

(See Numbers 35:6-34 and Deuteronomy 19:1-13)

These cities were a safeguard against the vengeance of a relative who had the obligation to avenge the death of a loved one. Those who caused an accidental death were protected from such personal vengeance. One who desired refuge had to meet with the elders of the city at the gate. The gate was not merely an opening in the wall, but an enclosed structure containing several rooms and more than one story. Shelter in one of these cities provided

time for tempers to cool down, and it was open to foreigners (strangers) as well. Eventually the accused had to stand trial before the congregation.

Cities of Refuge

In The West

Kedesh (Naphtali)
Shechem (Ephraim)
Hebron (Judah)

In the East

Bezer (Reuben)
Ramoth (Gad)
Golan (Manasseh)

THE CITIES OF THE LEVITES (21:1-45)

(Allotted in Shiloh)

Since the Levites had no inheritance, they were allotted cities and pastureland around them. This ensured that the leaders of the nation's faith and worship would be dispersed among the tribes. Levi had three sons, Kohath, Gershon, and Merari, and so the cities were divided among their descendants. There were 48 cities in all, and they were divided in the following manner:¹

The Kohathites (Descendants of Aaron)

Judah and Simeon

- *1. Hebron
2. Libnah
3. Jattir
4. Eshtemoa
5. Holon
6. Debir
7. Ain
8. Juttah
9. Beth-shemesh

Benjamin

10. Gibeon
11. Geba
12. Anathoth
13. Almon

The Kohathites (Others)

Ephraim

- *14. Shechem
15. Gezer
16. Kibzim
17. Bethhoron

Dan

18. Elteke
19. Gibethon
20. Aijalon
21. Gath-rimmon

Manasseh (1/2)

22. Taanach
23. Gath-rimmon

¹ *Cities of Refuge

Gershonites

Manasseh (1/2)	Issachar	Asher	Naphtali
*24. Golan	26. Kishion	30. Mishal	*34. Kedesh
25. Be-eshterah	27. Daberath	31. Abdon	35. Hammoth-dor
28. Jamuth	32. Helkath	36. Kartan	
29. En-gannim	33. Rehob		

Merarites

Zebulun	Reuben	Gad
37. Jokne-am	*41. Bezer	*45. Ramoth
38. Kartah	42. Jahaz	46. Mahanaim
39. Dimnah	43. Ked-emoth	47. Heshbon
40. Nahalal	44. Mepha-ath	48. Jazer

THE GIFT OF LAND

No one owns the land. God gives it to us to use. When it is abused, it is taken away; and that is precisely what happened to the Canaanites. They abused the land, and so God gave it to the Israelites. They too had to use it appropriately, or they too would lose it. After naming some of the reasons why the Lord intends to throw the Canaanites out of their land, the Lord warns the Israelites:

Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, for by all these practices the nations I am casting out before you have defiled themselves. Thus the land became defiled; and I punished it for its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you shall keep my statutes and my ordinances and commit none of these abominations, either the citizen or the alien who resides among you (for the inhabitants of the land, who were before you, committed all of these abominations, and the land became defiled); otherwise the land will vomit you out for defiling it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. (Leviticus 18:24-28)

The Israelites are not the only ones to take land away from other people. This same thing has happened on almost every continent and continues to happen even in the present. No group of people, possess an inherent right to any land. Several things are necessary to maintain possession of the land.

The first is a fair distribution of land, taking into account claims that might be made. After taking care of a number of claims, the Israelites surveyed the land and then divided it up by casting lots. Everyone had a right to some land, including women, as is illustrated by the story of Zelophehad and his five daughters (Joshua 17:3ff.). Any nation

that allows the wealthy to control too large a percentage of the land is in trouble, for the dispossessed will eventually rise up in dissatisfaction against them. God will be with them leading their movement.

The early Church recognized the need to make a fair distribution when it established the principle of fair distribution, which is explained in Acts 4:34-35: "There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need." This was not legislated, but done voluntarily. Barnabas, for example had more than he needed, and so he "...sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet." (Acts 4:37) No one was forced to do this, and everyone who did it had to be honest about it. Ananias and his wife Sapphira were punished not because they kept back some of the proceeds, but because they lied about what they had actually given (Acts 5:1-6).

There is no discussion of placing all the land in common and beginning some sort of commune. Even in Israel, where the Kibutz resembles a kind of commune, it is voluntary. Those who live in a Kibutz are in the minority, but they do have an influence beyond their number. They are illustrating for the rest of society what is required to maintain possession of the land. There must be a fair distribution, and the land must benefit everyone. When a society fails to accomplish this, God will take his gift back.

In addition to a fair distribution of the land, there must be someone or some group that can guarantee justice without having vested interests in the land. In the distribution of the land in Canaan, God chose the Levites to be this group, for they were not given a share of the land. Spread throughout the nation were Levitical cities and cities of refuge. The purpose of these cities was to guarantee justice for all. We expect our political and judicial leaders to make decisions for the greater good, and not simply to feather their own nests. This sometimes requires giving up possession of land and other economic interests.

Are there any Levitical cities today, or is there any group playing the same role, to make sure that the gift of land might not be lost? I think there is, but we will not find it among politicians. As in the time of Joshua, the main responsibility is still given to religious leaders. We do not have religious cities, but much has been made in recent times of sanctuary, which means that a person can find refuge in the sanctuary of a church. This idea never was designed to protect the guilty, but to provide a place of refuge so that one might gain a fair trial. Churches play the role of the Levitical cities and the cities of refuge, and the clergy are to play the role of the Levitical priests.

Churches of course possess land; no one owns it, but God. Some clergy possess land, as well, but churches and clergy alike ought not to possess land in such a way that it contributes to the abuse of the land. We must always remember our Lord, who said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:20) Because Jesus had no vested interests, he could see clearly;

and like the prophets of old, and the clergy of the present are called to that same objectivity.

What is sometimes difficult for us to accept is the fact that people more immoral than ourselves may take the land away. This bothered the prophet Habakkuk (1:5-6 and 13b), until he realized that they, who abused it, would lose it. It is not the righteous people, who seize land from others. The Israelites were not given the land because they had achieved the right level of righteousness, but because they had entered into a covenant with God, allowing him to begin to shape their lives and their nation. What needs to be remembered is that only the true children of God will inherit the land. This is what Jesus meant when he said in Matthew 5:5, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”

SACRED STORIES

The Stories in the Book of Joshua



Joshua by Arus Duellinus (1650 C.E.)

3. Final Acts of Joshua Joshua 22:1 — 24:33

3. FINAL ACTS OF JOSHUA (22:1 – 24:33)		
JOSHUA SENDS THE EASTERN TRIBES HOME (22:1-34)		
The Dismissal of the Eastern Tribes (22:1-9)	The Altar of Witness (22:10-34)	
JOSHUA’S FAREWELL SPEECH (23:1-16) [At 110 years of age]		
There is to be no Idolatry (23:6-8)	There is to be no Intermarriage (23:12-13)	
THE COVENANT RENEWAL AT SHECHEM (24:1-28)		
A Historical Review (24:2-13)	The Covenant Stipulations (24:14-15)	Joshua’s Stone (24:25-26)
CONCLUSIONS (24:29-30)		
Joshua’s Death at Timnath-serah, Ephraim	Joseph’s Burial at Shechem, Manasseh/Ephraim	Eleazor’s Death at Gibeah, Ephraim

3. FINAL ACTS OF JOSHUA

Joshua 22:1—24:33

ASSIGNMENTS			
Dismissal of the Eastern Tribes 22:1-34	Joshua's Farewell Speech 23:1-16	Covenant Renewal at Schechem 24:1-28	The Death of Joshua 24:29-33

JOSHUA SENDS THE EASTERN TRIBES HOME (22:1-34)

The Dismissal of the Eastern Tribes (22:1-9)

Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh have fulfilled their military obligations and are dismissed with Joshua's blessing and a share of the spoil. The spoil includes cattle, silver, gold, bronze, iron, and clothing (22:8).

The Altar of Witness (22:10-34)

The eastern tribes worry that they will be disowned in the future and so they build an altar of witness west of the Jordan. This causes misunderstanding for the western tribes, who think the altar is for idol worship. It is compared to the sin at Peor (22:17) where Israel worshipped Baal (Numbers 25) and the sin of Achan (22:20), which caused the death of 36 men (Joshua 7). The western tribes sent the priest Phinehas (Eleazar's son) and 10 chiefs—one from each of the tribal families—to investigate before they resorted to war. The eastern tribes replied that the altar was not to be used for idol worship or for making sacrifices. They did this with a threefold repetition of the divine name (El, Elohim, and Yahweh), which has an oath-like quality, enhancing their denial in the strongest possible terms. The altar was simply a witness to future generations of the link between the eastern and western tribes.

The story might also be an attempt to justify the continued veneration of an old local shrine, which would have otherwise been forbidden in the move to centralize worship in Jerusalem. At this time the Ark of the Covenant is still in Shiloh. Sacrifices could only be offered at the place that the Lord their God would choose, which for now is Shiloh, but will eventually become Jerusalem.

JOSHUA'S FAREWELL SPEECH (23:1-16)

It has been suggested that chapters 23 and 24 are two accounts of the same thing. Another guess is that chapter 23 is a farewell speech to Israel's leaders, and chapter 24 is a formal, public renewal of the Covenant.

In chapter 23 Joshua has grown old (110). He appoints no single successor. Perhaps none is needed now that they dwell in the Promised Land. Although all of the land has not yet been secured, he promises them success in finishing up the conquest if they keep the Law of Moses. They are not to give in to the temptation of idolatry, nor are they to intermarry with the Canaanites, who will lead them into idolatry. They are to worship the only God who exists, remaining faithful to him alone.

THE COVENANT RENEWAL AT SHECHEM (24:1-28)

Joshua called the leaders of Israel together at Shechem to renew the Covenant. There are two major parts to this Covenant renewal: (1) The Historical Review (24:2-13). This is a creedal affirmation or story of their salvation. (2) The Stipulations of the Covenant (24:14-15). This is a general demand to be loyal to Yahweh and to reject the other gods. It is possible that there were other elements included in this renewal, but we can only guess at what they might have been. They might have had a ceremony of blessings and curses. Animals might have been cut into two halves and passed through. They might have eaten a sacred meal and participated in a symbolic transfer of gifts. The Ark was not mentioned because it became associated with Shiloh instead of Shechem.

THE DEATH OF JOSHUA (24:29-31)

Joshua lived a long life and was buried at Timnath-serah, the Ephraimite town, which the Israelites had given to him.

CONCLUDING NOTES (24:32-33)

The Book of Joshua ends with the burials of Joseph at Shechem and Eleazar at Gibeah. Shechem was the main center for the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the two sons of Joseph. Eleazar was the son of Aaron, and Gibeah was located in Ephraim near Shiloh. This is not the Gibeah located in Benjamin.

ARE YOU A TEMPLE OF GOD OR AN IDOL?

Everyone decides. "Not to decide," said Harvey Cox, "is to decide." Joshua understood what was going on as they entered the Promised Land. They were still surrounded by those who worshipped idols, and so he warned:

Therefore be very steadfast to observe and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right nor to the left, so that you may not be mixed with these nations left here among you, or make mention of the

names of their gods, or swear by them, or serve them, or bow yourselves down to them, but hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day. (Joshua 23:6-8)

One of the most dangerous contacts one can make with idolatry is through marriage. The reason is simple. Marriage is the most intimate of all human relationships. That is why Joshua warns against intermarriage with those who worship idols:

For if you turn back, and join the survivors of these nations left here among you, and intermarry with them, so that you marry their women and they yours, know assuredly that the LORD your God will not continue to drive out these nations before you; but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a scourge on your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land that the LORD your God has given you. (Joshua 23:12-13)

Joshua calls for a decisive break with idolatry. He demonstrates it with his own life, and calls upon the people of God to follow him. “Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, “he says in Joshua 24:15, “choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” This is the way to keep the Promised Land and all of the other promises of the Covenant.

This may seem harsh, but after the Promised Land was lost, and regained, Ezra in a heavy rain, called them to divorce their foreign wives, saying, “Now make confession to the LORD the God of your ancestors, and do his will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives.” (Ezra 10:11) Paul does not call for the Christian to divorce an unbeliever (1 Corinthians 7:13), but he does question the wisdom of entering into marriage with unbelievers. In 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, he says:

Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Beliar? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

It is at the point of marriage that the battle with idolatry becomes most intense, and that is why it is not recommended.

Several great writers of the Christian Faith have reinforced the line that Joshua drew. Let us look at just a few of them:

Julian of Norwich: “The one thing that matters is that we always say Yes to God whenever we experience him.”

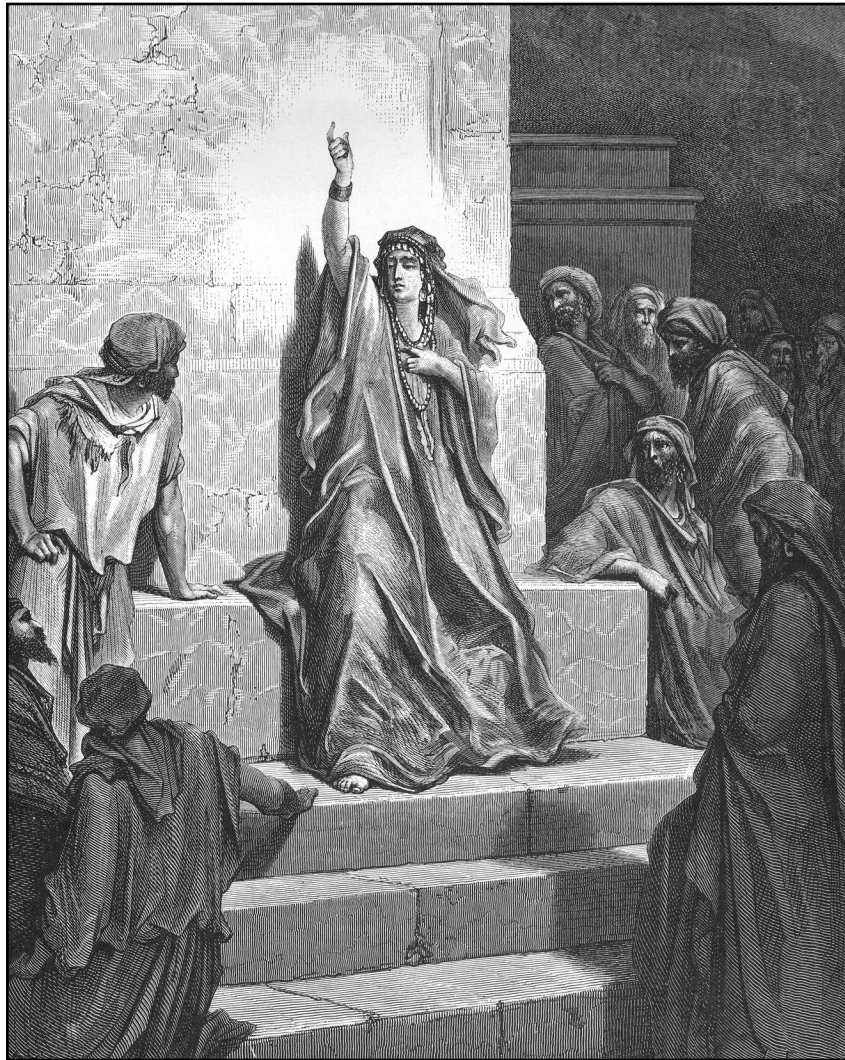
C.S. Lewis: “There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.”

M. Scott Peck: “We must ultimately belong to God or the devil.”

The decision for or against God plays itself out in every arena of life, not just in marriage, but marriage comes to the surface because our bodies are Temples of the Living God, or Temples of idols. Which will they be?

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of Judges



Deborah by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

4. God sends the Judges

Judges 1:1—5:31

4. GOD SENDS THE JUDGES (1:1—5:31)							
THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN (1:1—2:10)							
The Southern Conquest (1:1-21)							
The Tribes				The Conquered Cities			
Canaanites	Perizzites	Kenites	Philistines	Bezek Jerusalem*	Hebron Debir	Zephath Gaza	Ashkelon Ekron
The Conquest of Bethel (1:22-26)							
The Unconquered Cities (1:27-36)							
Bethshean Taanach	Dor Ibleam	Megiddo Gezer	Kitron Nahalol	Acco Sidon	Ahlab Achzib	Helbah Aphik	Rehob Beth-shemesh Bethanath
Judgment and Disobedience (2:1-5) Bochin: “Place of Weepers”				The Death of Joshua at 110 (2:6-10) Timnath-heres			
STORIES OF FOUR JUDGES (2:11—5:31)							
The Canaanite Gods (2:10-23)							
Baal: “Lord”	Ashtaroth (Plural)						
	Ishtar (Babylonian)	Astarte (Greek)	Aphrodite (Greek)	Venus (Roman)			
The Philistine Cities							
Ashdod	Ashkelon	Ekron	Gaza	Gath			
Four of the Judges							
Othniel (Judah) (3:7-11)	Ehud (Benjamin) (3:12-30)	Shamgar (3:31)	Deborah and Barak (Ephraim and Naphtali) (4:1—5:31)				

4. GOD SENDS THE JUDGES

Judges 1:1—5:31

ASSIGNMENTS		
The Conquest of Canaan 1:1—2:10	Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar 2:11—3:31	Deborah and Barak 4:1—5:31

INTRODUCTION TO JUDGES

(1200 - 1050 B.C.E.)

The Name

The title is the same in the Hebrew, Septuagint, and Latin Vulgate Versions. The Judges were not legal experts, but heroes who upheld the laws and customs of the Israelites. Some of them were tribal military heroes, and others were city or district rulers. They became heroes by divine call and empowerment, and they led the various tribes of Israel to deal with their surrounding enemies.

A better term might be “revolutionary leaders,” for none of them were elected by the people; nor was this a period in which there was any central power or unity. Justice had to be administered by someone, for no one had replaced Joshua. At best, the twelve tribes formed a loosely knit confederation without a King. John Wesley describes the judges as “avenging Israel of their enemies, and purging them from their idolatries.”¹ Those persons, military or otherwise, who could bring order out of chaos, were thought of as heroes. It is about such persons as these that this book has been written.

Military Leaders

1. Othniel - 1200
2. Ehud - 1170
3. Deborah - 1125
4. Gideon - 1100
5. Jephthah - 1070
6. Samson - 1070

City/District Rulers

1. Shamgar - 1150
2. Tola
3. Jair
4. Ibzan
5. Elon
6. Abdon

¹ John Wesley, Notes, Judges, ¶ 1.

The Authors

Tradition has named Samuel as the author, but authorship remains uncertain. These were stories passed down without a specific author. There are traces, according to some scholars, of the J and E authors of the Pentateuch.

The Date

The Book in its present form was complete by 600 B.C.E., but the writings are much older. They probably started to collect them around the 9th Century, but the Song of Deborah may have been written as early as 1100 B.C.E. All of the material covers a time period from about 1200 to 1050 B.C.E. In this period of time we discover the beginning of the iron-age. Examples are Og's iron bedstead (Deuteronomy 3:11), the iron chariots of the Canaanites (Joshua 17:16), Sisera's 900 iron chariots (Judges 4:3), and the Philistine's monopoly on iron-working (1 Samuel 13:19-22).

Two clues help us with the date of Judges. The first is that Jerusalem has not yet been taken (1:21), and that "there was no king in Israel (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; and 21:25)." Under David's reign, Jerusalem was finally taken in approximately 1000 B.C.E. (2 Samuel 5:6-12).

The Purpose

The retelling of these stories, covering the first two centuries following the conquest, had a specific purpose. They were to demonstrate how victory came from God and idolatry led to disaster. The theological and moral lessons to be learned were that loyalty to God is the prerequisite for national success and that disloyalty was a guarantee of disaster. The role of the Judge was not to rule, but to call the people back to God and to execute divine judgment. According to Gideon, God himself is the ultimate judge (8:23, but see also 11:27). Some scholars choose to call Gideon the ideal Judge, but I prefer to think of Deborah in this way. Following his military victory over the Midianites, Gideon resorted back to idolatry.

A fourfold cycle of events can be discerned. First, there is APOSTASY, which is followed by JUDGMENT. Judgment usually consists of foreign oppression, which brings the Israelites to REPENTANCE. Repentance begins with a cry of distress, and ends with divine DELIVERANCE.

Overall, the Book of Judges appears to be an endorsement for the establishment of kingship in Israel.

The Outline

- A. Conquest of Canaan. (1:1—2:10)
- B. Stories of the Judges. (2:11—16:31)

1. Introduction (2:11—3:6)
 2. Othniel (3:12-30)*
 3. Ehud (3:12-30)*
 4. Shamgar (3:31)
 5. Deborah (4-5)*
 6. Gideon (6-8)*
 7. Abimelech (9)
 8. Two Minor Judges (10:1-5)
 - a. Tola
 - b. Jair
 9. Jephthah (10:6—12:7)*
 10. Three Minor Judges (12:8-15)
 - a. Ibzon
 - b. Elon
 - c. Abdon
 11. Samson (13-16)*
- C. Appendix (17:1—21:25)
1. The Migration of Dan (17:1—18:31)
 2. War between Israel and Benjamin (19:1—21:25)

1:1—3:6	3:7-11	3:12-31
Introduction and Prophecy	Othniel vs. Mesopotamia	Ehud vs. Moab
4:1—5:31	6:1—8:32	8:33—10:5
Deborah vs. Canaan	Gideon vs. Midian	Abimelech
10:6—12:15	13:1—16:31	17:1—21:25
Jephthah vs. Philistines	Samson vs. Philistines	Appendix

Who Were the Judges?

1. OTHNIEL. This kinsman of Caleb's defeated an invasion from Hittite-controlled Mesopotamia.
2. EHUD. The Moabites, joined with the Ammonites and Amalekites, oppressed Israel. Ehud killed the Moabite King and then led Israel into battle against them, killing 10,000 soldiers.
3. SHAMGAR. Although not described as an Israelite Judge, he was a contemporary of Deborah's, and was known for having killed 600 Philistines.
4. DEBORAH. She was the only female judge, who was the inspiration behind Barak, her military commander. Barak wanted her to accompany him as he and his men killed 10,000 Canaanites led by Jabin and Sisera. As Sisera sought safety in Jael's tent (a Kenite woman), she killed him with a tent peg.
5. GIDEON. The Midianites swept through southern Israel in about 1175 B.C.E. Gideon scored a decisive victory over them with 300 soldiers. He refused the invitation to become a king over Israel, and peace followed for the next 40 years. Contrary to the Mosaic Law, he did form an image out of golden earrings.
6. TOLA. Following the chaotic rule of Abimelech, Tola ruled for 23 years. He was not a military ruler, and he faced no enemy. He came from Shamir in the Tribe of Issachar.
7. JAIR. Like Tola, Jair was more of a civil ruler than a military leader; and he ruled for 22 years. He came from Gilead and belonged to the Tribe of Manasseh. Jair became known for his 30 sons, 30 asses, and 30 cities.
8. JEPHTHAH. The Ammonites attacked the eastern borders of Israel, and Jephthah freed the eastern tribes from them. The Ephraimites were apparently invited to help, but complained that they had not been invited. Conflict arose between Gilead (Manasseh) and the Ephraimites, with Jephthah and his men killing off 42,000 Ephraimites. They recognized the Ephraimites by asking them to pronounce "shibboleh," which they could not do.
9. IBZAN. That he had 30 sons is an indication of his importance, but nothing is said of his acts of deliverance. The giving of his 30 daughters outside the tribe was standard practice for the time. He judged Israel for seven years, as the Philistine threat continued to grow.
10. ELON. All that is known about Elon is where he came from and that he judged Israel for ten years.

11. ABDON. He had 40 sons and 30 grandsons, who rode on 70 donkeys. This was a sign of his prominence in society. He judged Israel for eight years.
12. SAMSON. Coming from the Tribe of Dan, Samson had to deal with the Philistines, who finally drove the Danites north. While Samson never organized any military armies to fight them, he did resist them in more personal ways, such as by setting fire to their fields and slaying many of their soldiers with the jawbone of an ass. Following 40 years of oppression, he managed to rule 20 years, during which time he became a hero because of his great strength.

What We Learn from the Book of Judges

1. Certain gifts are given to us to use when they are needed, even though we are not always conscious of the fact that they come from God. One example of this is Samson's gift of strength.
2. Good religious and political leadership has a positive influence on the people. Without it the people do their own thing. (Judges 21:25) People need a model to imitate.
3. False gods (idols) have no power. (Judges 10:10)
4. God exercises patience as he waits for us to turn to him; and in the process, he forgives and forgives and forgives.
5. Obedience leads to blessing and success; disobedience leads to judgment and failure.

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN (1:1—2:10)

This account seems to be older than the one given in Joshua. There is no idea of any united army conquering Canaan; rather, each tribe settles in its respective area fighting its own battle.

The Southern Conquest (1:1-21)

Judah and Simeon began the conquest, but Judah is definitely the more important. They are not to be thought of as persons, but tribes. Judah was the only tribe to survive the exile in Babylon and is important right down to the time of Jesus. The religion of Judaism comes primarily from the people of Judah.

The Tribes

Four tribes are mentioned, which are the Canaanites, Perizzites, Kenites, and Philistines. There were various kinds of relationships with these tribes. The Kenites, for example, were a nomadic tribe closely allied to the Hebrews, but the Philistines were a formidable

enemy, who controlled the iron industry in Palestine. The Israelites had great difficulty fighting against their iron chariots.

The Cities

A number of cities are mentioned. Some of them were taken quickly and decisively, but others only after a long period of time.

Bezek. 10,000 men were killed here, and Adonibezek, the leader, had his thumbs and big toes cut off. This rendered him incapable of fighting, but it also humiliated him. This story is similar to one told in Joshua 10 about Adonizedek of Jerusalem. Some scholars think it is the same story.

Jerusalem. Neither Judah nor Benjamin captured Jerusalem. David captured Jerusalem 300 years later (2 Samuel 5:6-10). The Book of Judges assumed that Jerusalem was captured, but realized that the Jebusites were not completely dislodged (1:21).

Hebron. This city was taken and became the most important city of the time.

Debir. Caleb offered his daughter, Achsah, to the man who could take Debir. His nephew, Othniel, took it and claimed his cousin for his wife. Achsah then asked for a gift, and Caleb gave them the upper and lower springs as well. The modern city of Tell Beit Mirsim is located where Debir once stood, which was to the southwest of Hebron.

Zephath. This was the only city that Judges describes as totally destroyed according to the Law (1:17).

Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron. These were Philistine cities and it is not accurate to say that they were defeated. The Septuagint claims that Judah did not conquer them.

The Conquest of Bethel (Luz) (1:22-26)

The House of Joseph (Manasseh and Ephraim) captured Bethel. The story might be connected to the capture of Ai, since it is possible that Bethel was originally called Ai. As spies approached the city, they met a man coming out of the city. They asked him to show them the way into the city. The man might have shown them the secret water tunnel leading from the spring into the city. (See 2 Samuel 5:8) In turn, they let the man and his family, go free. The man went to the Land of the Hittites and built a new city, which he named Luz.

The Unconquered Cities (1:27-36)

Listed under each of the Israelite tribes are some cities that were not conquered. Although it says that the Canaanites in these cities were put to forced labor, this was probably not true until the time of David and Solomon. Below is a list of tribes and the cities, which they could not conquer.

MANASSEH

1. Beth-shean
2. Taanach
3. Dor
4. Ibleam
5. Megiddo

EPHRAIM

6. Gezer
- ZEBULUN**
7. Kitron
 8. Nahalol

ASHER

9. Acco
10. Sidon
11. Ahlab
12. Achzib
13. Helbah
14. Aphik
15. Rehob

NAPHTALI

16. Beth-shemesh
17. Bethanath

The tribe of Dan was unable to conquer anyone, and finally moved north. The Amorites were Canaanites, who continued to dwell in Harheres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim.

Judgment and Disobedience (2:1-5)

The reason why a complete victory was not theirs is because they did not tear down all the pagan altars and kill all the Canaanites. An angel of the Lord informs them at Bochim (Bethel) that they will now have to contend with their enemies and the attraction of their gods. The people wept. *Bochim* means “place of weepers.”

The Death of Joshua (110) (2:6-10)

Joshua was buried within the bounds of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim. Timnath-heres is the same place as Timnath-sereh, which was mentioned in the Book of Joshua. With the death of Joshua, there arose a new generation, which did not know the Lord or remember what He had done for Israel.

STORIES OF THE JUDGES (2:11—16:31)

Introduction (2:11-3:6)

The stories begin after the death of Joshua, who died at the ripe old age of 110. Since he was born in the tribe of Ephraim, he was buried within the tribe of Ephraim. They buried him in Timnath-heres, in the hill country, just north of Mount Gaash. With the death of Joshua a new generation emerged, who did not know the Lord. They worshipped the gods they were not supposed to worship and they were ruled and oppressed by native rulers. When they finally cried out, the Lord heard their cries and called judges to liberate them from their oppression.

The surrounding tribes were not conquered because of Israel’s disobedience. The people served the Canaanite gods, who were called the *Baals* and the *Ashtaroth*. *Baal* means, “lord.” It can be thought of as a plural term because of the many worship centers in Palestine, each containing its own idol. He is pictured standing on a bull. The storm cloud was his chariot, thunder his voice, and lightning his spear and arrows. The worship of Baal involved cultic prostitution and child sacrifice, and the purpose was to make the womb fertile, and the soil rich. *Ashtaroth* is also a plural word, and refers to the female

counterparts of the Baal. There are many variations to the name, the most common of which are *Ishtar* in Babylonia, *Astarte* or *Aphrodite* in Greece, and *Venus* in Rome. In conclusion, these were all local male and female fertility/vegetation gods and goddesses, which corrupted the Israelites.

For serving these gods, God turned the Israelites over to the five lords of the Philistines (rulers of Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gaza, and Gath), and the people of Israel found themselves in conflict with the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and Hivites as well. They also mixed with the daughters of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites and served their gods. As a result, they were not successful. They had to learn the art of warfare, and were punished and tested by God.

Othniel (Judah) (3:7-11)

He came from the tribe of Judah through Caleb's younger brother, but he was a Kenizite (Edomite). Israel had fallen into the hands of the King of Mesopotamia, Cushan-rishathaim for 8 years; and Othniel defeated him, thus liberating the Israelites for the next 40 years. Cushan-rishathaim is unknown, but the name itself means "double wickedness." The reference could be to a desert tribe called Cushan, which entered Judah from the south and was repulsed by the Caleb clan.

Ehud (Benjamin) (3:12-30)

The people's disobedience caused Eglon, the King of Moab, to defeat the Israelites with the help of the Ammonites and Amalekites. They took possession of Jericho (the City of Palms). Israel served Eglon for 18 years, but not without crying out to the Lord for deliverance. The Lord raised up Ehud, a Benjamite, a left-handed man. Ehud took the tribute to Eglon with a two-edged sword hidden on his right thigh. Eglon, a very fat man, received the tribute and sent it away with his servants. Later Ehud went to see him alone in his cool roof chamber and said, "I have a message from God for you;" and then he assassinated him with the sword. He locked him in the room and escaped. The servants, thinking that the King was merely relieving himself, waited for some time. When he did not come out, they entered the room to discover their dead King. Ehud returned to his people and led them in a battle to kill 10,000 Moabites. This deliverance lasted for 80 years.

Shamgar (3:31)

Shamgar killed 600 Philistines with an ox goad and then delivered Israel. This isolated action did not restrain the Philistines for long. (See Chapters 13-16) Deborah mentions him in her song (5:6-7), and so we can assume that they were contemporaries.

***Deborah (Ephraim) and Barak (Naphtali) (4:1—5:31)**

The story of Deborah and Barak's victories over the Canaanites of the North is told in two versions, one in prose (4) and one in poetry (5). Deborah is both a Judge in the

judicial sense, and also a prophetess, while Barak is a military leader. Archeological findings help us to date their story at approximately 1125 B.C.E., about fifty years after Gideon. This makes us aware of the fact that the events in Judges are not in chronological order.

The Prose Account (4:1-24)

The story is confused by two sources and almost impossible to untangle. Jabin is the eleventh King of Canaan (Hazor). The military commander is Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-goiim. He had 900 chariots of iron and oppressed the Israelites for 20 years. Deborah, who was the Judge who sat under the Palm tree, between Ramah and Bethel (in Ephraim), ordered Barak (from Kedesh in Naphtali) to obtain 10,000 men from Naphtali and Zebulun and go to Mount Tabor, where they might have gone through some religious rites. This would have been a militarily advantageous place for the battle, but it took place instead near the River Kishon, just north of Mount Carmel. Barak refused to go unless Deborah went along. She went, and they defeated Sisera and all his men, who took off on foot towards Harosheth-ha-goiim. All were finally killed by the sword, except for Sisera, who escaped to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber. There had been peace between Jabin (of Hazor) and Heber (the Kenite); and that is why Sisera confidently asked for protection. He did not expect Jael to kill him with a tent peg. When Barak came looking for Sisera, Jael explained what she had done.

The Poetic Account (5:1-31)

This is not a song of Deborah, but an eyewitness account of what took place. More tribes are mentioned in this account than Naphtali and Zebulun. Machir is the tribe of Manasseh. Because so many are mentioned, it is difficult to determine which one was Deborah's. The battle is fought at Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo. A torrent from the Kishon River aided the Israelites in their victory. In the end, Jael drives the tent peg into Sisera while he is standing up rather than while he is sleeping.

The two accounts differ, but priority should be given to the older account in chapter five. It is one of the oldest writings in the Old Testament and dates back to the 11th or 12th century B.C.E.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP

I have a sign on the wall in my office, which says:

Which way did they go? How many of them were there? How fast were they going? I MUST find them. I am their LEADER.

The author is unknown to me, but I understand what he or she is trying to say. The same thought was expressed by Tennessee Politician Shelton Edwards some years ago, when

he said: “The way to get somewhere in politics is to find a crowd that’s going some place and get in front of it.”¹

There is however a big difference between being a military versus a political leader. Joshua seems to have done a great job as a military leader, and it just might be that his age of 110 was not the only reason why he did not move into political leadership. He may not have felt capable. The various roles require different qualities. The entrepreneurs, for example, may be way out there ahead of the rest of us; but most of them are incapable of running businesses. An example of this might be Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, the founders of Apple Computer. Most generals do not make the best presidents, although there may be exceptions.

There is one similar quality required of every kind of leader, and that is to recognize a problem, and deal with it effectively, before it becomes an emergency. Such persons might not only win wars, they might also prevent them. The primary task of both military and political leaders is not to get in front of movements, but to initiate them, attracting people and maintaining support.

It is not easy to do this. One has to be somewhat of a visionary. Two brief, but common statements describe the difference between leaders and the rest of us.

People can be divided into three groups: Those who make things happen. Those who watch things happen. And those who wonder what happened.

Do something...lead, follow, or get out of the way.

It is important to know which of these three persons you are so that you can act accordingly. Men are not the only people who lead. Deborah is described as a prophetess, or a visionary, who called upon her military leader, Barak, to conquer the Canaanites in the North; but Barak refused to go into battle alone, knowing that he needed the inspiration that only Deborah could give to him.

¹Shelton Edwards. Time, August 28, 1978.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of Judges



Gideon chooses 300 by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

5. Gideon leads the People Judges 6:1—12:15

5. GIDEON LEADS THE PEOPLE (6:1 – 12:15)

GIDEON AND HIS FAMILY (6:1 – 9:57) (40 Years)

The Call of Gideon (6:1-40)	The Defeat of the Midianites (7:1-25)	Final Defeat of the Midianites (8:1-35)
The Prophet/Angel The Sign: Broth poured on cakes and meat consumed by fire The Command: Tear down altar of Baal and cut down Asherah Twofold Sign: Fleece wet, but not ground Ground wet, but not fleece	22,000 men afraid 9,000 [9,700] rejected 300 accepted 300 divided into 3 companies Trumpet in right hand Torch in left hand Smash the jar containing torch “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon.” (7:20) Killing of Oreb and Zeeb	Complaint of Ephraim Pursuit of Zebah and Zalmunna Gideon orders Jether to kill the Kings Gideon kills them himself Gideon makes an idol Gideon has 70 sons Abimilech born from a concubine

Abimelech (9:1-57)

His mother was a Canaanite Arumah was his Headquarters	He tried to kill all his brothers Jotham escaped and compared Abimelech to “Bramble”	The Revolt of Gaal A Millstone is dropped on the head of Abimelech
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SIX JUDGES (10:1 – 12:15)

TOLA (10:1-2) (Issachar)	JAIR (10:3-5) (Gilead/Manasseh)	JEPHTHAH (10:6 – 12:7) (Gilead/Manasseh)
23 Years of Civil Rule	22 Years of Civil Rule 30 sons and cities	6 Years of Military Rule Son of Gilead and harlot Compact to Sacrifice first person to enter door of his home
IZBAN (12:8-10) (Bethlehem)	ELON (12:11-12) (Zebulun)	ABDON (12:13-15) (Ephraim)
7 Years of Rule 30 sons 30 Outside Women	10 Years of Rule	8 Years of Rule 40 sons and 30 grandsons 70 donkeys

5. GIDEON LEADS THE PEOPLE

Judges 6:1—12:15

ASSIGNMENTS			
The Call of Gideon 6:1-40	The Defeat of the Midianites 7:1—8:35	Abimelech 9:1-57	Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Izban, Elon, and Abdon 10:1—12:15

GIDEON (MANASSEH) (6:1—9:57)

The Call of Gideon (1175 B.C.) (6:1-40)

After the Israelites experienced 40 years of rest, the Midianites oppressed them for seven years. The Amalekites contributed to their oppression.

God delivered them from their oppression by calling Gideon. First, an unnamed prophet appeared (6:8), and then an angel sought Gideon out in Ophrah where he was beating up wheat in the wine press in order to hide it from the Midianites. Gideon was reluctant to respond to God's call through the angel, and asked for a sign. He was instructed to prepare a kid, unleavened cakes, meat, and broth; and then to place the meat and unleavened cakes on a rock under the oak. As he poured the broth over them, fire sprang up from the rock consuming them. The angel vanished. Gideon was then instructed to tear down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah (wooden pole or image of the Canaanite mother-goddess) beside it. He was then to build an altar to the Lord and offer his father's seven-year-old bull on it. Gideon found 10 men to help him. This was important because his family had also been involved in Baal worship, and all this had to be eliminated before God could use him. The men in the town were furious and wanted to kill him. Gideon's father, Joash, stood by him and suggested that Baal was capable of killing him, that is, if he really was a god.

Gideon was then called Jerubbab, which refers to a worshipper of Baal, but here it means "hacker of Baal" or "Baal contends." If Baal really were a god, he could deal with Gideon by himself. He did not need anyone else's help.

As the Midianites and Amalekites responded to Gideon's call by gathering in the Valley of Jezreel, the Spirit of the Lord took possession of Gideon; but Gideon was unsure, and so he asked for a sign. He laid a fleece on the ground and asked God to cover it with dew

in the morning, while the ground remained dry. This happened, but Gideon wanted the opposite to happen the next morning. The fleece was to be dry, while the ground was covered with dew. When it happened, Gideon was convinced that God had called him.

The Defeat of the Midianites (7:1-25)

The Midianites were camped out by the Hill of Moreh; while Gideon and his men at the Spring of Harod. The Lord instructed Gideon to weed out his men so that they might know that it is the Lord who helps them to win and not their own power. The 22,000, who were afraid, were sent home. That left 10,000 whom the Lord still considered to be too many. Therefore, Gideon tested his remaining men by asking them to take a drink. More than 9,000 were sent home and 300 were chosen to do battle. The text in Judges 7:5-6 is obscure and it is difficult to draw any conclusions on how they were chosen.

The men were divided into three companies and given a trumpet for the right hand and a jar with a torch inside for the left hand. They were to surround the Midianites, break the jar and blow the trumpet and cry, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon." (7:20) When that was done, the Midianites became confused and fled as far as Abel-Meholah. Men from Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh joined in the pursuit of the Midianites, who fled all the way to the Jordan. The Midianite princes, Oreb and Zeeb were killed, and the Israelites took their heads to Gideon, who was camped beyond the Jordan.

The Final Defeat of the Midianites (8:1-35)

The Tribe of Ephraim complained that Gideon did not include them in from the beginning, but Gideon reminded them that they got in on the best part (fruit of the grapes), for they killed Oreb and Zeeb.

Gideon and his men then pursued the Kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, to Succoth and Penuel. In these two places they asked the elders for provisions, but were refused. Gideon threatened to punish the unfriendly cities. He ordered a young man from Succoth to write down the names of 72 men for later punishment. He then caught up with the remaining 15,000 Midianites at Karkor. In the previous conflicts 120,000 had been killed. When Gideon captured the two kings, he ordered his son, Jether, to kill them. This would have been a way of honoring his son and humiliating his enemies; but his son hesitated, and so Gideon had to do it himself. This seems to be an act of vengeance carried out by Gideon for Midianite violence against his family.

The people wanted to make Gideon king, but he reminded them that Yahweh alone was to rule. He then asked for their gold earrings (about 40 pounds) and made them into an ephod, an image of God, which was contrary to the Mosaic Law; hence, Gideon contributed to the return of idolatry.

Gideon finally gave up his military leadership to settle down with his 70 sons. This may allude to Gideon's total family and not simply to his sons. Forty years of peace followed. By his concubine, Gideon had a final son, whom he named Abimelech, which means "My

(divine) Father is King.” Following Gideon’s death, the Israelites turned to the Baals and made Baal-berith, the Canaanite covenant god at Shechem, their god; but as we have seen, Gideon himself contributed to the spiritual decline of his people.

Abimelech (9:1-57)

Abimelech’s mother was a Canaanite, and so he identified with his mother’s home of Shechem. Shechem had been ruled by the dynasty of Hamor, but Abimelech aspired to become its King. His first step was to make his headquarters at Arumah, an insignificant town outside of Shechem. The citizens of Shechem were inclined to follow him, and so they gave him 70 pieces of silver from the temple (house) of Baal-berith, with which he hired worthless fellows to follow him.

The next step was to eliminate his opposition, which would have been Gideon’s 70 sons, and his brothers. In Ophrah he killed all of them, except for Jotham, the youngest, who escaped by hiding himself. Jotham went to the top of Mount Gerizim and told the parable of the trees (olive, fig, vine). Abimelech was identified with the bramble, which would devour the Cedars of Lebanon. The ruling house of Shechem (Cedars of Lebanon), was being overthrown by someone of non-aristocratic birth (the bramble). Abimelech was made King for three years, and this story was a warning to the citizens of Shechem who supported him.

The Lord then put an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem. Gaal led a revolt against him, and Zebul warned Abimelech, who attacked Gaal and his followers with four companies. As they approached, Gaal caught sight of them, and told Zebul about what he saw from the city gate. Zebul told him to go out and fight Abimelech, knowing that Abimelech would win. Abimelech got the best of them, burned the city, sowed it with salt, and killed a thousand men and women in the process. The intention was to make Shechem uninhabitable. There is however no historical evidence to support this consequence.

Abimelech then went on to subdue the city of Thebez. As he and his men attempted to burn it down, they got involved in destroying the tower. At that time a woman dropped a millstone on his head, crushing it. Not wanting to die at the hands of a woman, Abimelech ordered his armor-bearer to kill him. The moral of this whole story is that no one can get away with usurping God’s authority.

TOLA (ISSACHAR) (10:1-2)

Tola judged Israel for 23 years. He was not a military leader, but a civil head of the Israelite confederacy. Shamir was his hometown.

JAIR (GILEAD/MANASSEH) (10:3-5)

Like Tola, Jair of Gilead was a civil head of the confederacy. He ruled for 22 years. His 30 sons rode 30 donkeys, and had 30 cities. The actual number of cities was somewhere

between 23 and 60. Other Old Testament passages allude to the cities of Jair. (See Joshua 13:30 and 1 Chronicles 2:22.)

JEPHTHAH (GILEAD/MANASSEH) (10:6—12:7)

After the people forsook the Lord for pagan gods, the Philistines on the west and the Ammonites on the east oppressed them for 18 years. This was part of their punishment from God. The people finally cried out to the Lord, but the Lord told them to cry out to the gods they had chosen. They repented and turned away from their foreign gods.

Jephthah was the son of Gilead. His mother was a prostitute. Because he was half Israelite and half Canaanite, he would not receive any inheritance, and so he was cast out of the house. He gathered worthless fellows around him, who participated with him in various raids.

When the Ammonites made war on Gilead, the elders of Gilead asked Jephthah to lead them. He agreed if they would make him their permanent leader. A pact was made at Mizpah. The Ammonites fought Israel because their land had been taken away and they wanted it restored. Jephthah retold the story and informed them that God had dispossessed them; consequently, they were wrong to make war. The King of Ammon refused to listen to him and war ensued.

Jephthah made a vow to the Lord that he would sacrifice the first person to exit the door of his house if the Lord would help him defeat the Ammonites. After he won the victory, he returned home to Mizpah, and his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and dances. She was his only child. When he saw her, he rent his clothes and told her of his vow. She asked for two months to mourn her virginity. It was granted, and then she was offered as a burnt sacrifice. In her memory, the daughters of Israel lament her death four days every year. The tragedy is that while human sacrifice was not acceptable, nor was going back on one's vow. Jephthah had his feet both in Canaanite and Israelite traditions, and he was trying to live out what he believed. This story does not mean that God now approves of human sacrifice.

Ephraim complained that Jephthah had unilaterally gone to war with the Ammonites, and a fight arose between Gilead and Ephraim. Gilead secured all the fords, and when Ephraimites tried to sneak back into their own country, they were recognized by their dialect, which was different. They could not pronounce the word "shibboleth", which means "flowing stream" or "ear of grain." They had trouble with the "sh" sound. In the battle 42,000 Ephraimites died, and Jephthah ruled for six years.

IBZAN (BETHLEHEM) (12:8-10)

That he had 30 sons is an indication of his importance, but nothing is said of his acts of deliverance. The giving of his 30 daughters outside the tribe was standard practice for the time. He judged Israel for seven years.

ELON (ZEBULUN) (12:11-12)

All that is known about Elon is where he came from and that he judged Israel for ten years.

ABDON (EPHRAIM) (12:13-15)

He had 40 sons and 30 grandsons, who rode on 70 donkeys. This is a sign of his prominence in society. He judged Israel for eight years.

THE DIVINE STRATEGY

God has a plan that requires our cooperation. The trick is to understand what it is, and then to gain the courage to follow it. Gideon was faced with such a task. He was called to reduce his troops down from 32,000 to 300. Unsure of his calling, he asked for several signs, which were given; and then he proceeded to unilaterally reduce his troops, with the help of a few simple principles. He sent home those who were afraid and those who failed to lap water like a dog. He accepted the 300 who knelt down to drink, putting their hands to their mouth.

Joshua 24:12b-13 spelled it out clearly: “it was not by your sword or by your bow. I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and towns that you had not built, and you live in them; you eat the fruit of vineyards and oliveyards that you did not plant.” If the weapons of war did not assure victory, then it was not important that they enter into an arms race with their enemies. The land was given to them, and so they would win even if they were outnumbered.

Can we really lower our defenses like that? While Gideon followed God’s orders in reducing his numbers, he did not sit back and allow the Midianites to attack him. With his three hundred soldiers, he went on the offensive. We can never lower our defenses without going on the offensive. God’s strategy does not mean that we will win every military battle, but we will win the war.

After Jesus revealed himself to his disciples at Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27ff.), he took the offensive by moving straight towards Jerusalem, where he knew that he would be crucified. Peter thought that he misunderstood the divine strategy, and so he tried to straighten him out; but the Gospel of Mark makes it quite clear that it was Peter who misunderstood the divine strategy. What was at stake was not an earthly Kingdom, but a spiritual one; and that is why Jesus told Peter to put away his sword (John 18:10-11). As they entered into the midst of the conflict, with Jesus being arrested, one of those who were with Jesus drew his sword and started using it; but Jesus replied, “Put your sword back into its place.... Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? ” (Matthew 26:52-53) Jesus went much farther than Gideon. He took the offensive with fewer men and included some women in his army. They inflicted no casualties on their enemies, even though many of them would be tortured and killed by them.

The divine strategy is similar in both the Old and New Testaments, even if the goal has changed. The changing goal does however transform some elements of the strategy. What is similar is the conviction that God gives the victory, and that the battle is not dependent upon numbers or military superiority. The goal changed from securing a Promised Land on earth to entering a Promised Land in Heaven. If the number of their soldiers and their weapons is unimportant for taking Canaan, they are even less important for entering the Kingdom of God.

While that is easy enough to understand, what about life in this world? We may not be able to storm the gates of Heaven; but we do have to hold back the forces of evil? Do we not have to use their weapons and tactics? We might resort to the strategies of evil, but we must always remember that they have nothing to do with the divine strategy. The promise of Jesus to Peter in Matthew 16:18 is clear: "...on this rock (Peter's faith) I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." The Church is again on the offensive, and that is the point of the divine strategy.

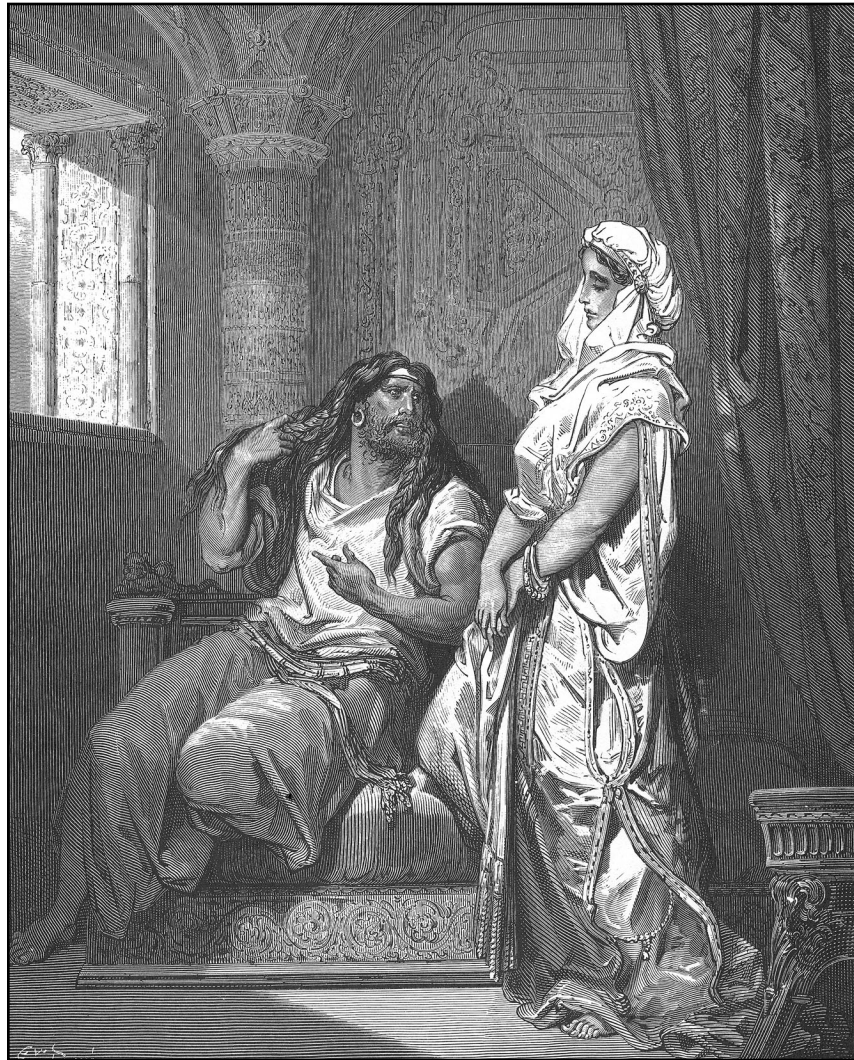
The difficulty for the Church today is that it has gone on the defensive while the forces of evil have gone on the offensive. How can I say this? To me it is clear. When a nation goes into warfare, it spends resources it does not have for the sake of victory. No cost is too high and no sacrifice too great to win every battle, and especially the war. The Church today has not taken this attitude, and has not even begun to spend its potential resources. It is not even using a fraction of them, and most Christians do not comprehend the seriousness of the warfare.

Gandhi understood what was required in the struggle for freedom from colonialism in India. We usually think of Gandhi as being non-violent, and he was; but he also said that if he had the choice between a coward and a militarist, he would pick the latter every time. "Non-violent force (satyagraha) for one's ideals," he insisted, "can be practiced only by those who are ready to die."¹ Martin Luther King, Jr. understood Gandhi's use of non-violence as an offensive weapon and was willing to pay the price in the struggle for civil rights in the United States. If the divine strategy could work for them in issues of justice in the world, it can also work for the Church in its struggle against every form of evil, worldly or spiritual.

¹Edward Stevens, *The Morals Game* (New York: Paulist Press), 1974), p. 142.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of Judges



Samson and Delilah by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

6. Samson and the Philistines

Judges 13:1—21:25

6. SAMSON AND THE PHILISTINES (13:1 – 21:25)		
SAMSON (DAN) (13:1 – 16:31) (20 Years)		
The Birth of Samson (13:1-25)	Samson's Wife at Timnah (14:1 – 15:20)	Samson and Delilah (16:1-31)
THE DANITE MIGRATION (17:1 – 18:31)		
Micah (Ephraim) and the Levite (Judah) (17:1-13)	Micah and the Tribe of Dan (18:1-31)	
WAR BETWEEN ISRAEL AND BENJAMIN (19:1 – 21:25)		
The Crime of the Benjamites (19:1-30)	The Punishment of Benjamin (20:1-48)	Wives for the Benjamites (21:1-25)

6. SAMSON AND THE PHILISTINES

Judges 13:1—21:25

ASSIGNMENTS		
Samson and His Wives 13:1—16:31	The Danite Migration 17:1—18:31	War between Israel and Benjamin 19:1—21:25

***SAMSON (DAN) (13:1—16:31)**

The Birth of Samson (13:1-25)

The story of Samson does not fit the regular pattern in the Book of Judges, although the section on Samuel begins with the usual formula (13:1). His calling in Israel was to deliver the people from the Philistines, but his conflicts seem more personal than tribal or national. About all that can be said is that Samson began the fight against the Philistines that was not completed until David's time. An approximate date of 1150 to 1100 B.C.E can be given for Samuel.

The Philistines were a non-Semitic people—from Crete—who settled on the coastal plain about the same time as the Hebrews crossed the Jordan from the East. They made up a loose confederation of five cities, which were Ashkelon, Ekron, Ashdod, Gaza, and Gath. The Tribe of Dan was situated in the Southwest near the Philistine plain. Because of the conflict with them, the Danites finally migrated to the North.

The Israelites found themselves under the Philistine oppression for 40 years. Samson was dedicated to God from conception, and was dedicated a Nazirite¹ at his birth. This meant primarily that he could not drink wine or have his hair cut (Numbers 6:1-8). The meaning, of Samson's name is not known for sure, but it many scholars believe it is related to the Hebrew word for Sun. Samuel's hometown was Zorah. An angel visited his parents, and his father, Manoah, in turn, prepared a kid for the angel. The angel refused to eat with him, but when the burnt and cereal offerings were made, the angel disappeared in the flame as the offerings were consumed.

¹ Nazirite, means "consecrated one."

Samson's Wife at Timnah (14:1—15:20)

Upon reaching a marriageable age Samson expressed his desire to wed a Philistine girl. His parents at first resisted, but finally gave their consent. An editor explains in Judges 14:4 that this intended marriage was set up by God in order to provoke a confrontation with the Philistines.

On the way to Timnah, where the girl lived, Samson killed a lion with the help of the Spirit of the Lord and later took honey out of its carcass. At the marriage feast Samson asked the Philistines to answer a riddle about the lion. He bet 30 linen garments and 30 festal garments that the Philistines could not answer his riddle, but they conspired with his wife to coax the answer out of him. Samson knew what they had done, and so he went to Ashkelon, where he killed 30 men, stripped them of their garments, and paid off the debt.

When Samson returned for his wife, he discovered that the girl's father had given her to his best man. Reacting in anger, Samson caught 300 foxes and tied them together by their tails. He then placed a torch on the tails of every pair of foxes, ignited them, and set them loose in the grain fields and olive orchards of the Philistines. When the Philistines saw their burned-out fields, they took revenge by burning the former wife of Samson and her father. Samson took out his revenge by killing many of them.

The Philistines then make a raid on *Lehi*, which means, "jawbone." Three thousand men from Judah sought Samson out because they feared Philistine revenge. They tied him up and delivered him to the Philistines at Lehi. The Spirit of the Lord fell upon Samson again, burning up the ropes setting him free. With the jawbone of an ass (curved sickle or scimitar resembling a jawbone), he slew 1,000 men. Samson then became thirsty and God split open a hollow place at Lehi and provided him with water to refresh his spirit. He judged Israel for twenty years.

Samson and Delilah (16:1-31)

After Samson had relations with a harlot at Gaza, he fell in love with Delilah (flirtatious). The Philistines offered her 1,100 pieces of silver "each" to find out the source of Samson's strength. That would have been an enormous amount. She used her charm on Samson, but got three false answers before obtaining the source of his strength. The three false answers were:

1. To be tied up with seven fresh bowstrings.
2. To be tied up with new rope.
3. To have his seven locks weaved into a web and made tight with a pin.

Finally, Samson told her the truth, that with the loss of his hair, he would lose his strength. Two reasons might be given. The first has to do with the fact that Samson's name came from the word "Sun." Hair represented the sun's rays, i.e. its strength. The loss of hair would then mean the loss of strength. The other reason is more biblical.

Samson was a Nazirite, and that involved the keeping of three vows, the prohibition against cutting one's hair, taking strong drink, and touching dead bodies. Samson had already ignored the prohibitions against strong drink and touching dead bodies, and now, with the loss of his hair, the final prohibition was violated. His special Nazirite vow was the source of his strength, and the cutting off of his hair ended that vow. With the violation of that vow, he lost his strength.

The Philistines gouged out his eyes, and bound him with bronze fetters. He was put to work grinding at the mill in prison. As time passed on, his hair began to grow. The Philistines gathered to offer a sacrifice to Dagon (Dagon: Deity of Grain) their god, and to rejoice that their god had given Samson to them. When they brought Samson out of prison to make fun of him, they forced him to stand between two wooden pillars. Samson asked the lad beside him to guide his hands so he could feel the pillars. There were 3,000 men and women in the building when Samson received his strength back and brought down the pillars and the building. More died in this final event than in all his former battles, and Samson died along with them. He had judged Israel for twenty years. In Judges 16:31, we discover that his brothers had a part in his burial. Judges 13:2-3 left us with the impression that Samson might have been an only child. That was not the case.

THE DANITE MIGRATION

Micah (Ephraim) and the Levite (Judah) (17:1-13)

What follows has nothing to do with judges, but it is part of the tradition dating, between 1100 to 1050 B.C.E. This first story explains why a Levitical priest maintained an illegitimate sanctuary in Dan. Philistine pressure was beginning to force the Danites to leave their appointed tribal location for safer territory in the north. The stories are confused and depart from our ethical expectations of God's chosen people.

In the first story, we encounter Micah (not the prophet) who came from Ephraim. The issue is 1,100 pieces of silver taken from his mother and placed under a curse by her. Somehow Micah wound up with them. He returned them, and his mother had a graven image and molten image made from 200 of the original 1,100 pieces. He set up a shrine and included an ephod and teraphim (cult objects used as a means of divination). First, he installed his own son, an Ephramite, as priest. Divination was the priestly task, and this took place when Israel had no king to guide the people, and the people were doing whatever pleased themselves. Only Levites were supposed to be priests, and so when Micah had the opportunity to hire a Levite from Judah, he did so, thinking that it would help him to prosper. He paid him 10 pieces of silver a year and provided him with clothing and food.

Micah's Levitical priest came from Bethlehem in Judah, which was not one of the Levitical cities. Why this priest was looking for a place to live and serve is not clarified. Without a judge, there was confusion; and Micah tries to cope in the vacuum as best he can.

Micah and the Tribe of Dan (18:1-31)

When the Philistines put pressure on the tribe of Dan, they selected five men from Zorah and Eshtaol to spy out some new land. As they passed through the hill country of Ephraim, they met Micah and lodged with him. They inquired of the Levite what he thought of their mission. The Levite assured them of success.

The migration of Dan is summarized in Joshua 19:47, where Laish is called Leshem. The city of Laish and its people were not well protected. They had everything and felt no need to defend themselves. The lesson to be learned here is that every people must be prepared to defend themselves from an enemy, and those who have the most also have the most to lose.

Six hundred men from the Tribe of Dan set out from Zorah and Eshtaol for Laish, which is about 100 miles. As they passed through the hill country of Ephraim, they took the Levite as their priest, along with the ephod and teraphim, and the graven and molten images. Micah caught up with them, but he was unable to recover his losses. The Levite's identity is given here as Jonathan, a grandson of Moses.

Laish was taken, burned, and renamed, Dan. The shrine set up at Dan became one of the two great shrines of the later Northern Kingdom. (See 1 Kings 12:29) The other important shrine was the one at Bethel. Dan became the northernmost settlement, which lasted until the captivity of the land. There was an Assyrian conquest in 733 B.C.E, but the final conquest took place in 721 B.C.E.

A final notation is made in regard to the "house of God" at Shiloh, which would have been the Tabernacle. Shiloh was the first place where the Tabernacle was maintained, but, in 1050 B.C.E. the Philistines destroyed Shiloh and stole the Tabernacle.

WAR BETWEEN ISRAEL AND BENJAMIN (19:1—21:25)

The Crime of the Benjamites (19:1-30)

An Ephraimite Levite took a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. A concubine would have been a slave purchased to act as a wife. She was not happy with the arrangement, and so she ran home to her father in Bethlehem. She stayed there for four months. The Levite finally went to get her and was welcomed by her father. He stayed three days and intended to leave on the fourth day; but he was persuaded to stay two more days. On the fifth night he finally refused and prepared to leave. He took a couple of saddled donkeys and his concubine and went in the direction of Jerusalem. Since Jerusalem had not yet been captured by the Israelites, he was afraid to spend the night there, and so he pushed on to Gibeah, which was in Benjamite territory.

After they arrived in Gibeah, they sat in the open square (just inside the gate) waiting for someone to take them in, but no Benjamites were willing to do so. Finally, an old Ephraimite man came along and offered them space in his home. While they were there,

some Benjamites came and wanted to engage in homosexual activity with the Levite. The old man refused to allow it and offered them his virgin daughter instead. The offer of his daughter was a wild attempt to avoid the sin of failing to protect his guest, a sacred obligation.

The Levite tried to help out his host and spare his daughter by offering his concubine in her place. The Benjamites raped the Levite's concubine all night long, and in the morning she found her way to the door of the house. Upon finding her, the Levite was upset about the attack on his personal property; and after he took her home to Ephraim, he cut her body up into twelve pieces and sent one piece to each of the other tribes. His purpose was to gain help in carrying out personal vengeance against the Benjamites.

The Punishment of Benjamin (20:1-48)

Because of a few discrepancies in numbers, it has been concluded that we might be dealing with two separate accounts weaved together. Having received the piece of the Levite's concubine, military units from the tribes of Israel meet at Mizpah with 400,000 men. The same problem exists here with the numbers as discussed in the census of the Book of Numbers. A "thousand" may refer to a military unit. The first goal was to get the Benjamites to cooperate by turning over the guilty men for execution, but the Benjamites refused to cooperate and stood behind the Gibeahites.

There were approximately 26,000 Benjamites and 700 Gibeahites who were all left-handed and very accurate with slingshots. They could sling a rock weighing one pound ninety to a hundred miles an hour with pinpoint accuracy.

The Israelites inquired at Bethel as to which tribe should lead the attack, and the Lord's answer was Judah. The battle lasted for three days. On the first day 22,000 Israelites were killed, and on the second day 18,000 Israelites were killed. Each time the Israelites began to doubt that the Lord was with them, and so they went back to Bethel to seek the Lord's will in the matter. Each time they were told to attack the Benjamites at Gibeah. The third attack differed from the first two in that a small force lured the Benjamites to leave the city in pursuit of them. They lost 30 of their men to the Benjamites in the retreat. Meanwhile, the other Israelites, who surrounded the city of Gibeah, entered the city and killed everyone and set it on fire. The cloud of smoke rising from the city was the signal for the retreating Israelites to turn on the Benjamites and fight. This time 25,100 Benjamites were killed (20:35), or as described later, 25,000 (20:46). About 600 escaped into the wilderness (Rock of Rimmon), where they stayed for four months. The Israelites burned every town in the area and killed all the men, women, children and even the animals. Hardly anything was left of the Tribe of Benjamin. In 1922-23 archaeologist confirmed the destruction of Gibeah in this time period.

Wives for the Benjamites (21:1-25)

After having nearly destroyed the whole Tribe of Benjamin, the Israelites wept bitterly over what they had done to one of their own Tribes. While they could not, because of the

oath they took at Mizpah, give their own women as wives to the remaining Benjamites gathered at the Rock of Rimmon, they decided to send 12,000 of their bravest men to Jabesh-gilead, a town that did not assist them in the civil war against Benjamin. They killed both men and women in Jabesh-gilead, but spared the lives of 400 virgins, whom they gave to the Benjamites for wives.

A second source of wives for the Benjamites came from Shiloh where the Benjamites were encouraged to attend the annual vintage festival of the Lord. The Benjamites were told to hide in the vineyards and watch. When the girls of Shiloh came out to dance during the feast, the Benjamites were to take them as wives for themselves and to take them home. If there was a protest from the family, they were to be told that they had not violated the oath, and that their daughters were not being given as a result of battle. It was common practice for young men to choose a wife from among dancing girls at a festival; and so this was not necessarily an immoral act, although everything seems to go downhill from here on. Judges 21:25 ends with the statement that because there was no king in Israel, "all the people did what was right in their own eyes." This was an indication that they were turning away from the Lord.

MONKEY SEE, MONKEY DO

We will never be any better than our leaders. Without leaders, everyone does their own thing; but with corrupt leaders, everyone imitates their example. That is why we try to cover up the corrupt behavior of our leaders. We do not want their behavior to become the norm. One phrase that illustrates this is: "Monkey see, monkey do."

None of the judges is an ideal leader, worthy of our emulation. Most of them were but violent militarists, who were ignorant of the Mosaic Law. They knew the name of God, and called people to him; but then, they themselves violated the divine Will, engaging in the idolatry opposed by divine Law.

Things have not really changed that much. We print on our money "In God we Trust" but then, we go on trusting in idols, including the one that bears this divine inscription. We may not approve of rape, but as a society, we give subtle consent to adultery and fornication. What is even worse is that we tolerate it in our leaders. Because everyone else is doing it, we somehow think that it must be okay.

People will not improve when they have no models but themselves to imitate; and none of the Judges are worth imitating. Will it help to move up another stage, say to Kings? The problem, of course, exists at all levels, even among the clergy, where we might expect a better example.

The real issue for us is what to do about it. The Royal Family in Great Britain is a good example of the problem. Every member of the Royal Family, not only the Queen, sets an example. When Diana first married Prince Charles, we saw all kinds of "Lady Di hairdos." This is a positive influence, which one can hardly find objectionable. What is a problem is any hint of scandal that might surface from within the Royal Family. Scandal

cannot be tolerated because it sets a standard for everyone else. When no one cares what that standard becomes, then the whole society is in deep trouble.

Many suggest that we should not worry about a leader's personal morality, or lack of it, and concentrate on their ability to lead in more important matters. While this seems to make good rational sense, it ignores the powerful impact that a leader's morality, or lack of it, has on the entire society. An immoral person may indeed be a strong and capable leader, but a moral person who is a strong and capable leader is much to be preferred. Such persons set standards, which others emulate.

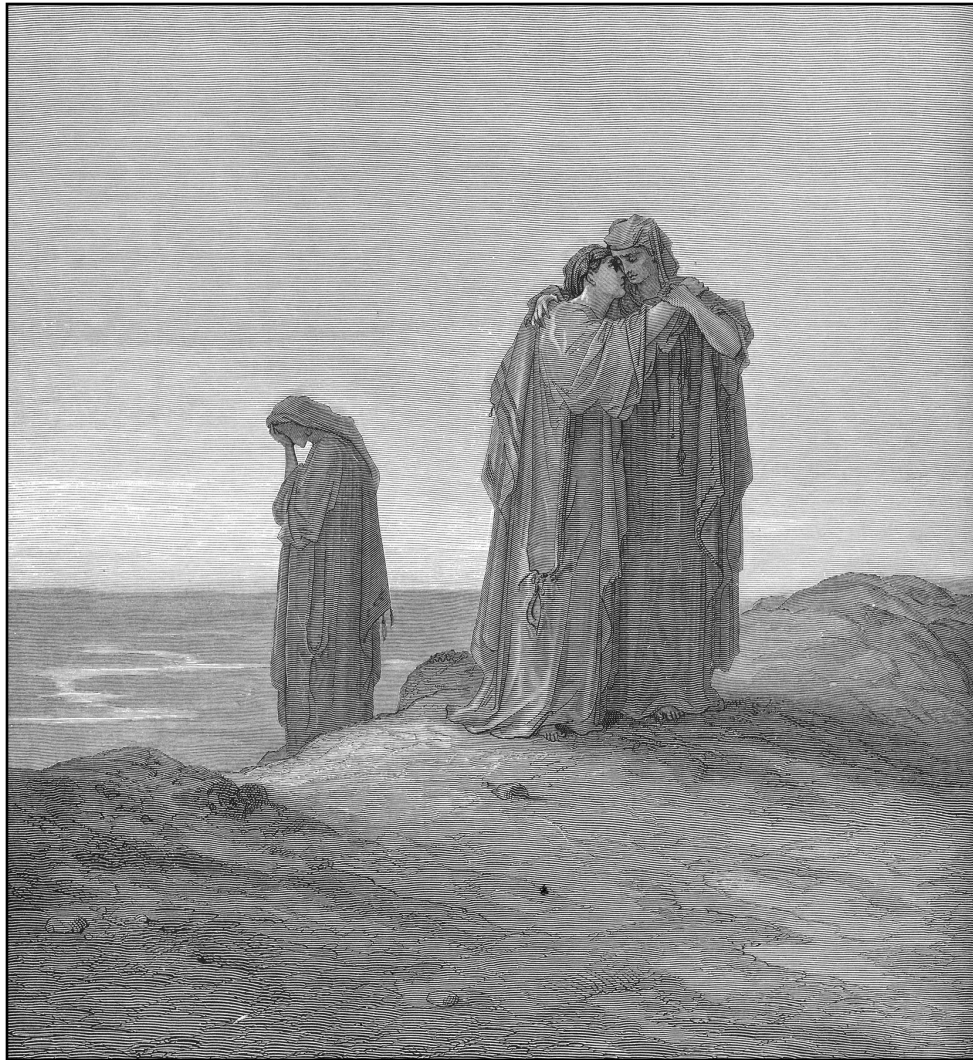
In recent years we have discovered many disturbing things about some of our Presidents and other political leaders, not to mention what has been revealed about some of our religious leaders. It is understandable why there have been attempts to cover all this up. Everyone knows that what is at stake is not only the reputation of the leader, but the impact that leader makes on the general population. We ought not to expect our leaders to be gods, but neither can we tolerate behavior inconsistent with our moral values.

No human being can become our ultimate model. What we want our leaders to do is to commit to the example of Jesus Christ, whose example alone is worthy of following, and we expect them to do their best to follow him. Does this mean that only a Christian can become a political leader? It all depends. If we had to choose between Gandhi, who denied being a Christian and yet tried to emulate Jesus, and a member of the Klu Klux Klan, who confessed to be a Christian, but violated Jesus' teachings, would it not make more sense to vote for Gandhi and not the self-confessed Christian? Too much is at stake, for the leader sets the pace.

We cannot tolerate biblical illiteracy among our leaders, even political leaders. Biblical literacy means more than using the divine name. All of the Judges used the divine name, and so do many irreverent political leaders. Being biblically literate means that one is capable of discerning how God worked in the past so that leadership can be given for the future. No better example exists than that of Jesus, and even nonChristians agree. They may not desire to call him the Son of God or confess him as the Christ (Anointed King), but as Christians, we believe that he is both and that he is King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). In him the religious and political will finally come together, and religious and political leaders who depart very far from his example ought to be removed from their positions, for they betray the direction in which history is moving.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of Ruth



Naomi and Her Daughters In Law by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

7. Stories of Love and Faith

Ruth 1:1—4:22

7. THE STORY OF RUTH (1:1—4:22)

IN MOAB

Elimelech (God is King) and Naomi (Pleasant One)

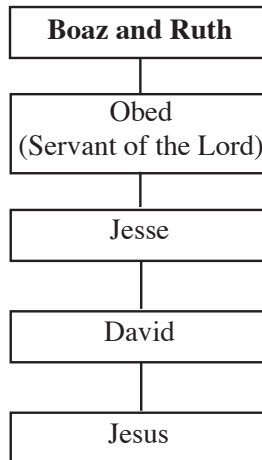
**Mahlon (Weakness)
and
Ruth (Rose/Companion)**

**Chilion (Pining)
and
Orpah (Stiffnecked/Raincloud)**

Following the death of Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion, Ruth makes a decision:

*But Ruth said, “Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you!
Where you go, I will go; Where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people, and your God my God.”
—Ruth 1:16*

IN BETHLEHEM



7. STORIES OF LOVE AND FAITH

ASSIGNMENTS			
Ruth's Decision 1:1-22	Ruth meets Boaz 2:1-23	Ruth falls in Love 3:1-18	Ruth marries Boaz 4:1-22

INTRODUCTION TO RUTH

1100-1050 B.C.E.

The Name

The Book is named after Ruth, the central figure in this historical short story. The only other book in the Bible to contain a woman's name is Esther.

The Authorship

The Talmudic Tradition names Samuel as the author, but this cannot be confirmed. Ruth 4:17, 22 mention Ruth's relationship to King David, who lived much later than Samuel. Naming an author depends upon the date the book was written, and that remains very unclear. All that can be said is that the author of Ruth is unknown.

The Date

There are different opinions on how to date the Book of Ruth. In the Hebrew Bible Ruth appears in the third section, called the Writings; but in the Christian Bible it appears right after Judges, possibly because its story takes place within the period of the Judges. The earliest date suggested would be during the period of the Monarchy, which might be any time from the monarchy of Solomon (10th Century B.C.E.) to the reforms of Jehosphaphat (9th century B.C.E.) or Hezekiah (8th century B.C.E.). Another opinion would place it after the Exile, somewhere between 550 to 450 B.C.E., and even as late as 350 B.C.E. In this later view the Book of Ruth is understood as an attack on the policies of Ezra and Nehemiah, who prohibited intermarriage with foreigners (Nehemiah 10:28-31).

The Purpose

The Book of Ruth does clash with the Law and Tradition of Israel (See Deuteronomy 23:3). Ruth was a Moabite woman who was accepted by a Jewish man and became the

ancestress of both David and Jesus. It is more than just a short story, for it contains a solid historical tradition of David’s Moabite ancestry. The story is placed historically in the period of the Judges, but stands in sharp contrast to the war and strife present in that time.

The question being answered is this: “Is it right and good that a Gentile woman be welcomed through marriage into the community of Israel?” The answer is, “Yes!” Ruth is commended for her actions and enters the community of Israel and becomes an important ancestress within that community. This indicates to some that the story is a tract written in opposition to Ezra and Nehemiah’s reforms on inter-marriage. The writer creates a sympathetic feeling for foreigners who place themselves under the protection of Israel’s God. It is a story that presents the message that Israel is to be “a blessing in the midst of the earth” (Isaiah 19:24), and “a light to the nations” (Isaiah 49:6).

The other book with a similar message is Jonah. Both of these books also present another motif and that is “divine providence” within and beyond the nation of Israel.

The Outline

(Key Verse: 1:16)

- A. Ruth’s Courageous Decision (1)
- B. Ruth Meets Boaz (2)
- C. Ruth and Boaz on the Threshing Floor (3)
- D.Boaz Marries Ruth (4)

1:1-22	2:1-23	3:1-18	4:1-22
Ruth’s Decision	Ruth meets Boaz	Ruth falls in Love	Ruth marries Boaz

RUTH’S COURAGEOUS DECISION (1:1-22)

Elimelech (God is King) and his wife, Naomi (Pleasant One), moved to Moab from Bethlehem to avoid a famine. The journey was about 50 miles. They took their two sons Mahlon (Weakness) and Chilion (Pining) with them, who in turn married two Moabite women, Ruth (Rose/Companion, or spelled backwards in Hebrew, Turtledove), and Orpah (Stiffnecked/Raincloud).

The two sons are described as Ephrathites, which associates them with Bethlehem. Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion all died in Moab, leaving Naomi and her two daughters-in-law as widows. Naomi, who changed her name to Mara (Bitter), decided to return to

Bethlehem, but encouraged Orpah and Ruth to return home to their families and god(s). The main Moabite god was Chemosh. Orpah followed Naomi's advice, and was not condemned for doing so. Ruth made the courageous decision to forsake the Moabite gods and follow Naomi to Bethlehem, where she committed herself to the God of Israel (1:16). They arrived during the beginning of the Barley Harvest, which would have been in April.

RUTH MEETS BOAZ (2:1-23)

Boaz was one of Elimelech's nearest kin. Rabbinic sources say that he was a cousin, but the text does not indicate the specific relationship. At the time of their arrival, Boaz was busy with the Barley Harvest; and the women, by law, were permitted to glean what the harvesters missed. (See Leviticus 19:9-10) Ruth collected one ephah (25 pounds or 1/2 bushel) and returned home to Naomi, who blessed Boaz for his kindness to her daughter-in-law.

RUTH AND BOAZ AT THE THRESHING FLOOR (3:1-18)

Naomi instructed Ruth to lie at Boaz's feet on the threshing floor after he had eaten and had a little to drink. She does this, and when he awakens, she reminds him of his duty to marry her as her husband's next of kin. This is all in accordance with Levirate Law, which is explained in Leviticus 25:25 and Deuteronomy 25:5-6. Although Boaz wanted to marry Ruth, he had to tell her of another who is more closely related to her than he, but if that person were to permit it, he would gladly marry her. Boaz invited Ruth to stay the night before sending her home with a gift of barley (6 measures/2 ephahs/50 pounds).

"Spread your cloak" in Ruth 3:9 and "wings" in Ruth 2:12 come from the same Hebrew word. It can be a request for protection, but there also seems to be a request for marriage. "Lie down" in Ruth 3:13 does not contain any sexual connotations. Nothing immoral is going on in this beautiful love story.

BOAZ MARRIES RUTH (4:1-22)

Boaz arranged to meet the man who, according to Levirate marriage practices, was next in line to marry Ruth. There had to be witnesses, and so ten elders of the city gather at the gate, as was the custom, to hear the conversation between Boaz and his unnamed kin, who had the first opportunity to purchase Naomi's land, and marry her daughter-in-law. When first informed that Elimelech's land was available and that he had first option, he responded positively; but after Boaz told him that the support of Naomi and Ruth was part of the deal, he responded negatively. He already had a family. Ruth's son would ultimately inherit the land; and so, he could see no real benefit.

All of this was what Boaz wanted, and so the man legalized the transaction in front of witnesses by taking off his sandal and passing it on to Boaz. This gave Boaz the right to marry Ruth, which, he did; and they had a son, whom they named Obed. Obed is a shortened version of Obadiah, which means "Servant of the Lord." While the legal

genealogy runs through Mahlon, Ruth's first husband, the real genealogy runs through Boaz, the real father of Obed. Out of Obed comes Jesse, the father of King David, and ancestor of Jesus. The decision of Ruth to leave her Moabite culture and faith and to commit herself to the God of Israel had tremendous implications, for through her will come Israel's greatest king and the King of kings, the Messiah.

A JEWISH HEART

There was a story on the news the other day about a Palestinian man who received a heart transplant, and the heart given to him came from a Jewish man. That creates quite a dilemma, but when it is a matter of life and death, who cares where the heart comes from? Still, it must be difficult for the Palestinian to continue to hate Jews, when his life has been saved through the donation of a Jewish heart. The same might be said for a Jew, should he be the recipient of a Palestinian heart.

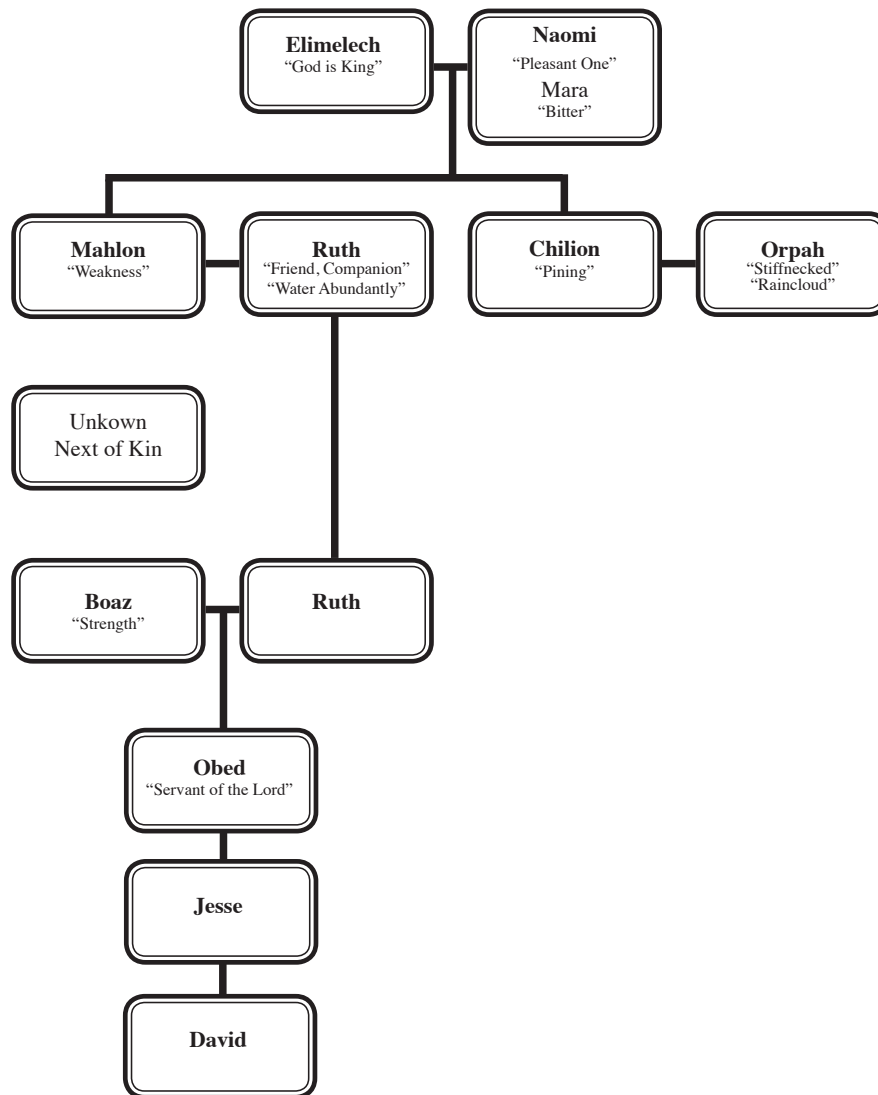
In ancient times this same kind of hostility existed between the Israelites and the Moabites. They were enemies for at least two reasons. First, the Moabites refused passage to the Israelites when they simply wanted to pass through on the way into the Promised Land; and secondly, the Israelites could not tolerate the idolatry and immorality connected with the worship of Chemosh, the Moabite god. Moab, the father of the Moabites, was the son of an incestuous relationship between Lot and his oldest daughter. The youngest daughter also gave birth out of an incestuous relationship, and she named her son Ben-Ammi, who became the father of another enemy to Israel, the Ammonites (Genesis 19:30-38).

The Book of Ruth contradicts the Old Testament opposition to intermarriage with foreigners, but it does not contradict the reason for the prohibition. The opposition to intermarriage was based on the fear of corrupting Israelite religion with pagan thought and morality. When Ruth left Moab, she left her Moabite religion behind. She said to her mother-in-law: "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God." (Ruth 1:16) No one questioned her marriage to a Jew, for she had accepted the Jewish God; hence, she could become the grandmother to King David and a legitimate ancestor of Jesus Christ. She had a Jewish heart, and that made her Jewish.

Our purpose however is not simply to worship the Jewish God, but God alone. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all claim that there is only one God; but each one's interpretation of that God is very different. How do we move beyond Jewish, Christian, and Muslim gods to the only God who exists? Can members of these three monotheistic religions intermarry? It is clear that none of these religions look with favor upon intermarriage with atheists or idolaters; but should the same prohibition exist on intermarriage between Jews, Christians, and Muslims? If the adherents in these various religions could get beyond Jewish, Christian, and Muslim concepts of God to the only God, then such intermarriage could be approved, but it is not likely to happen in the near future. If it did, then there would be no reason for these three religions to exist independently of one another.

The practical implication of all this is that inter-religious marriage, even among the three monotheistic religions, is prohibited by all three religions. Someone has to change, and if the change cannot be made honestly, then the marriage ought not to take place. One should not change for the sake of the marriage. Ruth saw something desirable in Naomi's religion, and that moved her to forsake her old religion. She had already received a heart transplant, and so when she went to Judah with Naomi, she was already Jewish, even if she was a Moabite.

GENEALOGY OF RUTH TO DAVID



SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 1 Samuel



Return of the Ark by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

8. The Life of Samuel

1 Samuel 1:1—7:17

8. THE LIFE OF SAMUEL (1:1—7:17)				
BIRTH AND CONSECRATION OF SAMUEL (1:1—2:11)				
Parents	Home	Tabernacle	Hanah's Promise	Hanah's Song
Elkanah and Hanah	Ramah (Beit-Rima)	Shiloh	Consecrated Samuel to the Lord	A Model for the Magnificat
THE WICKED SONS OF ELI (2:12-36)				
Defilement of the Offering (2:13-17)		Prostitution (2:22)		
THE CALL OF SAMUEL (3:1—4:1a)				
At Age 12	Four Calls		Message: End of House of Eli	
WAR WITH THE PHILISTINES (4:1b-22)				
Israel Attacks from Ebenezer	Philistines Camped in Aphek	Philistines Kill 4,000 Israelites	The Ark is Brought from Shiloh	
Philistines Kill 30,000 and Capture Ark	Eli Falls Dead upon Hearing the News	Phinehas' Wife gives Birth to Ichabod	Solomon favors Zadok over Abiathar (Ichabod's Descendant) (1 Kings 2:27)	
TERROR FOR THE PHILISTINES (5:1-12)				
Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza	Ark taken to Ashdod Dagon Falls and a Plague Begins	Ark taken to Gath, where the Plague Continues	Ark taken to Ekron, where the Plague Continues	
THE RETURN OF THE ARK (6:1—7:2)				
Ark returned with Guilt Offering of 5 Golden Tumors/Mice	Ark taken in a Cart to the field of Joshua at Beth-Shemesh	50,070 (70) slain for looking into the Ark	Ark taken to House of Abinadab in Kiriath-Jearim	
SAMUEL AS JUDGE (7:3-17)				
Samuel encourages Them to put away Baals/Ashtaroth	The Water Ceremony and Fasting at Mizpah		The Ebenezer Stone set up between Mizpah and Jeshanah	

8. THE LIFE OF SAMUEL

I SAMUEL 1:1—7:17

ASSIGNMENTS				
Birth and Consecration of Samuel 1:1—2:11	Eli and the Call of Samuel 2:12—4:1a	The Conflict with the Philistines 4:1b—5:12	The Return of the Ark 6:1—7:2	Samuel as a Judge 7:3-17

INTRODUCTION TO 1 SAMUEL

1075-1010 B.C.E.

The Name

1 and 2 Samuel were originally one volume in the Hebrew Bible. They became two when translated into the Greek which required more space because of the inclusion of vowels, which Hebrew omits. The two volumes were given the name Samuel because he dominates the early chapters, but 1 Samuel could have been named Saul and 2 Samuel David, for they are the primary subjects. Perhaps Samuel won out because he anointed both Saul and David, giving birth to the Monarchy. The idea of the Monarchy is the dominant theme. In the Septuagint (Greek Version) these books were named 1 and 2 Books of Kingdoms and in the Vulgate (Latin Version) they are called 1 and 2 Kings, with our present 1 and 2 Kings being called 3 and 4 Kings.

The Authorship

There are two main literary strands of thought interwoven in 1 Samuel. They are referred to as the Early Source and the Late Source. There is also a “three source” theory, but conservative scholars suggest one writer, who makes use of several sources. Abiathar (1 Samuel 22:20-23) and Ahimaaz (2 Samuel 18:19-32) have been suggested as possible authors of the early source, but the final author, or editor, remains unknown.

One of the main reasons for multiple sources has to do with the “anti” and “pro” monarchy views in 1 Samuel. The “anti” monarchy views can be seen in 1 Samuel 8; 10:17-27; 12 and 15; while the “pro” monarchy views can be seen in 1 Samuel 9; 10:1-16; and 13.

The Date

It is difficult to offer a date for the final writing of 1 and 2 Samuel. We know that they had to be written after the division of the Monarchy, for 1 Samuel 27:6 makes an allusion to a divided Kingdom. The Books may have been put in their final form as early as 900 B.C.E. or as late as the Exilic Period (587-539 B.C.E.).

The Early Source seems to come from the reign of Solomon, which can be dated 961 to 922 or 965 to 931 B.C.E.; and the Late Source, which can be found already in 1 Samuel 1-25, must be dated between 750 to 650 B.C.E. The final editing could have taken place much later.

The Purpose

The purpose of 1 Samuel is to describe the founding of the Monarchy and the anointing of its first two Kings, Saul and David. Samuel himself opposes the establishment of a Monarchy, but goes along with it, as does God. There is some uncertainty as to whether God ever intended a Monarchy or a Temple. He does not ask David to build him a house (temple); rather, he promises to build David a house (2 Samuel 7), lasting forever. Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise.

The Outline

- A. Samuel Stories 1-7
- B. Samuel And Saul 8-15
- C. Saul And David 16-31

1:1—12:25	13:1—15:35	16:1—31:13
Samuel	Samuel and Saul	Saul and David

A Chronology

- 1105 B.C.E. The Birth of Samuel (1 Samuel 1:20)
- 1080 B.C.E. The Birth of Saul
- 1050 B.C.E. Samuel anoints Saul as King (1 Samuel 10:1)
- 1040 B.C.E. The Birth of David
- 1025 B.C.E. Samuel anoints David to succeed Saul (1 Samuel 16:1-13)
- 1010 B.C.E. The Death of Saul (2 Samuel 1:1; 2:1, 4, 11)
- 1003 B.C.E. The Capture of Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5)

- 997 B.C.E. David's Wars (2 Samuel 8:1-14)
991 B.C.E. The Birth of Solomon (2 Samuel 12:24; 1 Kings 3:7; 11:42)
980 B.C.E. David's Census
970 B.C.E. The End of David's Reign (2 Samuel 5:4-5 & 1 Kings 2:10-11)

BIRTH AND CONSECRATION OF SAMUEL (1:1—2:11)

Elkanah

Elkanah, an Ephraimite, had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Apparently there was some jealousy between them. Peninnah had children, but Hannah was barren. Because she had no children, she did not receive as much from Elkanah in the meat of the sacrifice as did Peninnah. Each of the children received a share, but because Hannah had no children, her share was smaller. Barrenness was looked upon as disfavor from God, and so it was very disturbing for Hannah, who was Elkanah's favored wife. Polygamy was tolerated among the Israelites, but it was not the intention of God. It was felt necessary to help obtain a male heir and to provide for dependent women, who would otherwise become destitute.

Ramah (Beit-Rima)

Elkanah and his family lived in Ramathaim-zophim, which according to 1 Samuel 1:19 is called Ramah, and must be distinguished from the popular Ramah in Benjamin. This Ramah is in Ephraim, which is located twelve miles from Shiloh. Although Elkanah is called an Ephraimite, he is really a Levite, who was appointed to live in Ephraimite territory.

Shiloh (Seilun)

Shiloh was the place where Joshua set up the Tabernacle (Joshua 18:1). It is located halfway between Bethel and Shechem, about twenty miles northeast of Jerusalem.

Hannah (1:11)

On the occasion of an annual pilgrimage to Shiloh, probably the Feast of Tabernacles, Hannah prayed at the Temple (Tabernacle) for a son, whom she would consecrate to God. (See Numbers 6 for an explanation of the Nazirite Vow). She prayed to herself, although her lips moved. It was more common for one to pray aloud. Eli, the priest, saw her lips move, but did not hear her prayer. He assumed that she was drunk. Apparently, religious worship was at such a low ebb that it was common to see people worship who were drunk. She convinced him that she was not drunk, and so he promised that her petition would be fulfilled.

Samuel (Name of God)

Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son whom she called Samuel because he was the result of her prayer. That year she did not make the annual pilgrimage. She promised that she would take her son to Shiloh, where he would live for the rest of his life in the presence of the Lord. After he was weaned (2-3 years old), she consecrated him to the Lord at Shiloh. Part of this consecration included the sacrifice of a three-year -old bull, an ephah (bushel) of flour, and a skin of wine (1:24). Samuel became the last of the great Judges, and the first—after Moses—of the great Prophets. He was the man to usher in the Kings of Israel.

Hannah's Song (2:1-10)

This was probably written in the time of the Monarchy and later inserted here, but its fame lies in its use as a model for Mary's Song, *The Magnificat*, in Luke 1:46-55. The song praises God's power, against which no one can do anything. God will judge humankind by his own moral standards and give strength to the Davidic King.

THE WICKED SONS OF ELI (2:12-36)

The wickedness of Eli's sons is contrasted with the growing spirituality of Samuel. Two of their sins are as follows:

Defilement of the Offering (2:13-17)

The custom was that a priest could take as much of the meat offering as could be brought up with a three pronged fork thrust into the vessel where the meat was boiling. Eli's sons preferred to take the raw meat before it was boiled. This was considered as contempt for the offering of the Lord.

Prostitution (2:22)

Eli's sons also brought prostitution into the worship of God in the tradition of Canaanite religion. A man of God appeared to Eli and predicted that his wicked sons would die (2:34). This prediction was fulfilled.

THE CALL OF SAMUEL (3:1—4:1a)

When Samuel was twelve years old, the age of Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:40-52), God called him. God called a boy who did not recognize the voice of God at first. He thought it was Eli calling him, but Eli told him that it was God. The fourth time, Samuel listened to the voice. The call took place near the lamp, which was located close to the ark of God (3:3) and symbolized the presence and power of God.

The Lord told Samuel that Eli's house was doomed because Eli did not restrain his sons from wickedness. Eli encouraged Samuel to tell him about his call and what the Lord had

to say. Samuel hesitated, but Eli took the news graciously, recognizing where it came from. Samuel became known as a prophet from Dan to Beersheba, which means throughout the land. In Shiloh, where the ark was present, he could only function as a priest, but on a national scale, he could function as a prophet. He had become a national figure.

WAR WITH THE PHILISTINES (4:1b-22)

Who initiated the war between the Israelites and the Philistines? The mere presence of the Philistines seems to indicate that they were trying to spread their influence over central Canaan. The Philistines were quickly becoming a thorn in Israel's side, and so the Israelites initiated an attack on the Philistines from their camp in Ebenezer. The Philistines were encamped a few miles away in Aphek.

The Philistines quickly gained an upper hand and killed 4,000 Israelites. The Israelites sought help by having the Ark brought out from Shiloh. The inside of the Ark contained the symbols of their covenant with God, and the top of it was called the Mercy Seat, which symbolized the presence of God. The nation now wanted to use it as a talisman. The result was total disaster.

Eli's wicked sons, Hophni and Phinehas, accompanied the Ark. At first the Philistines were afraid, for they had heard of the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt. They overcame their fear and killed 30,000 more Israelites, captured the Ark, and killed Hophni and Phinehas.

When news of his sons' deaths and the capture of the Ark reached Eli, he fell over and died of a broken neck. The shock of the capture of the Ark seemed to affect him more than the news of his sons' deaths. Eli was 98 years old and had judged Israel for 40 years. Was he a Judge or just a Priest? The writer seems to assume that every prominent man in Israel was a Judge.

When the news reached Phinehas' wife, she bore a son and died in childbirth, but not before she named her son *Ichabod*, which means "no glory" or "alas for the glory." Although 1 Samuel does not say so at this point, Jeremiah 7:12-14 indicates that Shiloh was destroyed as well. This marks not only the demise of Shiloh as a holy place, but also the priesthood of Eli. It continues through Ichabod to Abiathar, who is banished by Solomon in favor of Zadok (1 Kings 2:27).

TERROR FOR THE PHILISTINES (5:1-12)

The Philistines occupied five cities: Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath and Gaza. They took the Ark first to Ashdod, which was somewhat central, and placed it in their Temple next to the statue of their god, Dagon. *Dagon* means "grain" although at one time it was thought to mean "fish." Dagon was, therefore, an agricultural deity. The next morning the statue of Dagon had fallen down before the Ark. The people simply put it back up, but the next morning it was down again, minus its head and hands. The Lord caused tumors to

appear on the Philistines, which are thought to be a swelling in the groin area caused by the bubonic plague. The Ark was finally moved, first to Gath and then to Ekron, in an attempt to bring an end to the terror. The plague, however, was spread with the movement of the Ark; and finally, the Philistines wanted to send the Ark back to where it came from, to the Israelites.

THE RETURN OF THE ARK (6:1—7:2)

After the Ark had been in the hands of the Philistines for seven months, they had had enough. They consulted their priests and diviners about how to return it, and they suggested returning it with a guilt offering of five golden tumors and five golden mice. The number is representative of their five cities. It was hoped that this would put an end to the plagues.

In order to find out whether the plague was an accident or really sent by the Israelite God, they placed the Ark on a new cart and yoked it to two cows that had never before been yoked. The cows were separated from their calves. The natural thing for these cows to do would have been to stay in Ekron, but they set out for Beth-shemesh, twelve miles away. This proved to the Philistines that God was in it because the cows did something unnatural. They left their calves and headed directly to the field of a man named Joshua of Beth-shemesh, where they stopped by a large rock. The wood of the cart was then used as fuel to offer the cows as a sacrifice on the rock.

Only the Levites were permitted to handle the Ark. The others might have looked upon the Ark, which violated the Law of Numbers 4:20, and so they were slain by the Lord. The Hebrew text says 50,070, but most of our current translations indicate that seventy was the number slain.

Messengers were sent to Kiriath-jearim to inform the people about the Ark's return, and the Ark was taken there to the house of Abinadab. Abinadab's son, Eleazar, was then placed in charge of the Ark. It was not possible to take the Ark to Shiloh; that city had already been destroyed. The Ark stayed in Kiriath-jearim until David took it into Jerusalem.

SAMUEL AS JUDGE (7:3-17)

Samuel led the people in a revival. He encouraged them to put away their foreign gods (Baals) and the Astartes (Ashtoreths), the Hebrew word for Astarte, which was the goddess of fertility and profane love. These were the deities of the Canaanites, but they were also worshipped by the Israelites from time to time.

The people did as they were told and then participated in a water ceremony and fasting at Mizpah (7:5-6). This ceremony symbolized their repentance, as did the baptism of John (Matthew 3:11). Samuel made an offering of a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering.

The Philistines attacked, but the Lord defeated them. For Israel it was only a mopping-up activity. Then Samuel set up a stone between Mizpah and Jeshanah and called it “Ebenezer” (stone of help). This was set up as a memorial. The cities from Ekron to Gath were taken back from the Philistines.

A general peace was finally established with the Amorites. The term *Amorites* must be understood as general reference to the Canaanites. With the coming of “peace” Samuel began to act as a Judge, the last Judge of Israel. He acted more as a *circuit judge* than a *military hero*, making rounds to Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah and Ramah (his home).

THE CALL

God does not only call mature people, who are ready to act immediately. He also calls children, who have many years of preparation ahead of them. Samuel was only twelve years old, when God called him. Not recognizing the call as coming from God, Samuel went immediately to Eli, the Priest, and asked him what he wanted. Eli told him to go back to sleep. After hearing the same voice three times and pestering Eli three times, Eli finally advised Samuel that he might be hearing the voice of God. He should lie down again, and next time, be ready to reply, “Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3:9) Samuel followed Eli’s instructions, and on this fourth occasion, he heard the voice of God.

The call was not an end in itself. It prepared Samuel for a lifelong task, which God was calling him to do. 1 Samuel 2:26 says: “Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and with the people.” A similar statement was made about Jesus in Luke 2:52, when he was about the same age: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.” Both of these statements were made prior to any call, and so we must conclude that their nurturing and growth prepared them to hear the call, although in the case of Jesus, it was more of a consciousness than a specific call. Following his baptism by John, Jesus assumes his ministry, conscious of what he must do.

Sometimes the call is not easily recognized as coming from God. Samuel thought Eli was calling out to him. The call was so clear that he thought he was hearing it with his ears. Would someone else nearby have heard it? Probably not! The call was meant specifically for Samuel. When Paul was called, however, there is some confusion about this. In Acts 9:7, the men who were traveling with him, heard the voice, but saw no one; but when the story is retold in Acts 22:9, they saw the light but did not hear the voice. Eli did not seem to hear the voice of God calling out to Samuel, but he was ready to accept the fact that God was indeed calling Samuel and that Samuel ought to put himself in the position of not only hearing it, but of making himself ready to respond to it as well. Sometimes we need others to help us prepare for the call.

Samuel was not being called into the priesthood, or even to become a prophet; rather, he was called to become a judge. According to 1 Samuel 7:15-17, he seems to function as a circuit judge. His ministry was to seek out and anoint the first two kings of Israel, Saul

and David; but he himself was not being called to any kind of ordained ministry. He is neither a priest nor a prophet, but the last of the judges. This means that the call is not only for religious vocations, and that all of us must be ready to take the advice of someone like Eli, who says, "...if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" (1 Samuel 3:9).

Most of us would probably take an audible call like this more seriously than a gradual consciousness of calling, but both kinds can be just as valid and ought to be taken with equal seriousness. In fact, those who hear an audible call may have more difficulty explaining it than those who have a gradual awareness of their call; and the latter will have an easier time explaining it to their family and friends. We are far more suspicious of the person who hears voices than we are of the person who gradually becomes aware of God's calling in his or her life. I am not saying that God does not call people in an audible voice, but that he does not need to, for there are other means by which we can hear him. They are just as valid.

I have never heard an audible voice from God, but I have experienced an awareness of his calling that was just as real as if he had spoken to me directly. He did not tell me specifically what to do, but he did make me aware of how he works in all of our lives. That is what he was doing with Samuel. He did not tell Samuel what to do, but rather, he said: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end." (1 Samuel 3:11-12) Everything God told Samuel could have been known by anyone who understood how God works in the world. Samuel was afraid to tell Eli what insight God had given him, but with Eli's encouragement, he finally told him, holding nothing back. Eli responded with great maturity: "It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him." (1 Samuel 3:18)

When we sense the call, we must respond, even if we are called into a path of suffering. That is what it means to say, "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening." One of the best examples for me was the decision made by John Bunyan to obey his call. Let me quote from his book, *Grace Abounding*:¹

I am going on, and venturing my eternal state with Christ, whether I have comfort here or no; if God doth not come in...I will leap off the ladder even blindfold into eternity, sink or swim, come heaven, come hell. Lord Jesus, if thou wilt catch me, do; if not, I will venture for thy name.

Is this not what Jesus did as he journeyed towards the cross to fulfill his calling?

¹John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1955), p. 146.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 1 Samuel



Samuel blesses Saul by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

9. Samuel and Saul

1 Samuel 8:1—15:35

9. SAMUEL AND SAUL (8:1 – 15:35)						
THE DEMAND FOR A KING (8:1-22)						
The Corruption of Joel and Abijah			Other People have Kings			
THREE STEPS TO OBTAINING A KING						
The Anointing of Saul (9:1 – 10:16)		The Election of Saul (10:17-27)		The Coronation of Saul (11:1-15)		
A Benjaminite In search of lost donkeys The meeting with Samuel The Three Signs Ramah		Elected by Lot Mizpah		Nahash and the Ammonites at- tack at Jabesh-gilead Saul recruits an army of 300,000 from Israel and 30,000 from Judah to gather at Bezek The Ammonites are defeated, and Saul is consecrated at Gilgal		
SAMUEL'S FAREWELL SPEECH (12:1-25) <i>God is displeased with the development of a Monarchy</i>						
WAR AGAINST THE PHILISTINES (13:1 – 14:52)						
Saul's Invitation of War (13:1-7)	Saul's Sin and Rejection (13:8-23)	Jonathan's Daring Deed (14:1-15)	Defeat of the Philistines (14:16-23)	Saul's Oath (14:24-35)	The Silent Oracle (14:36-46)	Summary (14:47-52)
WAR AGAINST THE AMALEKITES (15:1-35)						
The Command to Destroy the Amalekites (15:1-9)			Saul's Disobedience (15:10-35)			

9. SAMUEL AND SAUL

1 SAMUEL 8:1—15:35

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Demand and Anointing of a King 8:1—10:16	Saul's Election and Coronation 10:17—11:15	Samuel's Farewell Speech 12:1-25	War against the Philistines 13:1—14:52	War against the Amalekites 15:1-35

THE DEMAND FOR A KING (8:1-22)

Samuel's sons, Joel and Abijah, were Judges in Beersheba, but they did not follow the ways of Samuel and the Lord. They took bribes and perverted justice; and for this reason, the people demanded a King. Another stated reason was that they wanted to be like all the other nations. Samuel feared that this would drive a wedge between the people and their covenant with God. The Theological conclusion is that Israel's defeats have been caused by sin, not by political incompetence; and for Samuel, the solution is not the establishment of a monarchy, but obedience to God and his ways. Unfortunately Samuel could not communicate this to his own sons, and like Eli, he did not do anything about their incompetence; hence, all of this led to the people's cry for change. The monarchy was the result.

This request for a King, according to Samuel, was not pleasing to God. It would mean conscription for war, economic taxation, and the loss of personal liberty; but if the people demanded a King, they would get one. Deuteronomy 17:14-17 laid down some principles for the King to follow, but by the time of Solomon, these principles were completely forgotten.¹

THE CHOICE OF SAUL (9:1—10:16)

Saul enters the story as a tall and handsome Benjamite, who was in search of his father's (Kish) lost donkeys. As he entered Zuph (the region around Samuel's home town of Ramah), he was ready to give up the search for the donkeys; but his servant knew of Samuel and encouraged him to visit the seer. Saul apparently did not know about Samuel,

¹ The principles had to do with (1) too many horses, which indicated military power, (2) too many wives, which indicated political alliances, and (3) too much gold, with indicated taxation.

but agreed to visit him. In considering what might be given as an offering, they settled on 1/4 part of a Shekel of Silver (1/8th oz., worth about 10¢, but more at that time).

Samuel invited Saul to dine with him and about 30 other persons, after which, Saul was offered a place to sleep on the roof. This would have been a cooler place in the hot summer months. The next morning Samuel anointed him privately on the edge of the city with olive oil, and informed him of the following three signs that would confirm God's choice of him as Israel's King:

1. He would meet two men by Rachel's Tomb, and they would tell him that the donkeys had been found.
2. He would meet three men at the Oak of Tabor. These men would be carrying provisions for a sacrificial feast at Bethel. One would be carrying 3 kids; one, 3 loaves; and one, a skin of wine. Two loaves would be given to Saul.
3. In Gibeath-elohim, where a garrison of Philistines was located, he would meet a band of prophets with harps, tambourines, flutes, and lyres prophesying. He was to prophesy with them.

After encountering these three signs, he was to go down to Gilgal, where he was to wait for 7 days. Samuel was to go there to make some burnt offerings, a peace offering, and show Saul what to do.

Saul's uncle then questioned him about where he had been. Saul told him about the search for the donkeys, but did not say anything about the matter of being chosen as Israel's first King. This was yet to be made public.

SAUL'S ELECTION BY LOT (10:17-27)

In this section the people were called together at Mizpah, one of the places where Samuel acted as a judge (1 Samuel 7:16), to choose their King by lot, probably using the Urim and Thummim. The Tribe of Benjamin was chosen, from which came the Family of the Matrites and Saul. The family of the Matrites is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, and so nothing more is known about them.

At the time of Saul's election by lot, he could not be found. He hid himself among the baggage. When he was found, it was noted that he was a head taller than anyone else. After his election, Samuel explained the regulations for Kingship (Deuteronomy 17:14-20), and Saul returned home to Gibeah. The editor notes that there were some unfavorable opinions of Saul.

THE CORONATION OF SAUL (11:1-15)

The Ammonites, led by Nahash, made war on Jabesh-gilead. The citizens of Jabesh-gilead wanted to make a treaty with the Ammonites, but Nahash was unwilling. He

insulted them and gave them one week in which to seek help, after which he planned on gouging out everyone's right eye to disgrace all of Israel. Messengers went out all over Israel seeking someone to rescue them.

Saul heard the news as he was coming home from a field behind (with) his oxen. He took a yoke (pair) of oxen and cut them into pieces and sent them throughout Israel by the hand of messengers threatening and recruiting 300,000 men from Israel and 30,000 men from Judah. They gathered together at Bezek in three companies; and the next day, they attacked and defeated the Ammonites.

Saul proved that he was an able leader, and Samuel led the people in making Saul their King in a public ceremony at Gilgal. This concluded the process begun at Ramah, where Samuel anointed Saul (1 Samuel 10:1). The people had elected him in Mizpah (1 Samuel 10:17-27). Now they consecrated him, inaugurating his reign.

Saul was made King because he could lead them against their common enemies. The Ammonites, whom they had just defeated, were not as much of a threat as were the Philistines, but Saul's victory over them stirred up a new confidence. Saul was also able to unite the people under one leader, himself.

SAMUEL'S FAREWELL SPEECH (12:1-25)

While still at Gilgal, Samuel reminded the people that the monarchy was not God's idea, but as long as they desired it, they could have it. As long as they obeyed God, all would go well; but if they did not obey Him, then they and their monarchy would be swept away. To show God's displeasure over the monarchy, Samuel called for thunder and rain in the midst of the wheat harvest. They did not need this at harvest time, and it was to be a sign of God's displeasure over the monarchy.

WAR AGAINST THE PHILISTINES (13:1—14:52)

Saul's Initiation of War (13:1-7)

There is a great deal of confusion in Chapters 13 and 14, and the confusion begins with the first verse. Saul's age and the length of his reign are given, but not clearly. The Septuagint (Greek Version of the OT) says that Saul was 30 years old, but most scholars estimate his age at 40 since he had a son of military age. His reign is estimated at either 12 or 22 years, but it is not clear in the text. The NIV Bible suggests 42 years, and Acts 13:21 says 40.

Saul chose 3,000 men, 2,000 who were with Saul in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and 1,000 who were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. It was Jonathan, with his 1,000 men, who attacked and defeated the garrison of Philistines at Geba. When the Philistines heard of the defeat, they volunteered to fight. They mustered 30,000 (3,000) chariots, 6,000 horsemen and troops, and encamped in Michmash. The Israelites faced a very difficult situation there and were forced to hide, or go to Saul, who had gone to

Gilgal to call Israel into a war with the Philistines. There is some confusion over the numbers and what they might mean. The term “thousand” could also refer to a “company” or “battalion.” The presence of chariots alone would cause the Israelites to tremble.

Saul’s Sin and Rejection (13:8-23)

Saul waited for seven days for Samuel, but Samuel did not come. Saul took it upon himself to make a burnt offering. When Samuel did arrive, he informed Saul of his sin and told him that his dynasty was over. He would finish out his own reign, but none of his sons would succeed him. The sin seems to be Saul’s exercising of priestly duties. The writer assumes that a King has no right to make the burnt offering, but David (2 Samuel 6:12-19; 24:25) and Solomon both exercised priestly duties (1 Kings 3:15). It is easy to understand why Saul sought God’s blessing, but Samuel interprets it as disobedience.

When Samuel left Gilgal for Gibeah, only 600 men remained with Saul and Jonathan in Geba of Benjamin. Philistine raiders attacked them from Michmash in three companies. One company moved toward Ophrah, one toward Beth-horon, and one toward the border that looked down on the Valley of Zeboim. The Israelites were at a disadvantage in that they did not possess any swords or spears. If they wanted their plowshare, mattock, axe, or sickle sharpened, they had to pay the Philistines to have them sharpened. Only Saul and Jonathan had swords and spears.

Jonathan’s Daring Deed (14:1-15)

Jonathan and his armor-bearer went to the Philistine garrison at Michmash. Saul did not know about this and was camped with his 600 men at Gibeah or (Geba). Ahijah was with them and was wearing the ephod, which contained the Urim and Thummim. When Jonathan and his armor-bearer arrived, the Philistines fell before them; and the armor-bearer began by killing 20 of them. This caused panic among the Philistines and was interpreted as panic sent by God.

Defeat of the Philistines (14:16-23)

The watchmen of Saul looked on and saw the confusion developing among the Philistines. Saul asked for a count among his own men to find out who was missing. He discovered that only two were missing, Jonathan and his armor-bearer. Ahijah was called to bring the Ark, which would have been located at Kiriath-Jearim (7:2). The Septuagint says “ephod” (Urim and Thummim). Was the ark or the ephod brought to Saul? Either one is possible, but since lots are cast, the ephod is the more likely choice. The confusion of the Philistines, however, interrupts the request, and so Saul orders an attack. His 600 men, with the help of some other Hebrews among the Philistines, brought victory.

Saul's Oath (14:24-35)

In order to keep the momentum going, Saul swore an oath that no one was to eat. He believed that such a fast would be pleasing to God and that it would be helpful to his cause. Jonathan did not know about the oath, and ate some wild honey. His eyes became bright. The whole thing proved to be a tactical error. The troops found it difficult to pursue their military advantage without sufficient energy. When the oath was over, they continued the battle against the Philistines from Michmash to Aijalon. The people ate sheep, oxen, and calves with blood. This was a violation of the law (Leviticus 17:10; 19:26; Deuteronomy 12:16). Saul tried to make up for this violation by building his first altar to the Lord out of a stone.

The Silent Oracle (14:36-46)

Saul decided to strike the Philistines by night, but first he wanted to consult the priest with the ephod. The priest was unable to give an answer. The oracle was silent. This indicates to us that the urim and thummim had in addition to a positive and negative answer, a neutral one. Saul got no answer that day (14:37)

Saul assumed that something was wrong, that someone had sinned. By use of the Urim and Thummim the onus fell on Jonathan, who admitted that he had eaten some honey. The consequence would have been death, but the people saw Jonathan as a hero and did not want him to die. They ransomed Jonathan, which means that an animal was killed in his place.

Summary (14:47-52)

This last paragraph has to do with Saul's family and his victories over the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, the Kings of Zobah, the Philistines, and the Amalekites. The Philistines were to be feared the most, and that is why most of the narrative is taken up with them.

One very interesting name appears among Saul's family, and that name is Ishvi. Later on he is referred to as Ishbosheth, which means "man of shame." This would have a derogatory connotation. When Saul dies, Ishvi is in line for the throne; but it must be remembered that Saul's sin has brought about divine judgment. Ishvi will not inherit the throne.

WAR AGAINST THE AMALEKITES (15:1-35)

The Command to Destroy (15:1-9)

The setting was Gilgal. In fulfillment of the curse against the Amalekites (Deuteronomy 25:17-19), the Lord commands Saul to destroy them. The Amalekites were descendants of Esau (Genesis 36:12) and had always given the Israelites trouble (Exodus 17:8-16). Saul is to kill everyone; men, women, children, and even their animals. Destruction is to

be complete and there are to be no survivors. This is holy war, and its rules are to be obeyed.

Saul and his men (200,000 Israelites and 10,000 men from Judah) attacked the Amalekites, but they did not destroy everyone. Agag, the King of the Amalekites was captured alive, and the Kenites were set free because they served as guides to the Israelites in the desert (Numbers 10:29-33). The Kenites, partly related to the Midianites and the Amalekites, was the tribe from which Moses' father-in-law came. The best animals were not killed, but saved for a later sacrifice. Both the sparing of Agag and the saving of the animals violated the rules of holy war.

Saul's Disobedience (15:10-35)

The Lord confesses to Samuel that he was sorry that he ever made Saul King. Samuel then acts as a prophet and informs Saul of his disobedience and of God's complete rejection of him. Even though Saul offered sacrifices to the Lord, this was inappropriate. Sacrificial animals were to be the best you had, clean and unblemished; and they were never to come from the contamination of a pagan enemy. Saul demonstrated both his incompetence in understanding the Law and his disobedience of God. The Lord wanted obedience, not sacrifices (15:22). This became a common theme among the later prophets.

As Samuel leaves Saul, Saul grabs hold of the hem of his robe and it tears. Samuel interprets this as a sign of the Lord's rejection of Saul. When Agag is taken before Samuel, Samuel hacks him up with a sword, after which he returns to Ramah. Saul returns to Gibeah, and the two never meet again. The Lord finally repents that he ever made Saul a King.

In spite of the difficulty we might have with all that happens in this chapter, the message is crystal clear. Obedience brings divine blessing, and disobedience brings divine judgment. Saul's reign is not over yet, but the blessing of God on it is.

OBEDIENCE IS BETTER THAN LIP SERVICE

The success of any leader, be it religious or political, is dependent upon obedience to God and not upon competence. While competence may seem to be the more important factor in the short run, it does not stand up in the long run. Apparent success in this world cannot be compared to real success in the light of eternity. One can seem like an utter failure on earth and still be a success in heaven, where it counts. The best example of this is the death of Jesus on the cross, which seemed like a failure; but when we look back on it, his obedience assured him of success.

This kind of insight can be detected early in the Biblical Story. When Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land, he just assumed that they would obey the Covenant. Their success in entering the Promised Land had to do with God's Promise, not with their military power or political ability; and the only way they could shape a decent nation was

to choose to serve and obey the Lord, which at the same time meant that they refuse to serve and obey the idols in their world. The same applies to us today.

We may sense that political leaders are needed to prevent chaos and immorality in our society, but we must choose our leaders carefully. It is not enough to choose a leader who gives lip service to the Lord. Almost any leader will do that if it is expedient to get elected. Lip service may indeed help someone gain the seat of power, but it will never help anyone to succeed. The lesson of Samuel is that access to power is not even needed for people who obey the Lord; and if there is no obedience, all the power in the world will not keep a political leader, or a nation, from falling. Saul gave lip service to the Lord, and he was a powerful leader; but he was not obedient, and that made him unsuccessful in the eyes of the Lord. He continued to lead the nation for some time, but it mattered little, for God was preparing someone else to take his place.

Saul tried to convince Samuel that he had good intentions, and that he disobeyed because he wanted to provide the Lord with a better offering. Samuel understood that obedience was more important to God than offerings and sacrifices, and so he said in 1 Samuel 15:22-23:

Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is no less a sin than divination, and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.

God will reject every disobedient King, or Leader. He may tolerate such persons, and even at times use them for his own purpose, but they will still be rejected. That is why it was so important that Jesus resist the temptation to establish his Kingdom with the world's methods. Had he yielded to Satan in the Wilderness, he would not, and could not, be God's Messiah. God does not need the world's methods to establish his Kingdom.

Kings, and nations, rise because they relate to the Will of God, and they fall because they lose sight of the Will of God. Obedience to that Will is more important than lip service to the Lord; and that is why some leaders and nations may rise, who give no lip service to the Lord at all. Obviously, military power and political competence may have their effect, but if they are not connected to the Will of God, they will not last very long. Hitler's thousand year "Reich" is one twentieth century example, but it is not the only one. The only thousand-year reign that will ever succeed is the one mentioned in the Book of Revelation, and that will take place at the end of history, and it is not clear whether that reign is earthly or heavenly. It may well be that the Millennium mentioned in Revelation 20:1-6 should only be interpreted symbolically, along the same lines as we understand the seven days of creation. What is clear is that the new creation will succeed permanently.

And so the decision is our own. Are we going to give lip service to the Lord and think that is what he wants? Or, are we going to obey him, no matter what price we might have to pay in this world. Upon declaring himself as the Messiah (anointed King) to his

disciples (Mark 8:27—9:1), Jesus told them that it would mean death upon a cross. That is not the kind of Messiah (Anointed King) they expected, nor wanted; but it was the kind that God gave to them, and to us. We, like them, will have to decide how to respond.

Although Robert Schuller has been accused of preaching a Gospel without any cross, he does understand this principle, and has written:¹

There is no success without a cross. There is no gain without pain.

Over the years I've taught one of my favorite slogans to more than a million people, "I'd rather attempt to do something great and fail, than attempt to do nothing and succeed."

No one wants to fail, but no one should desire success so much that God's Will is compromised. The Kingdom of God can only be built on a solid rock, and the same is true of every earthly Kingdom—or life—as well (Matthew 7:24-27).

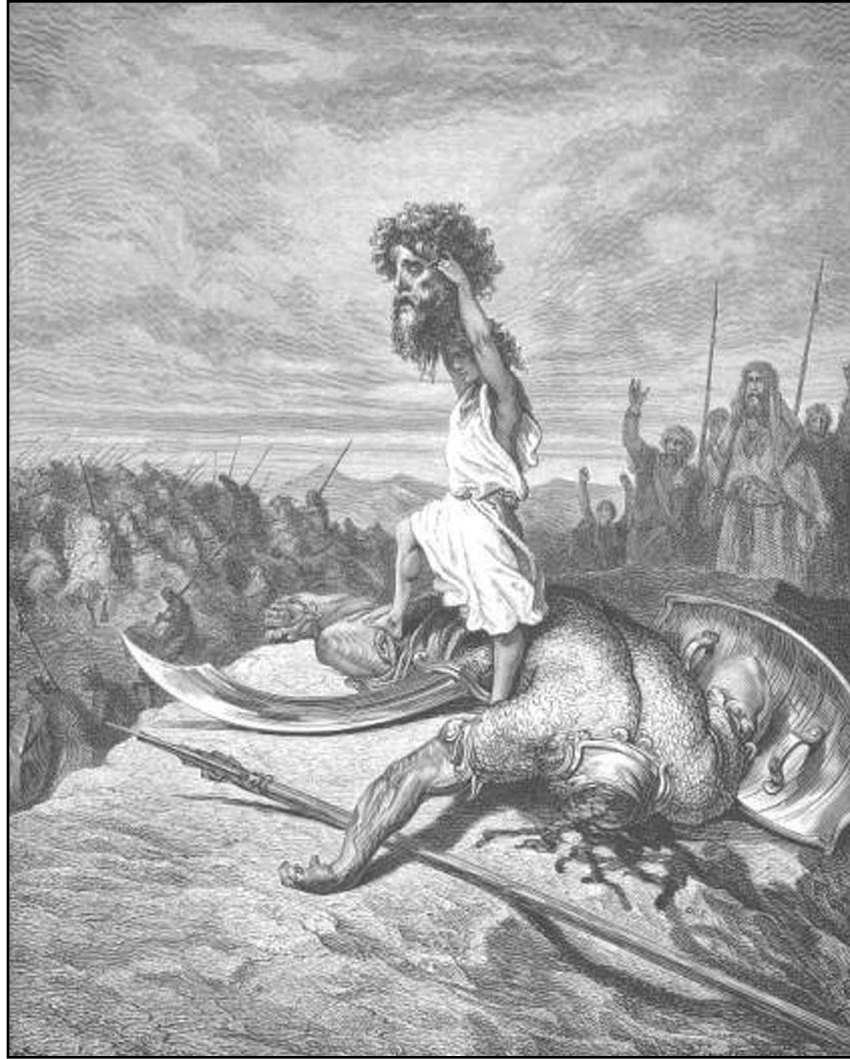
We must all ask what it means to be successful in an institution such as the Church, which is dedicated to serving the Crucified Messiah (murdered King). Nations and individuals must also ask the same question. I know what my answer is. It is the same as that given by E. Stanley Jones, when he said: "...I would rather fail with Jesus than succeed with anybody else, for to be with Jesus is the Victory."²

¹Robert Schuller, *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation* (Waco: Word Books, 1982), pp. 76-77.

²E. Stanley Jones, *The Divine Yes* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), p. 35.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 1 Samuel



David and Goliath by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

10. Saul and David I 1 Samuel 16:1—23:29

10. SAUL AND DAVID I (16:1—23:29)			
THE ANOINTING OF DAVID (16:1-23)			
DAVID AND GOLIATH (17:1-58)			
Eliab discourages David		Saul discourages David	
SAUL'S JEALOUSY WITH DAVID (18:1-30)			
Jonathan is David's Friend	Saul gives Michal rather than Merab to be David's Wife	The Wedding Present was 100 Philistine Foreskins (David gave 200)	
THE ATTEMPTS ON DAVID'S LIFE (19:1-24)			
Jonathan's Intercession (19:1-7)	The First Attempt (19:8-10)	The Second Attempt (19:11-17)	The Third Attempt (19:18-24)
THE CONFIRMATION OF SAUL'S INTENT (20:1-42)			
If the Arrow is on the Side: It is Safe!		If the Arrow is Beyond You: Run!	
DAVID FLEES FROM SAUL (21:1-15)			
The Flight to Nob (21:1-9)		The Flight to Gath (21:10-15)	
THE SLAUGHTER OF THE PRIESTS (22:1-23)			
THE HUNT IS ON (23:1-29)			
At Keilah (23:1-14)		In the Wilderness of Ziph (23:15-29)	

10. SAUL AND DAVID I

1 SAMUEL 16:1—23:29

ASSIGNMENTS			
The Rise of David 16:1—17:58	The Conflict between David and Saul 18:1—19:24	The Need for David to Flee 20:1—21:15	The Slaughter of the Priests and the Hunt 22:1—23:29

THE ANOINTING OF DAVID (16:1-23)

Samuel grieved over the Lord's rejection of Saul, but finally obeyed the Lord's command to seek out Jesse and his sons in Bethlehem. Jesse is the short form of "man of the LORD." Samuel went there to sacrifice and invite Jesse to the sacrifice. While there he asked to see each of Jesse's eight sons, and finally chose David, the youngest.

David is described as a shepherd who has beautiful eyes and is of ruddy complexion. Because of the use of the word ruddy, some scholars have concluded that David's hair was red. The Lord, not the people, chose David; and Samuel anointed him. He was not chosen for his outward appearance, but for what resided in his heart (16:7).

God filled David's heart with his own Spirit; and at the same time, took his Spirit away from Saul. Samuel's anointing of him was only symbolic; and after it was accomplished, Samuel returned home to Ramah. Saul was left with an evil spirit, which tormented him. Music therapy was sought and David was brought in with his lyre (harp) to play for Saul. Saul loved him greatly, and since the music worked, he made David his armor-bearer as well. Did David have military experience at this time, or was he given an advancement following his victory over Goliath? Nothing is known for sure, but David's skills in music and the military led the nation into spiritual and political vigor.

DAVID AND GOLIATH (17:1-58)

The Philistines gathered in Ephes-dammim to again challenge the Israelites who had gathered with Saul in the Valley of Elah. Each army took its position on a mountain overlooking the valley. Goliath of Gath, a giant 10 feet tall wearing more than 150 pounds of armor, challenged any Israelites to take him on in battle. The losers would become servants of the winners. Saul responds with a challenge, offering his daughter and exemption from taxes to anyone who can bring down Goliath.

Meanwhile, David, while delivering some provisions, heard Goliath step out a second time to deliver his challenge. Three of David's older brothers were present, and Eliab, the eldest, tried to prevent David from taking up the challenge. Saul also stepped in to discourage David from doing battle with Goliath, but David assures them both that he has experience as a shepherd in taking on lions and bears. Taking on Goliath is the same kind of challenge. Saul gives him some armor, but David, not being used to armor, proceeds with only a staff, five smooth stones and a sling. He finished off Goliath with one stone and cut off his head with Goliath's own sword. The Israelites chase the fleeing Philistines as far as Gath, and then David takes Goliath's head into Jerusalem. Saul asked his commander, Abner, who that young fellow's father was, but Abner was not able to answer him. Abner then brought David before Saul to answer for himself and David told him that his father was Jesse.

This story contains at least two conflicts in it. First, it conflicts with 2 Samuel 21:19 which says that Goliath was killed by Elhanan, one of David's warriors. It may be that the name Goliath was erroneously attached to David's victim, or else Elhanan's exploits later became associated with the famous hero. In 1 Chronicles 20:5 we read that Elhanan killed Lahmi, who was Goliath's brother. David. The second conflict has to do with David's experience as a warrior. In chapter sixteen he was given the task as "armor-bearer" by Saul, but in this story Saul hardly knows him. This is not a serious conflict, and may only mean that the chronology is confused.

SAUL'S JEALOUSY OF DAVID (18:1-30)

Saul became jealous of David's growing friendship with his son, Jonathan, and over David's military successes (18:7). Saul plotted for a way to kill David by giving him all the dangerous military assignments, but David always succeeded. Saul broke his promise to give his eldest daughter to the man who could kill the Philistine Giant, and so his Daughter, Merab, is given to someone else. His other daughter, Michal, is offered if David can pay the marriage present of 100 Philistine foreskins. David and his men killed 100 Philistines¹ and brought their foreskins to Saul in payment for his daughter, Michal. David's success, however, put him in conflict with Saul.

David's friendship with Jonathan, his marriage to Michal, and his military success all authenticate his destiny to be King. The very man David displaces in succession to the throne is his best friend. While Jonathan is not upset by David's rising popularity, Saul is; and so he reacts violently, attempting to eliminate him.

¹ Some sources say 200 foreskins were delivered to Saul.

THE ATTEMPTS ON DAVID'S LIFE (19:1-24)

Jonathan's Intercession (19:1-7)

Saul tried to urge Jonathan and his servants to kill David, but Jonathan instead interceded for David and reminded Saul of all that David had done. Saul agreed temporarily that David should not be killed.

The First Attempt (19:8-10)

After David fought the Philistines, an evil spirit entered into Saul. While David played the lyre to help Saul's depression, Saul attempted to kill David by pinning him to the wall with a spear. He missed and David escaped.

The Second Attempt (19:11-17)

This time Saul sent some messengers to David's house to kill him. David's wife, Michal, urged David to flee through a window. Michal then laid an image (teraphim) on his bed and put a pillow of goat's hair at its head and covered it with clothes. Saul demanded that David be brought before him, and when he discovered the trick, he accused his daughter of deceiving him.

There is some disagreement over whether Michal laid an "image" or a "pillow" in his bed. The Hebrew uses "pillow" and the Greek Septuagint replaces it with "image." The "image" is a "teraphim," which would have been an idol or family god. Even though this would have been a violation of the Mosaic Law, it was not uncommon for Israelites to possess such objects.

The Third Attempt (19:18-24)

David fled to Samuel in Ramah and told him all that Saul was trying to do to him. He and Samuel went to Naioth. When Saul discovered where they were, he sent messengers to kill David. When these messengers saw the company of prophets and Samuel standing over them prophesying, the Spirit of God caused them to prophesy as well. Saul sent two more groups of messengers, but the same thing happened. Finally, he himself, went; and he, too, began to prophesy. All of this proves that God, not Saul, is in control of history.

THE CONFIRMATION OF SAUL'S INTENT (20:1-42)

It is strange in this chapter that Jonathan seemed surprised by the threats on David's life. He has to be convinced that Saul really does intend to kill David, and so David and Jonathan devise a plan to confirm Saul's intent. David plans to hide from the King for three days, and Jonathan is to give an excuse on the new moon (a monthly feast day) that he has gone to Bethlehem to attend a yearly sacrifice for his family. If Saul says "Good," then everything is okay and he does not intend to kill David; but if Saul is angry, then it is a sign of his desire to harm David. Jonathan promises to tell David of Saul's response,

whatever it may be. They agree to meet near a stone heap (Ezel). Jonathan will shoot three arrows to the right of it as though he shot at a mark. Jonathan will then send a lad to find them. If he says to the youth, “The arrows are on this side of you,” take them and come, for it is safe; but if he says, “The arrows are beyond you,” then go, for it is not safe. Jonathan assures David that regardless of the results, the Lord will always be within their relationship.

On the first night of David’s absence, Saul said nothing. On the second night, he inquired and became angry at David and Jonathan. Saul swore that Jonathan’s kingdom would never be established as long as David lived. He then ordered Jonathan to bring David in that he might be killed. Jonathan was now aware of his father’s intentions and so he went to the stone heap (Ezel) and shot the arrows toward David, warning him that he would have to flee. After sending the youth home with his equipment, he secretly met with David and they kissed one another and wept, and departed in peace.

DAVID FLEES FROM SAUL (21:1-15)

The Flight to Nob (21:1-9)

Nob had become Israel’s central shrine, since the destruction of Shiloh. It was located near Jerusalem on Mount Scopus, which is between Anathotah and Jerusalem. The priest there was Ahimelech.

David went to Nob with some friends, and because they were hungry, he asked Ahimelech for some bread. Each Sabbath twelve fresh loaves of bread replaced twelve stale loaves, which only the priests were allowed to eat. Only these “holy” loaves were available. Ahimelech was willing to give them to David, but he wanted to know whether he and his companions were pure; that is, whether they had had sexual relations lately. David assured him that they had not had sexual relations, and so the bread was given to them.

Doeg (an Edomite), who was the chief of Saul’s herdsmen, was present. He had been detained in Nob to perform some religious ceremony. He later betrayed David (22:9).

Since David had no weapons, he asked Ahimelech for a sword. The only sword that was available was the one that belonged to Goliath. David gladly took it, for there was none other like it. The last we heard of the sword it was hidden in David’s tent (17:54), and so we have no idea how or when it was moved to the Sanctuary at Nob.

The Flight to Gath (21:10-15)

This story does not seem to fit here. It might be another version of Chapter 27. Its purpose is to show that David and Achish, the King of Gath, had nothing to do with one another. When David arrived, he pretended to be mad by making marks on the doors of the gate and by letting spittle run down his beard.

Why did he even go there? Was it to offer himself as a soldier or simply to escape from Saul? No answer is given, and the events that took place here do not seem to make sense.

THE SLAUGHTER OF THE PRIESTS (22:1-23)

David went into hiding in the cave of Adullam, about 10 miles southwest of Bethlehem. His relatives joined him, and so did a number of oppressed persons. There was about 400 men altogether. David went to Mizpeh of Moab (an unknown place) and asked the King of Moab to care for his mother and father. This shows his roots through Ruth, the Moabite woman. The Prophet, Gad, instructed David to go to the Land of Judah, and so they went to Hereth, another unknown place.

Doeg betrayed David and Ahimelech by telling Saul how Ahimelech had given David bread and a sword. Saul ordered his servants to kill Ahimelech and the other priests, but they all refused. Doeg then killed 85 persons who wore the linen ephod. The killing involved more than the priests; and only Abiathar, Ahimelech's son, escaped to join David. He stayed with David upon David's own request. Saul now sought both of them.

THE HUNT IS ON (23:1-29)

At Keilah (23:1-14)

Keilah, a few miles south of Adullam, belonged neither to Judah nor the Philistines. When David heard the Philistines were robbing the threshing floors of the people, he and his men went in to liberate Keilah. Before doing this, David first inquired from the Lord whether or not this was the thing to do. The answer was affirmative. He used the Ephod, which contained the sacred lots (Urim and Thummim), which had been brought to him by Abiathar, the one priest who had escaped the slaughter in Nob.

When Saul heard what was happening, he and his armies sought David at Keilah, a city of gates and bars. He was convinced that David did not stand a chance against him. David sought the Lord's will from the Ephod, and discovered that if he stayed, Saul would come and that David, himself, would be turned over to him. Therefore, he and his 600 men left. When Saul heard that they had escaped, he gave up the expedition. David went to the Wilderness of Ziph, which is located about five miles southeast of Hebron.

In the Wilderness of Ziph (23:15-29)

Hearing of David's whereabouts, Jonathan went to visit him at Horesh in the Wilderness of Ziph (about 2 miles south of Ziph), and tried to demonstrate his support. Jonathan acknowledged that David would become King and was willing to take second place to him. After recognizing David's superior position, Jonathan went home. The Ziphites went to Saul at Gibeah and offered to help. David then moved along with his men to Maon, which is located 3 miles south of Horesh. Saul began to attack them, only to be called back because of a Philistine raid against him. He, thus, had to give up the chase just as he

was about to capture David. David and his men escaped to the strongholds of Engedi, a wild mountain region overlooking the Dead Sea.

THE LORD LOOKS ON THE HEART

When Saul was selected to be King, the Scripture tells us that he was a head taller than anyone else (1 Samuel 9:2), and one gets the idea that Saul was selected because of his physical strength. David was not selected on the same basis. In 1 Samuel 16:7 Samuel is warned: “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

David was chosen because he would be obedient, and Saul was rejected for his disobedience. The first real test of this was the encounter with the Philistines and the challenge of Goliath. David was no match for Goliath, but he was willing to take him on in the name of the Lord; hence he said to Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:45-47:

You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This very day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's and he will give you into our hand.

Even though David was not as strong or as tall as Goliath, he was more agile and skillful. He knew how to use a slingshot, and through his skill, he brought down the giant. God still works through the talents and abilities of the people he calls into service. We are not to go into war without some kind of skill and preparation. That would be foolhardy.

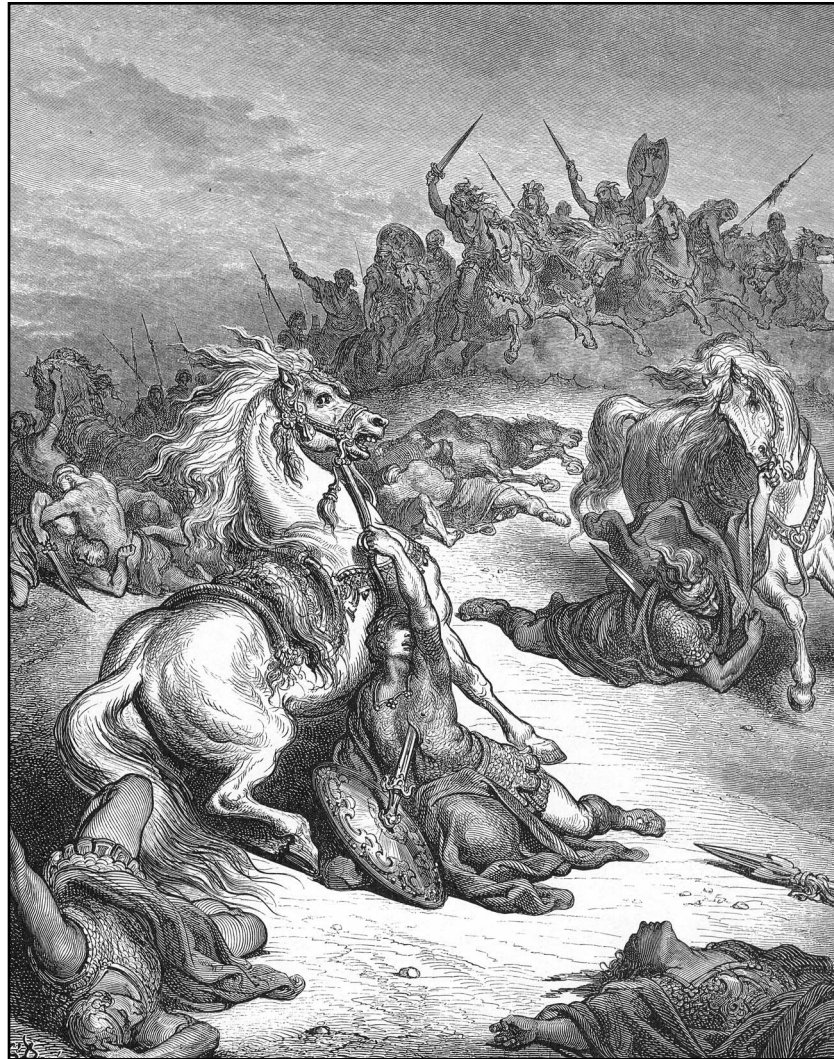
In dealing with the requirements of discipleship, Jesus warned that disciples ought to count the cost and compared it to a king going into warfare against another king. He said in Luke 14:31-32:

...what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace.

This is not a command to maintain an army, but a call to the highest level of commitment. In conclusion, Jesus says in Luke 14:33, “So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.” God does not want or need brute strength, but he does require obedience, commitment, and the exercising of our best skills.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 1 Samuel



Death of Saul by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

11. Saul and David II

1 Samuel 24:1—31:13

11. SAUL AND DAVID II							
DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE (24:1-22)							
The Experience in the Cave				The Corner of his Coat			
DAVID TAKES TWO WIVES (25:1-43)							
The Death of Samuel (25:1a)		Abigail (Nabal) (25:1b-42)			Anino-am (25:43)		
DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE AGAIN (26:1-25)							
Saul surrounds himself at Gibeah with Abner and 3,000 men				David and Abishai snuck into their Camp and took Saul's Spear and Water Jar			
DAVID AMONG THE PHILISTINES (27:1 – 28:2)							
David escapes with 600 men to Achish, King of Gath		David requests the town of Ziklag, (1 Year and 4 Months)		David raids the Geshurites, Girzites, and Amalekites		David becomes Achish's personal bodyguard for life	
SAUL CONSULTS A MEDIUM (28:3-25)							
The Death of Samuel		Philistines (Shunem) Israelites (Gilboa)		Saul seeks the Medium of Endor		Saul will lose his Kingdom	
DAVID REJECTED BY THE PHILISTINES (29:1-11)							
WAR AGAINST THE AMALEKITES (30:1-31)							
Return to Ziklag which is Destroyed	Abigail and Ahinoam Taken	Abiathar consults the Ephod	600 Men go to Apeh (3 Days)	200 Men left at Brook Besor	Egyptian Slave leads Them	400 Amalekites escape on Camels	The Spoil and David's Wives
THE DEATH OF SAUL AND HIS SONS (31:1-13)							
At Mount Gilboa		Jonathan, Abindadab, Malchishua		Saul commits Suicide		The Bodies are burned (anointed)?	

11. SAUL AND DAVID II

1 SAMUEL 24:1—31:13

ASSIGNMENTS				
David spares Saul's Life 24:1-22 26:1-25	David takes Two Wives 25:1-43	David and the Philistines 27:1—29:11	War Against the Amalekites (30:1-31	The Death of Saul and Three Sons 31:1-13

DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE (24:1-22)

Saul returned to the Wilderness of Engedi, where David and his men were encamped. With the help of 3,000 men, he intended to capture and kill David. While searching for him, he entered a cave to “relieve himself,”¹ which just so happened to be the cave in which David and his men were living. This presented David with an excellent opportunity to kill Saul; but because he respected the office of the King, he refused to kill him and instead, simply cut off the corner of his coat. This was tantamount to touching him. It was proof that David could have killed Saul, but David did not want to undermine the legitimacy of his own reign by overthrowing Saul's dynasty. *That* he was leaving to God. As Saul was leaving, David called out to him to let him know that he had respected the “Lord's Anointed” and spared his life. The proof existed in David's possession of a piece of Saul's clothing. With the awareness of what had happened, Saul wept and recognized David as a future King. His only request was that he and his descendants be remembered in the future establishment of David's Kingdom. This was probably not a genuine repentance.

DAVID TAKES TWO WIVES (25:1-43)

The Death of Samuel (25:1a)

Samuel died. This Judge and Prophet anointed Israel's greatest King, but he does not live to see him reign. Not until Elijah will there be another religious personality equal to Samuel.

¹ “To relieve himself” literally means “to cover his feet.” It's a euphemism for squatting to defecate.

David and Abigail (25:1b-42)

David was living in the Wilderness of Paran. The Septuagint says “Wilderness of Maon” and is probably right. At Carmel, between Ziph and Maon, there was a wealthy man by the name of Nabal. He had 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats. While he was mean and bad-tempered, he had an intelligent and beautiful wife named Abigail. Nabal was a Calebite.

The finishing of the sheep shearing was an occasion for a Feast Day. On that day, David sent 10 of his men down to receive payment for having protected Nabal’s property. Nabal refused. David then took 400 men to help him change his mind, but Abigail met him on the way with donkeys loaded with 200 loaves, 2 skins of wine, 5 sheep, 5 measures of parched grain, 100 clusters of raisins, and 200 cakes of figs. David accepted her gift.

Abigail returned home to find her husband having a feast. He was too drunk to be told what she had done, and so she waited until morning. When she told him, he had a double stroke, 10 days apart, after which he died. David then married Abigail of Carmel. This marriage brought to David considerable wealth and land, extending his influence into the southern territory of Judah.

David and Ahino-am (25:43)

David also married Ahino-am of Jezreel. Saul had given his first wife to Palti, and so David took these two wives for political reasons, which up to this point, are unclear. The best that can be said is that he was trying to strengthen his position in southern Judah.

DAVID SPARES SAUL’S LIFE AGAIN (26:1-25)

The Ziphites, who sided with Saul, went to him at Gibeah and told him where he could find David. Saul took 3,000 men into the Wilderness of Ziph in search of David. While they were sleeping, with Abner, the commander, and the whole army around Saul, David and Abishai went into the camp. Abishai wanted to kill Saul, but David would not permit it. Instead they took the spear and water jar out of the camp. They went on top of a mountain and, after calling them, showed them the spear and jar of water. Saul recognized that his life had been spared, and Saul and David parted, never to see one another again.

DAVID AMONG THE PHILISTINES (27:1—28:2)

David was fearful that Saul might catch him, and so he escaped to Achish, the Philistine King of Gath with 600 men. When Saul heard that he was with the Philistines, he stopped searching for him. David requested a country town and was given Ziklag, where he dwelt with the Philistines for a year and four months. He gained Achish’s confidence by informing him of his raids in the Negeb against Judah, the Jerahmeelites, and the Kenites; but in reality, he was making raids against the Geshurites, Girzites, and Amalekites. Since he left no survivors, there was no one to tell Achish anything different. Achish was so impressed by David’s loyalty that he made him his personal bodyguard for life. What

looked like benefit to Achish turned out to be the strengthening of David's own position in the south of Judah, fairly near to the Philistine territories. Another version of this story exists in 1 Samuel 21:10-15, which seems to be out of place there.

SAUL CONSULTS A MEDIUM (28:3-25)

A second account is given of Samuel's death. The first one appeared in 1 Samuel 25:1 and is probably out of place. Another possibility is that Samuel's death is mentioned again to prepare us for Saul's need of a medium. Saul had earlier outlawed mediums and wizards, who were forbidden by Law (Leviticus 19:31 and 20:6), and chased them out of the land, but now he feels the need for one.

The Philistine forces in Shunem face the Israelites at Gilboa. Afraid of the Philistines, Saul inquired of the Lord, but he received no answer through the traditional means such as dreams, Urim and Thummim, and prophets. Therefore, he went in search of the medium at Endor. He disguised himself and went with two other men. At first the medium suspected that he was trying to trick her, but he assured her that she did not risk punishment. When he asked to speak with Samuel, she recognized him as Saul. Saul again assured her that she was safe. Samuel was brought up from another world, which would be Sheol. Sheol was the abode of the dead, a hollow place under a flat earth, to which everyone, good and bad, went. Spirits who resided in Sheol were thought to have special knowledge about the future and that is why Saul wanted to communicate with the dead Samuel.

The scripture says that it is "god" who is brought up, but that word is to be equated with a being from the dead. A better translation might be "spirit." Samuel's "spirit" gave no reassurance to Saul and simply told him that his future was limited. He had not obeyed God, nor had he carried out God's wrath against Amalek, and this meant that his Kingdom would be taken away.

The medium expressed kindness and hospitality towards Saul by killing the fattened calf and baking some unleavened bread. Saul did not feel like eating, but they encouraged him to do so, after which he returned home to face the consequences of his disobedience.

THE PHILISTINES REJECT DAVID (29:1-11)

This chapter seems to continue from Chapter 28:2. It begins with the Philistines in Aphek and the Israelites in Jezreel. The Philistine overlords or commanders were reviewing their troops along with Achish. David and his friends were present. The commanders were suspicious of them, for they feared he would turn against them in battle. Achish attempted to support David, but the commanders were not convinced. Achish then advised David to leave. The Philistines moved on to Jezreel, and David returned to the land of the Philistines.

WAR AGAINST THE AMALEKITES (30:1-31)

On their return to Ziklag, David and his men found it completely destroyed by the Amalekites. The people had been taken captive, including David's two wives, Ahino-am and Abigail. They all wept bitterly. Some of the others were critical of David for having left no one in charge of things.

David asked Abiathar, the priest, to consult the Ephod, which contained the sacred lots (Urim and Thummim). The divine answer was to pursue the Amalekites; and so they set out with 600 men on a fast trip from Ziklag to Aphek, a distance of 80 miles, taking three days. When they arrived at the brook Besor, 200 of the men were so tired that they were left behind. On the way, they found an Egyptian slave, who had been left behind by the Amalekites because he was sick. He had not had any water or food for three days. He agreed to lead them to the Amalekites for their kindness. When they entered the Amalekite camp, they found their enemies having a feast in which there was much drinking and dancing. They were celebrating the taking of all the spoil from the Philistines and the Israelites. David and his 400 men attacked, killing everyone except for 400 young men who escaped on camels.

The spoil was recovered along with David's two wives. At first, some of David's men resisted sharing the spoil with the 200 men who stayed behind, but David insisted that they share it with the 200 and the several towns in Judah as well. This may explain his increasing popularity in Judah where he was about to become King.

THE DEATH OF SAUL AND HIS SONS (31:1-13)

Saul's final battle took place on Mt. Gilboa. Three of his four sons were with him: Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua. Ishbaal was not present. When Saul was seriously injured, he appealed to his armor-bearer to kill him. The armor-bearer refused to do it. Saul then took his own life, a rare occurrence in Israel, and his armor-bearer did the same. The surviving Israelites fled.

The next day the Philistines went out on the battlefield to strip the bodies. When they found Saul's body, they cut off his head and took his body and armor to the Temple of Astarte (Ashtaroth) in Beth-shean where they hung it on the wall. Some of the people of Jabesh-gilead took the body down, along with the bodies of his three sons, and burned them at Jabesh. Actually, the Hebrew word for "burnt," also means, "anointed," and so this is not very clear. Cremation was not commonly practiced. Burning the bodies is not mentioned in 1 Chronicles 10:12. At any rate, the bones were buried under a tamarisk tree in Jabesh. The people of Jabesh-gilead had not forgotten what Saul had done for them. (See 1 Samuel 11).

THE MORAL LAW WITHIN HISTORY

David had several opportunities to kill Saul and to seize the throne for himself. Samuel had already anointed David. It would have been the natural thing to do, but for some

strange reason David does not do it. He plays with Saul like a cat would play with a mouse. Although he wanted to participate with the Philistines in the final assault on Saul's armies, the Philistine commanders lacked faith in his loyalty, and so he was not allowed to accompany them. God did not need him to bring down Saul's Kingdom. He could do that with the Philistines. Although God did not approve of the Philistines and their gods, he was quite willing to use them as instruments of history.

Charles A. Beard once stated some of the lessons of history as follows: (1) when it gets dark enough, the stars come out. (2) The bee fertilizes the flower it steals from. (3) Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad with power. (4) The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small.¹ Is not Beard saying that there is a moral law written into things and that this moral universe always has the last word—that if you fit into it, you live, but if you do not, you perish? That moral universe is not a human creation, but we can discern its presence.

David did not have to kill Saul. Saul had chosen a path that would bring down his own Kingdom, and all David had to do was wait for it to happen. Beard's third and fourth principles were hard at work in Saul's Kingdom. Lacking divine authority from the prophet Samuel, Saul could only keep things together with power; but in the end, power corrupted him and things started falling apart. Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad with power. It took some time, and although the mills of God grind slowly, they do grind, and eventually Saul's reign was finished.

Saul lost his final battle to the Philistines not because they were stronger than he, although that may well have been the case, but because he chose to lead the nation outside the Will of God. He was defeated by his own choices more than by the Philistines. History and the Bible contain examples of inferior peoples winning over peoples with superior power. "History," wrote Robert Wicks, "seems to indicate that broken-down civilizations were conquered by outside foes only after they had been so inwardly divided that they were already committing suicide."² What this means in simple words is that the toil of those who take any other way but God's always ends up in smoke.

History is the result of an interrelation between the Will of God and the free choices of leaders. When people allow their leaders to take them down paths that lie outside the Will of God, they go down with their leaders. The reason the final destruction of a nation may take so long is due to divine patience. Kosuke Koyama puts it another way: "God does not grab history. God penetrates it."³ In other words, it takes time for the mills of God to grind up those who oppose his Will; and yet, God allows them to move down their own destructive path. In the end it may not be the "good guys" who conquer them, for God

¹Quoted in E. Stanley Jones, *The Way* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), p. 37.

²Robert R. Wicks, *The Interpreter's Bible*, Volume XI (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 19.

³Kosuke Koyama, *No Handle on the Cross* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1977), p. 71.

can use the “bad guys” as well. This does not mean that the “bad guys” are getting away with murder. Their time will come, for they are also committing political suicide.

How can such a fate be avoided? The trouble with most leaders is that they do not recognize the presence of the divine Will operating within history, and so they try to seize the reigns of history to steer it in the direction they want it to go. If God is operating within history, opposing him would be futile. History will not move for very long in any direction that is contrary to the Will of God. David understood that, and was quite willing to wait for the right time to assume leadership. Jesus understood this as well and was quite willing to accept death on the cross, knowing full well that he would ultimately reign as King.

“History,” wrote Nevins, “is the sextant and compass of states, which, tossed by wind and current, would be lost in confusion if they could not fix their position.”⁴ Christ is that position which guides every leader and every nation through the confusion; and even if battles are lost in the process, they can still move forward with courage because they know that the war has already been won. The war has been won with the Resurrection of Christ, and all that is left is the mopping up action. There may still be casualties along the way, but the confusion has been removed and we now know the direction history must move. Those who choose any other way are committing historical suicide.

SAUL'S WIVES

1. AHINOAM

(1 Samuel 14:50)

SONS

(1 Samuel 14:49)

Jonathan

Isvi (Ishbosheth)

Malki-Shua

DAUGHTERS

(1 Samuel 14:49)

Merab

Michal

2. RIZPAH

(2 Samuel 21:8)

Armoni

Mephibosheth/Meribaal (Not Jonathan's Son)

THREE LISTINGS OF SAUL'S SONS

1 Samuel 14:49

Jonathan
'Ishvi
Malchishua

1 Samuel 31:2

Jonathan
Abinadab
Malchishua

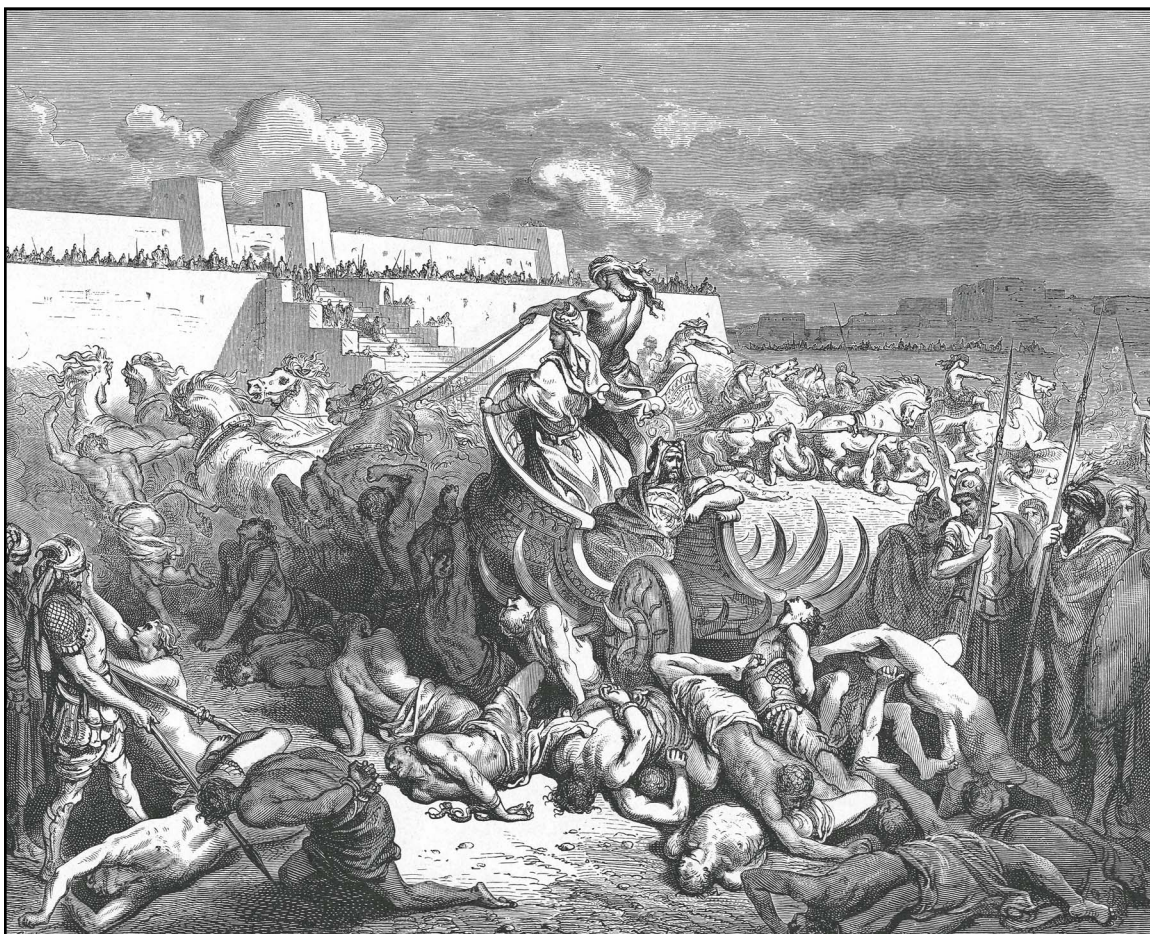
1 Chronicles 8:33

Jonathan
Malchishua
Abinadab
Esh-baal

⁴Quoted in Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans' Publishing Co., 1977), p. 2.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 2 Samuel



David attacks the Ammonites by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

12. David Becomes King 2 Samuel 1:1—9:13

11. DAVID BECOMES KING (1:1—9:13)			
THE DEATH OF SAUL AND JONATHAN (1:1-27)			
An Amalekite reports the Deaths (1:1-16)		David's Lament over the Deaths (1:17-27)	
CIVIL WAR BETWEEN JUDAH AND ISRAEL (2:1-32)			
Abner supports Ishbosheth		Joab supports David	
THE MURDERS OF ABNER (3:1-39) AND ISHBOSHETH (4:1-12)			
ISRAEL AND JUDAH UNITE (5:1-25)			
David becomes King (5:1-5)	Capture of Jerusalem (5:6-12)	The Family of David (5:13-16)	Defeat of Philistines (5:17-25)
David's Children			
Amnon (Ahinoam) Chileab (Abigail) Absalom (Maacah) Adonijah (Haggith) Shephatiah (Abital) Ithream (Eglah) (2 Samuel 3:2-5)	Shammua Shobab Nathan Solomon Ibhar Elishua (2 Samuel 5:13-16)	Nepheg Japhia Elishama Eliada Eliphelet	
THE ARK IS BROUGHT TO JERUSALEM (6:1-23)			
Kiriath-Jearim	Uzzah and Obed-edom	Jerusalem	
GOD'S PROMISE TO DAVID (7:1-29)			
DAVID'S MILITARY VICTORIES (8:1-18)			
The Victories		David's Leadership	
Philistines Moabites Zobah Syrians	Hamath Edomites Ammonites Amalekites	Joab: Commander in Chief Jehoshaphat: Press Secretary Zadok and Ahimelech [Abiathar]: Priests Seraiah: Secretary of Annals and Records Benaiah: Commander over Bodyguards	
DAVID'S KINDNESS FOR MEPHIBOSHETH (9:1-13)			

12. DAVID BECOMES KING

2 Samuel 1:1—9:13

ASSIGNMENTS			
The Deaths of Saul and Jonathan and Civil War 1:1—2:32	The Murders of Abner and Ishbosheth 3:1—4:12	The Ark is taken into Jerusalem 5:1—6:23	God's Promise and David's Victories 7:1—9:13

INTRODUCTION TO 2 SAMUEL

961-922 B.C.E.

The Name

See the Introduction to I Samuel.

The Authorship

The author's name is unknown, but 2 Samuel is mostly from the Early Source. See the Introduction of 1 Samuel for an explanation.

The Date

There are discrepancies in dates. The date for this material is either 961-922 or 965-931 B.C. E.

The Purpose

2 Samuel is the sequel to 1 Samuel. It is the history of David's reign as King, first over Judah (1-4) and then over Israel and the whole nation (5-24). Written mostly by the Early Source, the author's intent is to show Israel as the people of the Lord and the Lord's providence at work in Israel's history. David is portrayed as a man of deep faith, but also as a sinner who is out to get what he wants, until the prophet Nathan confronts him with his sins. David confesses his sins and accepts the punishment God sends. David's rule is so impressive that in times of national distress, the people of Israel long for the return of such a King. They long for "a son of David" or a "messianic leader."

The Outline

- A. David's Reign over Judah (1:1—4:12)
- B. David's Reign over Israel (5:1—20:26)
 - 1. The Early Years (5:1—10:19)
 - 2. David and Bathsheba (11:1—12:25)
 - 3. Troubles and Difficulties (12:26—20:26)
- C. Events in David's Reign (21:1—24:25)

1:1—4:12	5:1—20:26	21:1—24:25
David's Reign over Judah	David's Reign over Israel	Events in David's Reign

THE DEATH OF SAUL AND JONATHAN (1:1-27)

Report of the Death (1:1-16)

Shortly after David returned from slaughtering the Amalekites, a young Amalekite reported on the death of Saul and Jonathan to David. This happened on the third day after David returned to Ziklag, which is about 100 miles from Gilboa where Saul died. The young Amalekite's version of the death of Saul differs from the account given in 1 Samuel 31, but the two accounts are not irreconcilable. He claimed to have finished the King off, probably to gain some favor in the eyes of David. He took Saul's crown and armlet and presented them to David at Ziklag, but David, in turn, had the Amalekite executed (1:15). The only reason that can be given is David's respect for nobility.

David's Lament (1:17-27)

This lament demonstrated David's great respect for Saul and his office as King. The book of Jashar, in which it was recorded, was a collection of poems, now lost. Verse 26 expresses David's deep love for Jonathan.

CIVIL WAR BETWEEN JUDAH AND ISRAEL (2:1-32)

David asked the Lord where he should go, and the ephod (urim and thummim) led him to Hebron of Judah. He took his two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, along with him. In Hebron David was anointed as King of Judah. The first thing he did was to send a message to the men of Jabesh-gilead, who had buried Saul, to commend them for their deed. This might have been a politically motivated gesture. David reigned over Judah for seven years and six months.

Meanwhile, Abner, Saul's commander, took Ishbosheth (son of Saul) to Mahanaim, one of the principal towns of Gilead, to make him King over Israel. His actual name was Ishbaal, meaning "man of Baal," but in his time, it was interpreted as a title (master or lord) of Yahweh. He was set up as a puppet King over the Northern Tribes, but since he ruled from Mahanaim, this seems to suggest a weakness in his Kingdom. He had to rule from the east side of the Jordan River, and his reign lasted for only two years.

For two years the nation was divided. An attempt was made to settle the issue by a single "representative" fight at Gibeon, but the result was inconclusive. At the suggestion of Abner, twelve young men were chosen to represent each side. Joab, David's representative, agreed. The twelve men all grabbed their opponents by the head and plunged a sword into their side, and all twenty-four men killed one another.

A battle then broke out between David's men and the Israelites. Zeuriah, David's sister, had three sons, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel; and it was Asahel who could run like a deer, who pursued Abner. Abner warned him to stop, but he would not. Hence, Abner thrust the butt of his spear into Asahel's belly. Joab and Abishai continued the pursuit until sunset. Abner finally took a stand and asked for a truce at the hill of Ammah. The truce was accepted and Abner and his men buried Asahel in Bethlehem and then returned home to Hebron.

THE MURDER OF ABNER (3:1-39)

The Civil War continued for such a long time, that the sons of David, all born in Hebron, are named, along with their mothers.

1. Amnon (Ahinoam)
2. Chileab (Abigail)
3. Absalom (Maacah)
4. Adonijah (Haggith)
5. Shephatiah (Abital)
6. Ithream (Eglah)

Abner, meanwhile, was attempting to strengthen his position in the House of Saul. He took Rizpah, one of Saul's concubines, and this set up a dispute with Ishbosheth who challenged him on this; but Abner sent messengers to David to make a covenant with him. David refused to receive him until he sent Michal (Saul's daughter) back to him as

his wife. Ishbosheth sent Michal back to David. At first Paltiel, her second husband, followed her to Bahurim. Abner told him to go home and he obeyed.

Abner entered Hebron with twenty men to discuss the covenant between Judah and Israel. David sent him away in peace. When Joab returned from a battle, he heard about it and warned David that Abner had come to deceive him. Without David's being aware of it, Joab sent for Abner. While pretending to talk with Abner, Joab killed him in a similar manner to the way in which Abner had killed Joab's brother, Asahel. He stabbed him in the stomach.

Joab did this for two reasons: (1) to avenge the death of Asahel, and (2) to eliminate his rival for the post of commander-in-chief of David's army. This act threatened the unification of Judah and Israel, and so David put a curse on Joab's household to prove that he had nothing to do with Abner's murder. David could not kill Joab because of Joab's influence with the people, but he could become the chief mourner at Abner's funeral. By these acts, David proved to Israel that he did not approve of what Joab had done.

THE MURDER OF ISHBOSHETH (4:1-12)

After Abner's death, two captains of raiding bands in Israel, Baanah and Rechab (Benjaminites), set out for the palace to assassinate Ishbosheth. They entered his bedroom when he was taking his noonday rest and slew him in bed. After beheading him, they took his head to David in Hebron. They were not aware of David's respect for royalty, and so their reward was execution. Their hands and feet were cut off, and their bodies hung beside the pool in Hebron. The head of Ishbosheth was buried in the tomb of Abner in Hebron.

Verse 4 seems out of place. It introduces Mephibosheth, the only remaining descendant of Saul. His name had been changed from Meribaal (1 Chronicles 8:34). Even though Saul's line comes to an end, there is still a descendant to whom David can express kindness (2 Samuel 9).

ISRAEL AND JUDAH UNITE (5:1-25)

David becomes King (5:1-5)

All the tribes of Israel committed themselves to David in Hebron. David was only 30 years old when he was anointed King over both Judah and Israel, and he reigned for more than 40 years. He reigned over Judah for 7 years and 6 months, and then over both Judah and Israel for 33 years.

The Capture of Jerusalem (5:6-12)

Hebron did not make an ideal capital and so David led a force into Jerusalem. Although Jerusalem had been partially taken (Judges 1:8), it had never been completely conquered

(Joshua 15:63 and Judges 1:21). The reference to the blind and crippled has to do with how easy it was to defend Jerusalem. Even the blind and crippled could defend it with little effort. Further reference to these persons, hating, David, suggest that David will tolerate no opposition, not even from the weak (or supposedly) unclean.

David inquired of God (through Abiathar and his ephod) and was given the command to take Jerusalem, even if the blind and crippled tried to defend it. Hiram, the Phoenician King whose capital was Tyre, sent David some materials with which to build a palace. One of the most confusing projects was the “Millo,” mentioned in verse 9, which seems to have been some kind of rampart or raised mound. It must have been some kind of landfill project to expedite building of the palace complex.

The city of Jerusalem was held for the next 400 years, after which, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it.

The Family of David (5:13-16)

David married some more wives and concubines. A concubine was a female slave who provided sexual favors to her master. She did not enjoy the same rights and privileges as a wife. No reference is made to which children came from wives and which ones came from concubines. They are simply named:

- | | |
|------------|---------------|
| 1. Shammua | 7. Nepheg |
| 2. Shobab | 8. Japhia |
| 3. Nathan | 9. Elishama |
| 4. Solomon | 10. Eliada |
| 5. Ibhah | 11. Eliphelet |
| 6. Elishua | |

Defeat of the Philistines (5:17-25)

The Philistines began to gather at the Valley of Rephaim. David inquired again of the Lord and was told to go into battle against them. He defeated them at Baal-perazim, which means “Lord breaking through.” There was another gathering of the Philistines at the Valley of Rephaim, and David again inquired of the Lord, only to be told not to face them head on. He was to attack them from the rear. He was successful in driving them back from Geba (Gibeon) to Gezer. There is some question concerning the chronology of these battles with the Philistines. They might have preceded the taking of Jerusalem. But whatever is the case, it is clear that Philistine power is waning.

THE ARK IS TAKEN TO JERUSALEM (6:1-23)

David gathered 30,000 (or 30 units of) chosen men of Israel to go to Baale-Judah to get the Ark. Baale-Judah is either an error, or another name for Kiriath-Jearim, where the Ark had been left (1 Samuel 6:21—7:2). David’s purpose was to make Jerusalem the religious, as well as the political capital. (For another version of this story, see

1 Chronicles 13, 15-16). The Ark had been kept in the House of Abinadab, which was located on a hill.

Abinadab's sons, Uzzah and Ahio, became the drivers of a new cart which was used to carry the Ark. David and his whole house sang songs and played instruments (lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets, and cymbals) as they accompanied the Ark on the trip. When the oxen stumbled, Uzzah tried to steady the Ark. He died instantly. He apparently violated the Law recorded in Numbers 4:15. Uzzah's death made David angry and afraid. He was unwilling to continue the journey and so the Ark was left at the home of Obed-edom for three months.

Since Obed-edom experienced nothing but blessings, David went back to get the Ark. After taking six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling (calf). When Saul tried to perform priestly duties, he was criticized, but there was no criticism of David for doing the same thing. As they entered Jerusalem, David was seen leaping and dancing before the Ark. Michal, his wife (Saul's daughter), watched him and despised him for his actions. After the Ark was set inside of a tent and burnt and peace offerings made, David gave a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins to all the people. When he went home, Michal expressed her feelings and was either made barren by God or isolated from David for the rest of her life. She had no more children.

GOD'S PROMISE TO DAVID (7:1-29)

At first David suggests to the prophet, Nathan, that he might build a house for God, since he himself, lives in a house of cedar and God lives in nothing but a tent. God spoke through Nathan informing David that He did not need a house and besides, it was not for David to do. Solomon, his son, would build the house (Temple).

Rather than David providing God with a house, He would make David's house (dynasty) everlasting (7:16). On this promise runs a theme, which is taken up by the rest of the Old Testament, the hope for a Messiah. David's dynasty came to an end in 587 (6) B.C.E. when Jerusalem fell. The promise was fulfilled in the coming of Christ, who was born in David's birthplace, Bethlehem, and was of the house and lineage of David (Luke 2:4). The angel told Mary, "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the House of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:32-33) In order to understand the discussion about house, one must think of it as meaning PALACE in Verses 1-2; TEMPLE in Verses 5, 6, 7 and 13; DYNASTY in Verses 25, 26, 27 and 29; and FAMILY STATUS in Verse 18.

David's response was a deeply moving prayer of gratitude. In this prayer David acknowledged that all his accomplishments were due to God's presence and direction in his life. The prayer concludes with a request that God continue to bless the House (Dynasty) of David.

DAVID'S MILITARY VICTORIES (8:1-18)

This chapter seems to predate the events of Chapter 7 and probably belongs after Chapter 5. The nations defeated are as follows:

- Philistines
- Moabites—They used to be friends (See I Samuel 22:3-4), and of course, David is related to them through Ruth (Ruth 4:22). Something must have happened for David to kill 2/3rds of them.
- Zobah—This nation was north of Damascus. David took their horsemen and foot soldiers. Chariots would be of little help in the hills.
- Syrians—David killed 22,000 Syrians as they came to help King Hadadezor of Zobah. Damascus was their capital.
- Hamath—This nation was north of Zobah and was not under the control of David. Its King, Toi, was friendly to David and sent his son, Joram, to congratulate David on his victories and give him some articles of silver, gold, and bronze.
- Edomites—18,000 of them were killed as David extended his power southward.
- Ammonites
- Amalekites

The final verses of this chapter give a list of some of David's leadership.

- Joab—(son of Zeuriah) He was the commander-in-chief of David's armies.
- Jehoshaphat—He was David's recorder, which would be similar to a press secretary, or foreign relations minister.
- Zadok and Ahimelech—Priests. It should be Abiathar instead of Ahimelech. During Solomon's reign, Zadok is elevated and Abiathar is banished.
- Seraiah—David's secretary was responsible for annals and records.
- Benaiah—He acted like another military commander who exercised power over the Cherethites and Pelethites, who had been Philistine mercenaries. They now operate as David's personal bodyguards.
- David's sons—They were priests. David also performed various priestly functions and in that sense acted like Melchizedek, the priestly King of Jerusalem. (Genesis 14:18) Perhaps that is why David and Jesus are later compared to Melchizedek.

DAVID'S KINDNESS FOR MEPHIBOSHETH (9:1-13)

This chapter should follow Chapter 21 or be read with 1 Kings 1-2. It presupposes the death of all of Saul's descendants, for here, David seeks to find out whether any of Saul's descendants have survived. He was probably worried about an insurrection. Ziba, a former servant of Saul's, came forward and told David about Mephibosheth, who was crippled in both feet. An explanation of Mephibosheth's lameness is given in 2 Samuel 4:4. He accidentally fell while fleeing for safety following the events at Mount Gilboa.

The original form of Mephibosheth (he who spreads shame) was Meribbaal (he who strives for the Lord). Mephibosheth had been living in the House of Machir at Lodebar,

which might have been north of Gilead not far from Jabesh, although the exact location is uncertain. When David found out that Mephibosheth was crippled and that he was Jonathan's last surviving son, he restored all of Saul's former property to him. Ziba was to be his steward along with his 15 sons and 24 servants. David and Jonathan had sworn a loyalty to one another (1 Samuel 18:1-4 and 20:14-17), and although this might explain his kindness, he might have been kind simply because Jonathan's son did not pose any serious threat to him. In light of what happened to seven of Saul's descendants, it is understandable why Mephibosheth was reluctant to come forward. Along with the restoration of Saul's property to this final descendant, David honored Mephibosheth by having him eat at his table.

WHEN A TENT BECOMES A TEMPLE

When David moved into his palace of cedar he began to feel guilty, and so, according to 2 Samuel 7:2, he said to himself, "...I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." David wanted to build a Temple. Although Nathan encouraged David to follow his heart on the matter, God replied in 2 Samuel 7:6-7,

I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'

From that day to this has risen the debate over the necessity of a Temple in Jerusalem. What is God's idea or David's? Just as there are pro- and anti-monarchy sources in the Bible, there are also pro- and anti-Temple sources.

Was it ever God's intention that a Temple be built? My answer is, "No.!" That was not the Divine Will, just as the monarchy was not the Divine Will. The Temple was built to satisfy human guilt and a yearning for something that might symbolize the divine presence. Had David remained in a tent, he would not have felt the necessity to build a Temple.

How can I say that God never desired a Temple? There is an anti-Temple strain running throughout the Bible beginning here and ending in the Book of Revelation. As Judah came close to its end, Jeremiah began preaching that God would have the Temple destroyed by the Babylonians. Obviously God did not feel that a Temple was necessary. Even though, under the inspiration of Ezekiel, the Temple was rebuilt, it was not rebuilt according to Ezekiel's original vision. It did not even compare with Solomon's, much less Ezekiel's Temple.

One of the reasons why Jesus was crucified is because he predicted the destruction of the Temple in his day, which was considered blasphemous enough to warrant the death penalty. Stephen continued the anti-Temple attitude when he preached in Jerusalem, saying in Acts 7:48-50: "...the Most High does not dwell in houses made with human

hands; as the prophet says, ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house, will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things?’” Stephen paid dearly for his anti-Temple theology. They stoned him to death on the spot, and he became the first martyr (Acts 7:58). He died at the feet of a young man named Saul, or as he was to be known later, Paul.

In being the main missionary of the early Church, Paul may not have spoken against the Temple, but he did reinterpret what it meant. He did not call upon people to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem; rather, he told people that they were Temples of the Holy Spirit. Allow me to quote two passages from his letter to the Church in Corinth:

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple. (I Corinthians 3:16-17)

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body. (I Corinthians 6:19-20)

In the final vision of John’s description of the New Jerusalem, he notes in Revelation 21:22: “I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.”

Does all of this mean that we do not need Temples? In the discussion among Jews as to whether the Temple should be rebuilt, Jerusalem’s Pesach Schindler, a member of Judaism’s Conservative branch, which shuns Orthodox literalism regarding the Temple, says: “We have respect for the past, but it has no operational significance. With the establishment of the state of Israel, we have all our spiritual centers within us. That is where the Temples should be built.”¹

Does this mean we do not need Church buildings? No, it does not. Church buildings are patterned more after the Synagogue than the Temple. A Synagogue was a place of prayer, scripture reading, and preaching. That is also what the Church should be. It ought not to be a Temple. It is a building that houses God’s people. The people are the Temple.

Our son recently attended a service at the Cathedral in St. Paul, Minneapolis, and suggested that we might like to go there. We tried, but got confused on the freeway; and realizing that we would be late, we began looking for another church. We found St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church. It was not as impressive a building as the Cathedral, but we met people who really believed that they were Temples of God. David may have wanted to build a Temple. God wanted to shape David into his own Temple. We may want to worship in buildings that resemble Temples and Cathedrals, but God

¹Richard N. Ostling, “Time for a New Temple?” Time, October 16, 1989, p. 65.

reminds us that the only acceptable Temple is his people. We may think of ourselves as tents, but God thinks of us as Temples.

13. DAVID SECURES HIS KINGDOM (10:1 – 20:20)					
DEFEAT OF THE AMMONITE/SYRIAN ALLIANCE (10:1-19)					
Humiliation of David's Men	The Alliance at Beth-rehob/Zobah	Joab and Abishai's Victory		David's Attack and Victory	
DAVID ADULTERY WITH BATHSHEBA (11:1-27)					
Fighting against the Ammonites at Rabbah		Uriah, the Hittite, brought Home		Joab has Uriah Killed	
NATHAN'S VISIT TO DAVID (12:1-31)					
Nathan confronts David	David's Repentance (Psalm 51)	Three Sons will Die and One will Rebel		Defeat of Ammonites at Rabbah	
THE RAPE OF TAMAR AND ABSALOM'S REVENGE (13:1-39)					
Amnon and Tamar	Jonadab's Advice	Absalom's Reaction		Absalom's Flight	
THE RETURN OF ABSALOM (14:1-33)					
The Women from Tekoa		Absalom allowed Home		Absalom burns Joab's Field	
ABSALOM'S REBELLION (15:1-37)					
Absalom's Plot	Capital in Hebron	Ahithophel's Support	David leaves Jerusalem	Zadok and Abiathar	Hushai Remains
ABSALOM TAKES OVER JERUSALEM (16:1-23)					
The Conflict between David and House of Saul			Absalom and the Royal Harem		
ABSALOM REJECTS AHITHOPHEL'S PLAN (17:1-29)					
Ahithophel: Go after David with 12,000 Men			Hushai: Consolidate Power First		
THE DEATH OF ABSALOM (18:1-33)					
1/3 Joab (Kills Absalom)		1/3 Abishai		1/3 Ittai (Philistine)	

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 2 Samuel



Combat between David and Ish-bosheth by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

13. David Secures His Kingdom 2 Samuel 10:1—20:20

THE AFTERMATH OF REBELLION (19:1-43)			
David mourns Absalom's Death	Joab's Anger over David's Attitude	David Returns to Jerusalem	
SHEB'AS REBELLION (20:1-26)			
Sheba a Benjamite	Amasa's Weakness	Abishai in Command	Joab kills Amasa
Joab's Victory		General Commander: Joab Over Forced Labor: Adoram/Adoniram Recorder: Jehoshaphat Court Secretary: Sheva Priests: Zadok/Abiathar Personal Priest: Ira	

13. DAVID SECURES HIS KINGDOM

2 Samuel 10:1—20:20

ASSIGNMENTS					
Ammonite and Syrian Alliance 10:1-19	David, Bathsheba, and Nathan 11:1—12:31	Tamar's Rape and Absalom 13:1—14:33	Absalom's Rebellion and Takeover 15:1—16:23	Ahithophel's Plan and Absalom's Death 17:1—18:33	Aftermath and Sheba's Rebellion 19:1—20:26

DEFEAT OF THE AMMONITE/SYRIAN ALLIANCE (10:1-19)

With the death of the Ammonite King, Nahash, David sent servants to comfort his son, Hanun. There is no record of friendship between David and Nahash, but there is a record of hostility between Nahash and Saul (1 Samuel 11). Perhaps they formed a friendship because Saul was expressing hostility towards both of them. The Princes of Hanun were afraid that David's servants were really spies, and so they informed Hanun of their suspicions. Hanun then had David's servants humiliated. The deepest humiliation that a Jew could suffer was to have his beard shaved off and be indecently exposed, that is to have their genitals exposed. The Ammonites shaved off one-half of their beards and cut off their garments in the middle at the hips, completely exposing them.

Such humiliation demanded immediate revenge. In preparation for it, David's first step was to order his men to remain in Jericho while their beards grew back. Meanwhile, the Ammonites prepared by seeking an alliance with the Syrians (Arameans) at Beth-rehob and Zobah, from which 20,000 men were provided. The King of Maacah provided another 1,000 and the King of Tob contributed 12,000.

Joab led the Israelite forces, but got caught between the Ammonites who were at the entrance of the gate and the Syrians who were in the open country. Joab divided his forces and placed half of his men under Abishai, and led the rest himself. Abishai fought against the Ammonites, and Joab took on the Syrians. After defeating the Ammonites, they returned to Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, the Syrians regrouped under Hadadezer, who sought help from Syrian reinforcements. The new Syrian army, led by Shobach, prepared for battle at Helam. David entered the conflict personally, and led his troops across the Jordan and slew 700

men from the chariots and another 40,000, foot soldiers (or horsemen). Shobach himself was wounded and died. The Syrians were afraid to help the Ammonites after that.

A word of explanation might be said about the way in which David's army was organized. There seem to have been three units. First, there was the host of Israel, consisting of men drafted from all the tribes, led by Joab. This was the most powerful force. Secondly, there was the highly trained militia, made up of many of David's early companions from his days in Judah. Abishai, Joab's brother, led them. Finally, there were his personal bodyguards, led by Benach and consisting of the Cherethites and Pelethites.

DAVID'S ADULTERY WITH BATHSHEBA (11:1-27)

David sent his army out in the spring of the year, when kings go to war, to Rabbah to defeat the Ammonites; but ironically, David himself remained behind in Jerusalem. One afternoon, following the rest period, he saw Bathsheba from the roof while she was bathing or purifying herself from uncleanness. This purification had to do with attitudes towards menstruation. It is included here to prove that Bathsheba was not pregnant at the time. David committed adultery with her, and then she became pregnant.

Adultery carried a serious penalty, that of death to both persons involved (Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:2). To cover up their sin David sent for Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to receive some news of the battle. Uriah was a converted Hittite, who had become a member of the Royal Guard (Mighty Men), of which there were only thirty. Bathsheba's father, Eliam, was also a member of the same order. Uriah must have taken on a new faith, for his name means "Yahweh is a (my) Light." David hoped that he would go home and lay with his wife, saving him from public exposure; but instead, Uriah slept outside the palace door. It was considered wrong to have sexual intercourse while you were fighting in a "holy" war. David then got him drunk, thinking that he would have intercourse with her while he was drunk, but even this did not work. Finally, he sent him back to the battle with a note to Joab to place him in a dangerous position so that he would die in battle. Joab was unable to arrange for Uriah to be the only one to die, and so he had to apologize to David for the loss of a few other men, who died with him. This did not seem to bother David, who shrugged it off and married Bathsheba.

NATHAN'S VISIT TO DAVID (12:1-31)

David thought the matter concerning his adultery and murder was over, but Nathan told him a parable of a rich man and poor man. The poor man had one ewe lamb, while the rich man had many flocks and herds. A traveler came to visit the rich man, who took the poor man's one ewe lamb in order to provide food for the table. David was incensed at such injustice and told Nathan that the man deserved to die and ought to repay the poor man fourfold. Then Nathan informed David that he was the rich man in the story.

David recognized his sin and repented. Psalm 51 is an account of his repentance. Nathan went on to tell him what his punishment would be. Three of his sons would later die and his son, Absalom, would take over his harem in public. (Compare 2 Samuel 12:10-11

with 2 Samuel 16:20-23.) The punishment for David's sins should have been death (Exodus 21:23-25; Leviticus 24:19-21; and Deuteronomy 19:21), but David was spared. Since someone had to die, it was his son who was born out of the adulterous union. A second son—Solomon—was born to Bathsheba, and Nathan suggested the name "Jedidiah," which means "beloved of the Lord." Some scholars believe that Jedidiah was the name given him at birth, and that Solomon was a kind of throne name given to him later.

The war continued against the Ammonites with Joab winning and taking the capital city, Rabbah (Rabbath-Ammon). The Ammonites were made into slaves and a gold crown (weighing 63 pounds or 1 talent) was taken as David's crown. The crown had belonged to the Ammonite idol, Milcom (or Molech), confused with Malkam, meaning their "King" (12:30).

THE RAPE OF TAMAR AND ABSALOM'S REVENGE (13:1-39)

Amnon desired sexual relations with his half-sister, Tamar, who was Absalom's full sister. A friend and cousin, Jonadab, told Amnon how he might get together with Tamar. All he had to do was fake an illness and ask his father, David, to send Tamar in with some food. He did this, and when she prepared some cakes, he refused to eat them until all the servants left the room. Apparently, he had two rooms. He then asked her to enter his private chambers, where it became clear to her what he wanted. She told him that all he needed to do was to ask David for her hand, and so it seems as if she were willing to marry him. After all, Abraham had married his half-sister; but that was before the Law was given through Moses, which prohibited sexual intercourse with a half-sister (Leviticus 18:9, 11 and Deuteronomy 27:22). Amnon did not want a dispensation to marry Tamar. He only wanted to satisfy his lust for her; and so, he raped her. Later his love for her turned to hatred, and so he sent her away. She put ashes on her head and rent her long robe as she went into mourning. She mourned because, once raped, she could never marry.

When Absalom and David found out about the rape, they were angry, but David did nothing about it. Absalom did something, but only after two years had passed. The occasion was the time of sheepshearing, which was also a time for festivals. Absalom asked his father and brothers to go along. While David declined, he allowed his sons to go, even though he was suspicious as to why they all should go. Absalom had his servants kill Amnon as soon as he got drunk. Following the murder, all the other sons fled. News got back to David, that Absalom had killed all of his sons. Jonadab, his nephew, assured him that only Amnon had been killed.

Absalom fled to Geshur (the Aramean Kingdom), the home of the King, Talmai, who was his maternal grandfather. He stayed there for three years. Geshur was still under the military control of David. It helps to understand some of the dynamics taking place here to realize that Amnon, being the eldest son, was heir to the throne. Chileab, the second son, had died young, and so Absalom, being third, would be next in line. Was it revenge

over Amnon's rape of Tamar, or a desire to get rid of the heir to the throne that motivated Absalom? At any rate, the throne will be passed on to Solomon, not Absalom.

THE RETURN OF ABSALOM (14:1-33)

After Absalom had been absent for three years, David began to miss him, but he did not do anything about his longing for him. Joab asked a woman from Tekoa, a village six miles south of Bethlehem, to go before David as a mourner. She did this and told David that she had two sons, one of whom had been killed by the other in the fields. The whole family wanted to take vengeance on the remaining son, but that would mean the loss of both her sons. She asked David to insure that this would not happen. David took her side in the matter, but then she applied this story to David and his relationship to Absalom. David saw immediately the relationship, but also realized that Joab had put her up to this scheme.

Absalom was allowed to come back to Jerusalem, but he was not allowed inside the royal court. Absalom is described as very handsome. When he cut his hair, the Bible says that it weighed four to five pounds (200 shekels).

Absalom must have married, for verse 27 tells of a daughter named, Tamar, after the sister who had been raped by Amnon. Although 2 Samuel 14:27 indicates that Absalom had three sons, 2 Samuel 18:18 says that he had no sons. Is there a contradiction here, or did his three sons die? We do not know.

After living in Jerusalem for two years, without being permitted in the royal court, Absalom finally called for Joab to help him get a hearing with his father, David. Joab ignored two requests, and so Absalom burned down Joab's barley field to get his attention. This worked. Absalom then requested through Joab that David either kill him or accept him back into the royal court. He was brought before his father David, and kissed by him.

ABSALOM'S REBELLION (15:1-37)

Absalom had prestige in Jerusalem, which was symbolized by his possession of a chariot and horses and an escort of 50 men. This did not mean that he was necessarily the one to succeed David as King. He apparently recognized that this was not the case; therefore, he planned a rebellion whereby he would take over by force. Since David was a better military leader than an administrator, Absalom appeared at the gate and began to help people obtain what they wanted. Over a period of four years, he won the hearts of many common people. At that point, he asked permission to pay a religious vow in Hebron. He took 200 unsuspecting persons along with him and sent messengers to all the tribes of Israel informing them of the plot. When the sound of trumpets could be heard, it would mean that Absalom had succeeded David as King. The capital, however, would be in Hebron, where there was some discontent with David's moving it to Jerusalem. Hebron was also Absalom's birthplace. While Absalom offered sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel, the grandfather of Bathsheba and David's personal adviser, who supported Absalom. He

may not have forgotten the circumstances surrounding David's marriage to Bathsheba, and therefore, was easily swayed to follow Absalom.

When David heard about all that was happening, he decided to leave Jerusalem with his family, officials, and friends. Only 10 concubines were left behind to take care of the palace. One foreign leader of 600 troops from Gath followed him, but David told him that he did not need to do this. His name was Ittai, and he vowed loyalty to David, even if it meant death. The vow sounds very much like the one Ruth made to Naomi. (Compare 2 Samuel 15:21 with Ruth 1:16.) The people's response indicates that David had quite a following in Jerusalem; but still, he felt threatened enough to leave. As they were departing, the priests, Zadok and Abiathar, picked up the Ark of the Covenant to take it along, but David commanded them, along with their sons, Ahimaaz and Jonathan, to return to Jerusalem with the Ark. He intended to return, and they were to remain behind as spies. When David heard that Ahithophel had sided with Absalom, he prayed that all his advice would be nonsense. Hushai, David's royal counselor, wanted to go along, but David instructed him to return and offer his services to Absalom and to do what he could to oppose any of Ahithophel's advice. As David went up to the Mount of Olives, Hushai returned to Jerusalem.

ABSALOM TAKES OVER JERUSALEM (16:1-23)

Ziba, a servant of Jonathan's son Mephibosheth (Meribaal), took some gifts to David (asses, bread, raisins, fruit, and wine), which David received. When David went to Bahurim, just east of Mount Scopus, he was cursed and stoned by Shimei, a member of the House of Saul. Bitterness seems to persist between the followers of Saul and David, and Abishai threatens to take Shimei's head for his words and deeds. David stopped him.

Meanwhile, Absalom took over Jerusalem, and at first suspected Hushai of still being loyal to David, but Hushai convinced him of his loyalty to Absalom. On the advice of Ahithophel, Absalom pitched a tent on the roof (wedding tent), and publicly took the royal harem (concubines). This was symbolic of his succession to the throne.

ABSALOM REJECTS AHITHOPHEL'S PLAN (17:1-29)

Absalom, after he took over the throne, asked Ahithophel for his advice. Ahithophel asked for 12,000 men to pursue and kill David. Absalom also asked Hushai what he thought, and was told that going after David prematurely would be like cornering a bear, who had been robbed of her cubs. He warned that David was an expert in military matters and that a defeat of Absalom's armies would not be in his best interest. It would be better to gather all of Israel under him first, and then go personally into battle against David. If David fled to a walled city, his troops could just dismantle the city.

Hushai's plan was accepted, and bought David some time, but Hushai did not rely on that. He sent a message through Abiathar's son Jonathan and Zadok's son Ahimaaz. They would wait for a message on the edge of town, which was to be delivered by a servant girl. One day, however, a boy saw Jonathan and Ahimaaz receive a message, and he told

Absalom. Jonathan and Ahimaaz then went to Bahurim, where a woman hid them in a well. Absalom's officials came in search of them, but were told that they had already crossed over the river. When they climbed out of the well, they told David to cross the river.

When Ahithophel discovered that his plan had not been followed, he went to his hometown and hung himself. Meanwhile, David and his men reached Mahanaim by the time Absalom and the Israelites had crossed the Jordan River. Amasa, a cousin of Joab's, had been placed in command of Absalom's army. They camped in the land of Gilead. David's friends, Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai brought supplies to him at Mahanaim.

THE DEATH OF ABSALOM (18:1-33)

David divided his seasoned troops up into three groups and placed one-third under each of his three leaders; Joab, his nephew Abishai, and Ittai (a Philistine). David intended to go along with them, but upon their urging, stayed behind. His final request was that they deal gently with Absalom.

The battle with Absalom and his troops took place in the Forest of Ephraim, where 20,000 Israelites died. The forest claimed more lives that day than did the sword. In an attempt to escape, Absalom rode off on a mule, but was caught in the branches of an oak tree. According to some stories, Absalom's long beautiful hair got caught in a tree. The text seems to indicate that his whole head got caught in the tree (See 14:26). The mule kept going. The first person to spot Absalom reported the news to Joab, who asked why Absalom was not immediately killed. The man remembered David's command to treat Absalom gently. Joab knew that Absalom had to be killed, so he thrust three darts into his heart. Ten young men, Joab's armor-bearers, finished him off. They buried Absalom in a pit and raised a great heap of stones over him. This was the mark for the burial of an evil person. Thus, Absalom's tomb was very different from what he planned for himself. He had planned an elaborate monument near Jerusalem. Still standing today in the Kidron (King's) Valley is a monument called Absalom's Monument, but no one knows for sure that it is the same one. A statement is made in 2 Samuel 18:18 that Absalom had no sons. This is either an error, or his sons died young. (See 2 Samuel 14:27.)

Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, wanted to be the one to report the news to David, but Joab sent a Cushite (Ethiopian) slave instead. He tried to tell Ahimaaz that he did not have any good news for which the king would reward him. After a brief conversation, Joab finally permitted Ahimaaz to go. By taking another route (via the plains), he reached David in Mahanaim first, but for some reason he was unable to tell him about the death of Absalom. Although the Cushite slave did not specifically say that Absalom was dead, David got the message, and immediately went into mourning. In his grief he forgot about the military victory and his public duties.

THE AFTERMATH OF REBELLION (19:1-43)

In the aftermath of victory, David continued to mourn Absalom's death. This upset Joab, and apparently many of his supporters; so Joab went directly to David to urge him to express his appreciation to his supporters, lest they all forsake him.

The Israelites began to complain that David had not been brought back to Jerusalem as their King. David sent the priests, Zadok and Abiathar, to ask the leaders of Judah why they were the last to help in his return to Jerusalem. In order to win them over, he promised to demote Joab and give his job as commander of the military to Amasa. Apparently, David still resented Joab's killing of Absalom, but he also wanted to win Judah over to himself. The promise apparently worked, for Judah offered its support, and was present when David crossed the Jordan near Gilgal.

Shimei and Ziba were also present at Gilgal. Although they refused to pay homage to David earlier (16:1-14), they finally sought forgiveness. David forgave Shimei, much to Abishai's dismay, for he wanted to see him put to death. Abishai, who was the brother of Joab, could hardly be sympathetic with what David was doing. Both Shimei and Ziba were members of Saul's clan (Benjamites).

When Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, met David he was asked why he didn't go along with David when he was forced out of Jerusalem. He told him that he was crippled and that his servant lied to him. In spite of the fact that he was unable to accompany him, he assured David that he had been earnestly waiting for his return. When David attempted to make a decision on a property settlement between Mephibosheth and Ziba, Mephibosheth gave up his claim on the property and said that he was just happy to see the King come home.

David's host, Barzillai, accompanied him to the Jordan, but did not want to return with him to Jerusalem. He was too old, and so he sent his servant, Chimham.

After David crossed the Jordan and entered Gilgal, there arose a dispute between Israel and Judah over their loyalty and claim to David as their King. This dispute remained for some time, but the division did not occur until the end of Solomon's reign.

SHEBA'S REBELLION (20:1-26)

Sheba, a Benjamite, tried to lead the nation back into tribalism. Although he seemed to gain a large following, in reality only a few listened to him. Since Amasa was not very successful in mustering Judah to fight off the rebellion, David ordered Abishai to take professional troops and pursue him. He probably knew that Joab, Abishai's brother, would really take charge. When Joab and Amasa met, Joab offered to kiss him; but, instead, he grabbed Amasa's beard and thrust his sword into his stomach. Joab then took over and pursued Sheba to the city of Abel Beth-maacah. They prepared to besiege the city, when a wise woman from the city requested a conversation with Joab. She agreed to

throw Sheba's head over the wall, if Joab and his troops would promise not to destroy the city. When that was done, Joab and his troops returned to Jerusalem.

The last few verses list David's officials, who are: (A similar list can be found in 2 Samuel 8:1-18, with only a few slight differences.)

- Military commanders: Joab was the overall commander, and Benaiah was over the Cherethites and Pelethites.
- Supervisor of forced labor: Adoram (Adoniram). This was not a position that won him many friends.
- Recorder: Jehoshaphat.
- Court Secretary: Sheva. In the other list, Seraiah is identified as the Secretary.
- Priests: Zadok and Abiathar.
- David's personal priest: Ira.

PERSONAL MORALITY

Does the personal life of a political leader, or a religious leader, matter? Almost everyone would say that for religious leaders it does, but for political leaders it does not. This is not the answer that comes out of Scripture, where religion and politics cannot be easily separated. David exerts both political and religious leadership, even though he is not a priest. In most of his political activities he inquires into the Will of God, and that spiritualizes his political decisions.

When David commits adultery with Bathsheba and then arranges for the death of her husband Uriah, his personal immoral behavior affects his political integrity, placing his political leadership in question. One cannot only "inquire of the Lord" in political matters, but must also be subservient to the Lord in one's personal life as well.

The public is right in rejecting public figures, political or religious, who, betray moral standards. David, "displeased the Lord" (2 Samuel 11:27), and what he did, should displease the public as well. If our leaders are not going to "inquire of the Lord" for their personal behavior, what guarantee do we have that they will "inquire of the Lord" in their political decisions? We are not just looking for good administrators to run our political and religious institutions. What we want are leaders who will run these institutions according to the Will of God, for that is what insures their continued survival. To place these institutions on a collision course with God is to insure their demise. This is true in our personal lives; it is also true in our social and political institutions.

Every leader must live in a fish bowl. It is the only way that the public can judge the integrity and effectiveness of its leaders. No leader will be perfect, and many will violate the public trust. What happens when that trust is violated? Should every leader be discharged and deprived of their position in authority? The Scripture is clear in saying, “No!” It all depends upon how the leader responds to the accusations of immoral behavior. What do they do when the word gets out? If they try to hide what they have done, or to deny that they have done anything wrong, then they ought to be discharged as quickly as possible. If on the other hand, they quickly acknowledge and confess their immoral behavior, then they should be given a second chance. David was guilty of adultery and murder, but when he was confronted by Nathan, he understood what he had done, and expressed true repentance, as Psalm 51 illustrates:

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. (Psalm 51:1-2)

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10)

How can one tell the difference between a truly repentant leader and one who is just putting on a show for political, or even religious, expediency? That is not easy, but there are ways. For example, is the leader willing to accept punishment for the immoral act, or does he or she try to avoid it because of his or her particular status? Those who are not willing to accept the consequences of their behavior cannot be trusted to deal justly with others and should not be given “second chances.” This willingness to accept punishment reveals “true” repentance. David repented when he cried in his famous prayer, “...you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.” (Psalm 51:4) He recognizes that his sin is not only against public standards of morality but against the Law of God. As a result, he confesses the righteousness of God’s judgment against him.

No one wants to be punished, and no punishment should be destructive of those who truly repent. The second sign of true repentance is the desire to be transformed. Punishment should always aim at that transformation. David desires it, and cries out for a clean heart and a right spirit (Psalm 51:10). Only time can verify this desire. A time of rehabilitation may be necessary to prove the sincerity of the repentant leader. David was lucky that he did not get the punishment, which the Law required, death by stoning. His repentance saved him from that destructive kind of punishment, but it did not save him from further consequences of his immoral act. David would have to deal with a rebellious son, who would gain the confidence of enough people that he would lose public confidence and trust for a period of time. Absalom took advantage of the situation by listening to those who could not get a hearing from David (2 Samuel 15:1-6). Most of the leaders in Jerusalem could see through Absalom’s so-called concern for social justice, and remained suspicious of his real motives. He had reacted with a vengeance against his brother Amnon, who had raped his sister Tamar, having him killed while he was drunk (2 Samuel 13:28). This is no way for political or religious leaders to act, even when they pretend to have the public interest in mind.

Political and religious leaders who cannot hear the Will of God for their personal lives cannot be trusted to make decisions for the public or for churches in social matters. There are plenty of good moral people who would not make good leaders. They lack the gifts and graces for leadership. Every leader however must take seriously the relationship between personal moral behavior and the ability to serve the public good. God cannot be in one's social decisions without being in one's personal life.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 2 Samuel



Abishai saves David's Life by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

14. Events in David's Reign 2 Samuel 21:1—24:25

24. EVENTS IN DAVID'S REIGN (21:1 – 24:25)			
THE FAMINE AND APPEASEMENT OF GIBEON (21:1-14)			
This whole section belongs prior to 2 Samuel 9			
Two Sons from Rizpah (Saul's Concubine)		Five Sons from Merab (Saul's Daughter)	
THE DEFEAT OF THE PHILISTINE GIANTS (21:15-22)			
Abishai kills Isbibenob	Sibbecai kills Saph	Elhanan kills Goliath	Jonathan kills the Deformed Giant
DAVID'S SONG OF VICTORY (22:15-22)			
Synonymous Parallelism (22:7)	Synthetic Parallelism (22:18)	Antithetical Parallelism (22:28)	
DAVID'S LAST WORDS (23:1-7)			
The King stands before God		The Perpetuity of the Dynasty	
MEN FROM DAVID'S SPECIAL GUARD (23:8-39)			
The Three Mighty Men: Josheb-basshebeth, Eleazar, and Shammah		The Order of the Thirty 32 in 2 Samuel; 47 in 1 Chronicles 11:11-47	
THE CENSUS AND THE PESTILENCE (24:1-25)			
The Lord calls for a Census		Satan call for a Census (1 Chronicles 21:1)	
Two Purposes for a Census: Military Enlistment and Taxation			
Results of the Census: 800,000 in Israel and 500,000 in Judah			
Punishment Options for David's taking of the Census			
Three Years of Famine	Three Months of Fleeing from his Enemies	Three Days of Pestilence 70,000 died in the Pestilence Field of Araunah Purchased	

14. EVENTS IN DAVID'S REIGN

2 Samuel 21:1—24:25

ASSIGNMENTS			
The Famine and Defeat of the Philistines 21:1-22	David's Song of Victory 22:1-51	David's Last Words and the Special Guard 23:1-39	The Census and Pestilence 24:1-25

With Sheba's death the nation was united and at peace. The writer now brings together some events and information from various periods in David's reign.

THE FAMINE AND APPEASEMENT OF GIBEON (21:1-14)

A three-year famine caused David to consider what wrong might have been done against God. He decided that it was probably Saul's mistreatment of the Gibeonites, who had a treaty with the Israelites (See Joshua 9:3-27). No mention of Saul's killing of Gibeonites is made elsewhere in the scriptures, but the mention of it here seems to indicate some such act of brutality took place.

The Gibeonites were remnants of the Amorites. David offered to make expiation to them for what Saul did, but the Gibeonites responded by saying that gold and silver would not help. They wanted seven of Saul's sons hung before the Lord at Gibeon. David agreed and spared Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, because of his own pact and friendship with Jonathan. He then gave two sons of Rizpah (Saul's concubine), and five sons of Merab (Saul's daughter). The seven were put to death in the first days of the Barley Harvest, but the bodies were exposed all summer until the fall rains came. Then David went to Jabesh-gilead and got the bones of Saul and Jonathan and gathered up the bones of the seven sons and grandsons of Saul, and buried them all at Zela, an unknown place. These events all should be put into the story just prior to 2 Samuel 9 in order to better understand what then follows.

DEFEAT OF THE PHILISTINE GIANTS (21:15-22)

More wars with the Philistines are described and four giants are killed. The persons killing the giants are as follows:

Abishai killed Ishbibenob

This giant had a bronze spear weighing about 7 1/2 pounds (300 shekels) and threatened David. Abishai interceded and killed him, suggesting that the life of the “Lamp of Israel” (King of Israel) not be risked.

Sibbecai killed Saph from Gob

In I Chronicles 20:4, Sippai is named, but we are probably talking about the same person.

Elhanan killed Goliath from Gob

The story seems to conflict with David’s killing of Goliath in 1 Samuel 17. How can this be reconciled? One authority says that it was the brother of Goliath (1 Chronicles 20:5), and another explanation says that another giant took on the name of Goliath after the original one was killed by David. A final explanation is that Elhanan was another name for David, much as Jedidiah was another name for Solomon, but this cannot be proven.

Jonathan killed the Deformed Giant from Gath

The giant had six fingers and six toes on each hand and foot.

DAVID’S SONG OF VICTORY (22:1-51)

It was common for editors to insert a *Song of Victory* as a great leader found time to rest from his enemies. One only has to compare this Song of Victory with that of Moses found in Deuteronomy 32:1-47, or with Psalm 18:1-50, which are almost word for word the same as 2 Samuel 22:1-51.

Hebrew poetry is well illustrated in this Psalm. It is conceptual rather than rhyming. Three patterns can be seen. First there is the “synonymous parallelism” of verse 7, in which the first line is simply repeated in the second line, using different words but containing the same meaning. Next there is the “synthetic parallelism” of verse 18, in which the second line adds a new thought; and finally, there is the “antithetical parallelism” of verse 28, in which the second line presents an opposite idea.

Like Psalm 18, this is a Royal Psalm, expressing the Holy War tradition. 2 Samuel 22:2b-3 presents God in terms of nature: rock, stronghold, refuge, and fortress. These are also military images. When David asks how he will deal with his enemies, the answer comes in a theophany, that is, a revelation from God. This theophany is described in 2 Samuel 22:8-16, with verses 14-15 focusing on God as a warrior. The main point of the Psalm is that the King is not an absolute monarch, but like everyone else in the covenant community, responsible first to God. He too must obey the divine laws of the covenant, which then guarantees victory to him and his people. Failure to obey those laws will bring about disaster. Because of David’s faith, he is promised victory, which will last

forever, even through his descendants. It is not David who has defeated his enemies, but the Lord (2 Samuel 22:44).

DAVID'S LAST WORDS (23:1-7)

This last Psalm of David's, using "synonymous parallelism," also contains his last words. See 1 Kings 2 for his final charge to Solomon. These thoughts bring to mind Psalm 1 and Proverbs 4:10-19, and center on what makes a good ruler, mainly his standing before God and the perpetuity of his dynasty. While David refers to himself as the ideal ruler, only Jesus Christ has adequately fulfilled these two requirements.

MEN FROM DAVID'S SPECIAL GUARD (23:8-39)

The passage comes out of the context of the Philistine wars, and is really a continuation of 2 Samuel 21:15-22. It can also be found in 1 Chronicles 11:11-47, where there is some variation with names and details. Instead of thirty-two men, Chronicles contains a list of forty-seven. Joab's name is not listed. Perhaps he was assumed because he was the overall commander. The names listed here are in two categories, the THREE and the THIRTY. Abishai seems to rule over the three (23:18).

It must not be assumed that the THIRTY is limited to thirty. At the end of the chapter a total is given of thirty-seven, which can only be arrived at by assuming that Jashen had six sons, or else the THREE MIGHTY MEN along with Abishai and Benaiah must be included with the thirty-two to make thirty-seven. Abishai and Benaiah are described as great men, but not equal to the MIGHTY THREE. Note that Uriah, the one David betrayed, is listed last.

The Three Mighty Men

1. Josheb-basshebeth. The name was probably an error in copying. Scholars say that his name should really be Ishbaal. He was the mightiest, for he killed 800 men at one time by himself.
2. Eleazar. He slew Philistines until his hand was weary.
3. Shammah. He slew Philistines when the others fled.

The Order of the Thirty

- | | | |
|------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. Asahel | 11. Heleb | 21. Ahaim |
| 2. Elhanan | 12. Ittai | 22. Eliphelet |
| 3. Shammah | 13. Benaiah | 23. Eliam |
| 4. Elikah | 14. Hiddai | 24. Hezro |
| 5. Helez | 15. Abialbon | 25. Paarai |
| 6. Ira | 16. Azmaveth | 26. Igal |

- | | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| 7. Abiezer | 17. Eliahba | 27. Bani |
| 8. Mebunnai | 18. Sons of Jashen ¹ | 28. Zelek |
| 9. Zalmon | 19. Jonathan | 29. Naharai |
| 10. Maharai | 20. Shammah | 30. Ira |
| | | 31. Gareb |
| | | 32. Uriah |

THE CENSUS AND THE PESTILENCE (24:1-25)

This section belongs with 21:1-14 and prior to Chapter 9. The point is that natural calamity is caused by the wrath of God against human sin and that it can only be stopped as one appeases God by some significant act of piety. The Old Testament knows nothing of secondary causes. The Lord causes everything, good and bad, to happen; the events in nature and history are but manifestations of his wrath or mercy.

In 2 Samuel it is the Lord who commands David to make the census, but in 1 Chronicles 21:1 it is Satan. We have a theological debate developing. It seemed inconsistent to the Chronicler that God should call for a census and then punish David for carrying it out. Taking a census was considered to be a sin, and even Joab knew that and hesitated; but because David ordered it, he carried out the census anyway. Israel was found to have 800,000 men able to bear arms and Judah 500,000, a total of 1,300,000 fighting men. This was a considerable number, given the size of the country.

Taking a census had to do with military enlistment, taxation, or both. It also meant that they did not fully trust in God and that God's wrath would follow. The prophet Gad informed David of his options, which were three: (1) three years of famine, (2) three months of fleeing from his enemies, or (3) three days of pestilence. David preferred to fall under the wrath of God, instead of men, so he took the three days of pestilence. In those three days 70,000 persons died. As the pestilence approached Jerusalem, the Lord repented and Jerusalem was spared from the disaster. In order to stop the pestilence, however, David was expected to do something. What he did was to purchase the threshing floor of Araunah for 50 shekels (\$20.00). This was a significant purchase because it was close to the place where Abraham offered up Isaac and which was to become the site of Solomon's Temple. (Genesis 22:2; 1 Chronicles 22:1; and 2 Chronicles 3:1) Araunah wanted to give him the site, along with sacrificial animals; but David insisted on paying for everything, saying: "I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing." (2 Samuel 24:24)

RELIGIOUS FAITH AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

David has become the ideal King (Messiah), because he has managed to keep religious faith and political leadership together. He never went to war without consulting God and whenever he was confronted over his misdeeds, he expressed true repentance. He faced

¹There are several sons of Jashen bringing the number of the order of the 30 to 37.

the consequences of his sin and learned from the experience. Most of all he never tried to rule apart from his faith in God, even if he was not made perfect by that faith. historical and natural events were interpreted theologically and faith lay behind every political decision.

Can religious faith form the basis for political leadership today? One might look at the reign of David and conclude that his attempt to make political decisions on the basis of religious faith led to the Holy War attitude in which many were killed on the battlefield in the name of God. That was certainly true in David's rule, and every attempt to make political decisions on the basis of religious faith is likely to justify violence in the name of religion.

The political leader, however, never stands above God and never has the right to do as he or she pleases, justifying anything and everything in the name of God. Such leadership will lead inevitably to disaster. Every political leader must rule justly, and that requires religious faith. 2 Samuel 23:3b-5a describes the relationship that must exist between God and a political ruler:

One who rules over people justly, ruling in the fear of God, is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land. Is not my house like this with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure.

It is not enough to claim that God is on your side. You must also align yourself on God's side and that is precisely what David was trying to do. Every political leader must make political decisions that are in line with the Will of God or the dynasty being built will fall from within.

The issue is not the *means* being used to establish justice in the world, but the *goal* being pursued. Violence sometimes has to be used for the cause of justice, but with much care and great reservations. The difficulty with violence is that it usually begins another cycle of violence and corrupts the end you are seeking. For this reason it can never be sanctified, but it can be useful in establishing an approximate justice in the world. When it aims at doing that, it can be part of God's activity in the world. Violence aimed at oppression and injustice can never play a positive role in divine activity; it can only play a negative one. God allows unjust rulers to win a few battles, but they will never win the war. In the end they will destroy themselves, because they have pursued political goals without religious faith, cutting themselves off from what God has set as the ultimate goals for history and for his eternal Kingdom.

The early messianic expectation arose out of the hopes of those who had seen their nation destroyed, because religious faith was separated from the realm of politics. Jerusalem came to an end because its kings and its people worshipped idols rather than the Lord. The same will happen to every nation that tries to proceed in the political realm without reference to religious faith. We may make fun of those who seem to fail to exercise good political leadership on the basis of religious faith, but in the end, they will be vindicated.

The endless cycles of the rise and fall of nations is related to this separation of faith and politics. If it seems as if a nation is falling because religion has been brought into the political process, it is only because we do not see the larger picture. It could also be because religion is only being used to justify political activity. It is difficult to discern which might be the case.

What is clear is that every political decision that is properly lined up with the Will of God cannot fail. It can only succeed. The question that needs to be asked is not whether religious faith and political decisions should be related, but how one can discern the Will of God as one makes such decisions. The answer to this question lies not in the story of David, but in the teachings of Jesus. David inquired of God. Jesus is the revelation of God. David made mistakes, but repented of them. Jesus claimed that his Will was identical with the Will of God, and then he proceeded to demonstrate the validity of his teachings with his life and death. His resurrection from the dead is not only a confirmation of life after death, but it is also the voice of God confirming everything Jesus said and did. His victory is not only over death, but also over all the powers of injustice and oppression. The major battle has been won and all that remains is mopping up action. The end is in sight, even if there are setbacks along the way.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 1 Kings



The Judgment of Solomon by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

15. The Glory of Solomon

1 Kings 1:1 — 11:43

15. THE GLORY OF SOLOMON (965-931 B.C.) (1 Kings 1:1 – 11:43)

THE END OF DAVID’S REIGN (1:1 – 2:12)

David in his Old Age (1:1-4)	Adonijah’s Claim to the Throne (1:5-10)	The Anointing of Solomon (1:11-53)	The Death of David (2:1-12)
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THE SECURING OF SOLOMON’S POSITION (2:13-46)

The Death of Adonijah (2:13-25)	The Banishment of Abiathar (2:26-27)	The Death of Joab (2:28-35)	The Death of Shimei (2:36-46)
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SOLOMON’S REIGN (3:1 – 11:43)

The Early Years (3:1 – 4:34)	The Building of the Temple (5:1 – 8:66)	The Later Years (9:1 – 11:43)
Solomon takes a Wife (3:1-2)	The Deal with Hiram (5:1-18)	Solomon’s Vision (9:1-9)
	The Temple is Built (6:1-38) <i>Vestibule Nave Inner Sanctuary Side Chambers</i>	The Agreement with Hiram (9:10-14)
Forced Labor (9:15-24)		
The Priestly Functions 9:25)		
The Navy (9:26-28)		
The Queen of Sheba (10:1-13)		
The Wisdom of Solomon (3:3-28 and 4:29-34)	The Total Complex (7:1-51) <i>House of the Forest Hall of Pillars Hall of Throne/Judgment Palaces Decorative Pillars Bronze/Molten Sea Ten Wheeled Statues</i>	Wealth and Power (14:14-29)
The Organization of Solomon (4:1-19)		The Downfall (11:1-13)
The Wealth of Solomon (4:20-28)		Enemies: Hadad, Rezon, Jeroboam (11:14-40)
		Dedication of the Temple (8:1-66)

15. THE GLORY OF SOLOMON (965-931 B.C.E.)

1 Kings 1:1—11:43

ASSIGNMENTS				
Solomon takes over from David 1:1—2:46	The Early Years of Solomon's Reign 3:1—4:34	The Building of the Temple 5:1—6:38	The Total Complex and The Dedication 7:1—8:66	The Later Years of Solomon's Reign 9:1—11:43

INTRODUCTION TO KINGS

965-853 B.C.E.

The Name

1 and 2 Kings, like 1 and 2 Samuel were originally one volume in the Hebrew Bible. They became two when translated into the Greek. The title is obvious, though in the *Septuagint*, the title was *Kingdoms*. In most English Bibles, the Hebrew designation of *Kings* is kept.

The Authorship

The author is unknown, although he is probably a prophet from the Southern Kingdom, who wrote this material down while in captivity in Babylon. Many sources have been used, and the author is only an editor.

Three references are mentioned in 1 and 2 Kings. They are *The Book of the Acts of Solomon*, *The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel*, and *The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah*. If these latter two books were official records, then the authors would have had to be prophets or priests who had access to such records. Such access might have been easier to obtain in Exile. The author invites us to read these sources for ourselves for additional information about the monarchy, but these books have been lost and are not available to us. The implication is that they were available to the common reader at the time.

The Date

Kings may consist of material put together in two separate editions, one having been written prior to the death of Josiah in 609 B.C.E., and the other having been edited around 550 B.C.E. This would have followed the fall of Jerusalem in 587/6 B.C.E., but had to precede the fall of Babylon in 538 B.C.E.

Accurate dates of the various Kings are not given, but approximate dates can be assigned by making comparisons between events in Israel and Judah and with Babylonian history as well. Three dates can be arrived at with some certainty, and they are the division of the Kingdom into Israel and Judah in 930 B.C.E., the fall of Samaria in 722/1 B.C.E., and the fall of Jerusalem in 587/6 B.C.E. These events span both 1 and 2 Kings.

The Purpose

The purpose of Kings is threefold:

1. To preserve a record of the monarchy from the time of Solomon to the fall of Jerusalem.
2. To show how the good kings were those faithful to the commandments of God.
3. To describe God's judgment on a sinful nation, as that judgment was pronounced by the prophets.

The intent of the authors or editors is not to give us a mere political account of any of the Kings, but to deal with whether or not they were faithful to the covenant. In dealing with God, they do not discuss the nature and being of God; rather, they describe God's judgment on Kings and nations, who violate the covenant. Their purpose is to explain why Israel and Judah fell, and why they now find themselves in Exile in Babylon. It is because they violated the covenant.

1 & 2 KINGS		
1 Kings 1:1—11:43		1 Kings 12:1—2 Kings 1:18
The Glory of Solomon		The Divided Kingdom
2 Kings 1:19—8:15	2 Kings 8:16—17:41	2 Kings 18:1—25:30
The Prophet Elisha	Kings of Israel and Judah	The Last Kings of Judah

The Outline

- A. The Glory of Solomon. (1:1—11:43)
 - 1. The End of David's Reign (1:1—2:12)
 - 2. Solomon Becomes King. (2:13-46)
 - 3. Solomon's Reign. (3:1—11:43)

- B. The Divided Kingdom (12:1—1:18)
 - 1. The Revolt of the Northern Tribes (12:1—14:20)
 - 2. The Kings of Judah and of Israel (14:21—16:34)
 - 3. The Prophet Elijah (17:1—19:21)
 - 4. Ahab (Israel) (20:1—22:40)
 - 5. Jehoshaphat (Judah) and Ahaziah (Israel) (22:41—1:18)

- C. The Prophet Elisha (2:1—8:15)
- D. The Kings of Israel and Judah (8:16—17:41)
 - 1. Jehu's Revolt and Purge (9:1—10:31)
 - 2. The End of Israel (722-721 B.C.E.)

- E. The Last Kings of Judah (18:1—25:30)
 - 1. Hezekiah (18:1—20:21)
 - 2. Josiah (22:1—23:30)
 - 3. The First Deportation (598 B.C.E.)
 - 4. The End of Judah (587-586 B.C.E.)

THE END OF DAVID'S REIGN (1:1—2:12)

David in His Old Age (1:1-4)

David began to show symptoms of senility, and so they appointed Abishag, a nurse, to watch over him. They believed that contact with a young virgin had powers to overcome senility, but there is no suggestion that Abishag did anything but serve as his nurse. She had no sexual relations with him.

Adonijah's Claim to the Throne (1:5-10)

Adonijah was the eldest living son, and he just assumed that he would inherit the throne. The older leadership, Joab and Abiathar, supported him; but there was opposition among some of the younger leaders, such as Zadok, Benaiah, and Nathan. Adonijah proceeded to make an offering at En-rogel, a source of water southeast of the city. This was a sacred and appropriate place for an event of this kind. A feast was also involved, but none of the opposition was invited.

The Anointing of Solomon (1:11-53)

Nathan initiated a plan by asking Bathsheba to discuss the matter with David, and to remind him of his promise to make Solomon King. After discussing the matter with Bathsheba and Nathan, David instructed both Nathan and Benaiah to make preparations for the coronation of Solomon. Solomon was to ride on David's own mule, and they were to go to the Spring of Gihon, where Zadok was to anoint him with scented olive oil. A trumpet was to be blown and they were all to cry out, "Long live King Solomon." Finally, the King was to take his place on the throne itself.

While Adonijah and his followers were prematurely feasting, they heard what was taking place and realized that their lives were in danger. Therefore, Adonijah touched the horns of the altar, which was a symbolic act invoking God's protection. Upon being told about this, Solomon sent a message to him promising a royal pardon if he remained loyal to the new king, but at the first sign of disloyalty he would be put to death. Adonijah quietly retired from public life.

The Death of David (2:1-12)

As David was dying, he called Solomon in for some final instructions, mainly that he was to obey the Lord and the written Law of Moses. Then he instructed Solomon to do three things he was unable to do himself: (1) to make sure Joab did not die a natural death; (2) to fulfill a debt of gratitude to Barzillai through his family; and (3) to punish Shimei. David had sworn that he would not kill Shimei, but Solomon was not bound by his promise. After he gave these instructions to Solomon, David died, having served as King for 40 years (seven from Hebron and 33 from Jerusalem). He reigned from 1000 to 965 B.C.E.

THE SECURING OF SOLOMON'S POSITION (2:13-46)

The Death of Adonijah (2:13-25)

Adonijah asked Bathsheba to intercede for him to her son Solomon in an attempt to get Abishag for his wife. Bathsheba was reluctant, but agreed to discuss the matter with Solomon. Solomon interpreted this request as a challenge to the throne. Abishag belonged to David's harem, and the loss of even one concubine was indeed a serious matter. Such loss demonstrated the weakness of the King; therefore, Solomon instructed Benaiah to execute Adonijah immediately. The purge could not stop with Adonijah, but had to continue with those who had supported him.

The Banishment of Abiathar (2:26-27)

Abiathar had supported Adonijah, but because he had been a close friend of David, his life was spared. It was probably spared also because he was a priest, but his priestly duties were over and he was banished to Anathoth, his ancestral home.

The Death of Joab (2:28-35)

When Joab heard what had happened, he sought sanctuary by grasping the horns on the altar, as Adonijah had done earlier. Solomon sent Benaiah to kill him, but Joab was unwilling to leave the sacred area. Benaiah was reluctant to kill him there, and so he returned to Solomon for advice. Solomon instructed him to kill him at the shrine for his double sin of killing Abner (commander of Israel) and Amasa (commander of Judah). Benaiah went to the shrine and executed him on the spot and then buried him on his own property, east of Bethlehem (2 Samuel 2:32). With these executions accomplished, Solomon replaced Abiathar with Zadok as the new high priest, and Joab with Benaiah as the new military commander. The new regime was in place, but there was still one more potential threat in Shimei.

The Death of Shimei (2:36-46)

Solomon promised not to kill Shimei if he built a house in Jerusalem and agreed to stay there. If he were to even cross the brook of Kidron, just outside the eastern wall of the city, he would be killed. Shimei managed to stay in Jerusalem for three years, but then two of his slaves ran away to Gath and he went after them. When Solomon found out that Benaiah had successfully killed Shimei, he knew that his position was secure.

SOLOMON'S REIGN (3:1—11:43)

The Early Years (3:1—4:34)

Solomon takes a Wife (3:1-2)

Nothing can be said about this Egyptian princess; only, that she was the daughter of an Egyptian Pharaoh, which in itself is saying something.

The Wisdom of Solomon (3:3-28 & 4:29-34)

Although one Greek manuscript states that Solomon began his reign when he was 12, Josephus wrote that he was 14. He was probably more like 20 years of age (3:7), and by this time, he was very religious. He sacrificed both at the altars in Gibeon and Jerusalem. In Gibeon the Lord appeared to him in a dream asking him what he wanted. Solomon's answer was "Wisdom," which pleased the Lord; and so wisdom was granted.

An example of his wisdom is illustrated with the story of the two harlots claiming the same child. Both apparently had a child, but one died, and now both were claiming the same one. They asked Solomon to pass judgment on the claim, and Solomon's answer was to cut the child in two and give each woman half. The mother then gave up her claim, and Solomon recognized her as the true mother. The child was given to her. This story spread throughout the Kingdom. It not only illustrates Solomon's wisdom, but also the fact that the common people had access to their King.

As a source of wisdom, Solomon is given credit for 3,000 proverbs and 1005 songs. He expressed his wisdom in proverbs, songs, and sayings based on natural and animal life. Some examples of this can be found in Psalm 72 and 127 and Proverbs 10:1—22:16. As Moses became known for his Laws and David his Psalms, Solomon became known for his Proverbs of Nature and Wisdom. Too bad he was not wise in the way he treated people and administrated the government.

The Organization of Solomon (4:1-19)

The royal cabinet of Solomon consisted of the following offices and officials:

Priest: Azariah (son of Zadok)
Secretaries: Elihoreph and Ahijah
Recorder: Jehoshaphat
Military Commander: Benaiah
Priests: Zadok and Abiathar (?)
Over the Officers: Azariah
Priest and King's Friend: Zabud
Over the Palace: Ahishar
Over Forced Labor: Adoniram

Abiathar is incorrect. According to 1 Kings 2:35, he was removed from his priestly office for having supported Adonijah.

The palace needed food, and so Solomon organized all of Israel into 12 administrative districts. Each district was to provide the palace with one month's supply of food. The names of the district leaders are as follows:

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Ben-hur | 7. Ahinadab |
| 2. Ben-deker | 8. Ahimaaz* |
| 3. Ben-hesed | 9. Baana |
| 4. Ben-abinadab* | 10. Jehoshaphat |
| 5. Baana | 11. Shimei |
| 6. Ben-geber | 12. Geber |

No name is given for Judah. Judah might have been given tax-exempt status, and this might have contributed to the revolt at the end of Solomon's reign.

Another development that might have contributed to Solomon's eventual downfall is his filling positions with his sons-in-laws. The two men marked by asterisks above married his daughters Taphath and Basemath.

The Wealth of Solomon (4:20-28)

Solomon's monarchy exercised its influence from the Philistine border to the Euphrates River. Peace and prosperity were present for all. All of them "...under their vines and fig trees" (4:25) meant that everyone prospered. There was, however, a price to be paid for such peace and prosperity. Every district had to provide the palace with its daily provisions for one month. Every day the palace needed:

- 30 Cors of fine flour (150 bushels)
- 60 Cors of meal (300 bushels)
- 10 Fat oxen (stall-fed cattle)
- 20 Pasture-fed cattle
- 100 Sheep, harts (deer), gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl (poultry)

In addition to these needs, there were 40,000 (or 4,000) stalls of horses for his chariots and 12,000 horsemen working for him. All these had to be cared for and supported.

The Building of the Temple (5:1—8:66)

The Deal with Hiram (5:1-18)

Solomon turned to Hiram, a friend of his father, David, for the cedar and cypress wood (2 Samuel 5:11-12). Hiram was the King of Tyre, a city closely tied to Sidon. These cities became the two major city-states of the Phoenicians, which gained a reputation for a vast maritime enterprise. Purple dye and cedar were their main exports. Cedar was desirable

because of its resistance to rot and insects, and because of its grain, which made it suitable for carving. These famous trees have almost become extinct in Lebanon. Both Lebanon and Israel are currently trying to replenish their forests by planting trees.

Solomon had decided to build the Temple at this time because they were at peace, and he seems to indicate to Hiram that David was unable to do so because of the many wars with which he had to deal. The deal made with Hiram was to exchange food for wood. In exchange for the cedar and cypress, Solomon promised to give them 20,000 cors of wheat (125,000 bushels) and 20,000 cors of fine oil (1,000,000 gallons). (The Good News Bible says 100,000 bushels and 110,000 gallons.)

Solomon was also to supply 30,000 forced laborers to work in Lebanon, with 10,000 working there each month. That meant one month in Lebanon and two months at home. Adoniram (Adoram or Hadoram) was in charge of this forced labor, which eventually caused trouble for the kingdom. There were also 70,000 laborers bearers and 80,000 stonemasons, supervised by 3,300 supervisors.

The Temple is Built (6:1-38)

The Temple was built in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, about 960 B.C.E. This was about 300-325 years after the Exodus. The number 480 refers to 12 generations of about 40 years each and not to the precise number of years following the Exodus. Construction began in the month of Ziv (April/May) and ended in the month of Bul (Oct/Nov). The Temple was a place for God to live and not a gathering place for the congregation; hence, it was more like the size of a chapel than a cathedral. The congregation was to gather in the court outside of the Temple. The Temple itself consisted of the following rooms:

Vestibule (Entrance Hall): 30 feet wide by 15 feet deep.

Nave (Main Room): 30 feet wide by 60 feet deep.

Inner Sanctuary (Holy of Holies): 30 feet by 30 feet.

Side Chambers: They surrounded the Nave and Inner Sanctuary, but not the Vestibule, and were used for storage.

The Temple stood 45 feet high. All the stone was prepared at the quarry so that construction could take place in silence.

On the inside, cedar covered the stone, so that no stone could be seen. Cedar was highly valued, but everything was covered with gold; and figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers were carved into the wood.

The Ark was placed in the Inner Sanctuary and two cherubim 15 feet high were placed there with it. The cherubim were winged creatures with human heads and animal bodies. They also appeared on the thrones of Kings and guarded them. The cherubim were made of olive wood as were all the doors in the Temple. The whole project took between 6¹/₂ to 7¹/₂ years.

The Total Complex (7:1-51)

The palace and administrative complex took 13 years to build. Along with the Temple there were also the following buildings:

House of the Forest of Lebanon (7:2-5) This was probably an armory. It was 150 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. It was larger than the Temple.

Hall of Pillars (7:6) This was a covered portico in front of the House of the Forest of Lebanon.

Hall of the Throne/Judgment (7:7) This might have been where Solomon heard the claim of the two women for the same child (1 Kings 3:16-28).

The Palaces (7:8) One was for Solomon and the other for his wife, the Pharaoh's daughter. While it took seven years to build the Temple, it took 13 years to build the Palace (6:38 and 7:1).

There were also a number of items related to the Temple in the way of furnishings, which were built by Hiram, a craftsman from Tyre. He is not to be confused with Hiram, the King from Tyre, who furnished Solomon with all the cedar. The furnishings cast in bronze, are as follows:

Two Decorative Pillars (7:15-22) They were placed at the entrance to the Temple, and given the names of Jachin (on the north) and Boaz (on the south). These names mean "God establishes" and "He comes with power." It was common practice to have pillars of this type at the entrance to a Temple. They were 6 feet thick and 27 feet high.

Bronze/Molten Sea (7:23-26) This was 15 feet wide and 8 feet deep and held 10,000 gallons of water. It was a place where the priests could cleanse themselves. Twelve oxen, facing outwards, held it up. It was located on the southeastern corner.

Ten Wheeled Stands (7:27-38) These stands supported more bowls or layers and were used for sacrificial rites. Five were located on the south side and five on the north side of the Temple.

Miscellaneous Equipment (7:40ff) Pots, shovels, and basins were also made of bronze.

Temple Furnishings (Nave) Solomon made the following furnishings for the Temple: a golden altar for incense; a golden table for the bread of presence; and ten golden lampstands, five to be placed on the north side and five on the south side of the entrance into the Inner Sanctuary (the Holy of Holies).

Dedication of the Temple (8:1-66)

The Temple was finally dedicated eleven months later. It was done in the seventh month, the month of Ethanim or Tishri (Sept./Oct.), the religious New Year, which was the high point of the year.

The main part of the dedication was taking the Ark of the Covenant from the City of David into the Temple itself and the placement of it in the Inner Sanctuary (the Holy of Holies). According to 1 Kings 8:9 the Ark only contained the two Tables of Stone. The manna and Aaron's staff are not even mentioned.

1 Kings 8:10-11 describes the accompanying presence of God in the Temple, but later Solomon warns that even the Temple cannot contain God (1 Kings 8:27). The idea being expressed here is that the Temple is a symbolic image of the presence of God on earth. The Israelites have been chosen as God's people so "that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no other." (1 Kings 8:60)

So many sheep and oxen were sacrificed that they couldn't be counted. Solomon addressed the people and offered a prayer. Then Peace Offerings, Burnt Offerings, and Cereal Offerings were made, and 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep were given as Peace Offerings. Following this a feast was held for seven days. It had to be expanded for another seven days, making the festivities last for two weeks. Thus, in such splendor was the Temple dedicated.

The Later Years (9:1—11:43)

Solomon's Vision (9:1-9)

In response to Solomon's dedicatory prayer, the Lord appeared to him in a second vision to state the conditions of the covenant and the continuation of his dynasty. Disobedience would lead to national ruin, and even the destruction of the temple.

Solomon's Agreement with Hiram (9:10-14)

The building operation that lasted for 20 years left Solomon's treasury empty, and so he had to sell 20 cities to Hiram to refill it. The amount Hiram sent was 120 talents of gold (5 tons). The value of one gold talent, which weighed about 75 pounds, has been estimated at \$30,000. Hiram was not satisfied with the cities and called the whole area in which they were located, "Cabul," which was a derogatory name. The meaning is uncertain.

Solomon's Forced Labor (9:15-24)

Solomon built up Jerusalem by extending the wall to enclose the palace and temple and constructed the Millo, which is usually understood as an earthwork south of the Temple area, which needed constant repair. He used two kinds of forced labor to do this: (1)

Canaanites as permanent slaves, and (2) Israelites as short-term, forced labor. The Israelites were called soldiers, officials, commanders, captains, chariot commanders, and horsemen. Five hundred and fifty chief officers were needed to supervise the work.

Solomon's Priestly Functions (9:25)

As King Solomon still exercised certain priestly functions, mainly that of performing the religious duties related to the three annual feasts prescribed for all Israelites. These feasts would have been Passover, Pentecost, and Booths (Tabernacles).

Solomon's Navy (9:26-28)

Solomon was the first of Israel's Kings to establish a Navy, which was stationed at Ezion-geber at the north end of the Red Sea (Gulf of Aqaba). Its purpose was purely commercial. Gold was brought from Ezion-geber to King Solomon. Its original source was Ophir, an unknown place. According to 1 Kings 10:22, it took them three years to make the trip, which would suggest a distant place as far away as India or East Africa.

The Queen of Sheba (10:1-13)

The Queen of Sheba came from Southwest Arabia (Yemen) in order to find out whether the news of Solomon's wisdom and prosperity were true. In keeping with Oriental etiquette, she gave him gifts of spices, gold, and precious stones. She was very impressed by what she saw, and Solomon gave her whatever she asked for as she departed for home. 1 Kings 10:11-12 is an interlude to describe Solomon's commercial Navy and its cargo of precious stones and Almug wood. Almug wood was probably used to make musical instruments.

Solomon's Wealth and Power (10:14-29)

Every year Solomon received 666 talents (25 tons) of gold, plus taxes, profits, and tribute. He made from this gold, 200 large shields containing 3 Minas of gold each. (A shekel equalled $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. or 11.4 gm., and a Mina equalled $1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. or 500 gm.) These shields were too soft for use in battle, and so they were stored in the House of the Forest of Lebanon (Armory). In addition to the shields Solomon had a rare ivory throne overlaid with gold. All his drinking vessels were of gold.

His fleet of ships of Tarshish (deep sea cargo vessels) travelled with Hiram, but once every three years they returned home with gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks. The whole world sought his wisdom and brought gifts to him in return. The nation had an active business importing chariots from Egypt for 600 shekels (pieces of silver) and horses from Egypt (should be Musri) and Kue (Cilicia). Musri and Cilicia were the major centers for horse breeding. Solomon himself had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses (not horsemen). The whole nation prospered, and silver was as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones.

Solomon's Downfall (11:1-13)

Solomon's downfall came through his 700 wives and 300 concubines. Most of whom came to him from foreign countries. As he became older, he was more easily influenced by these foreign women to turn to their gods. The gods were four in number: (1) Ashtoreth (Astarte), the Phoenician fertility goddess, or goddess of the Sidonians; (2) Milcom, the god of the Ammonites, whose name means "King" and was sometimes shortened to (3) Molech; and finally (4) Chemosh, an astral deity and Moabite god.

Solomon built altars on the mountain east of Jerusalem for these pagan deities; and because Solomon came under the influence of them, God promised to break up the united monarchy. Solomon's son would have control over Judah, but the Tribes of Israel would pull away. The problem with the above gods is that worship of them involved child sacrifice, fertility rites, prostitution, and sexual deviation. The nation had been warned in Deuteronomy 17:17, and Solomon should have been aware of the dangers of allowing the faith of Israel to be corrupted.

Solomon's Enemies (11:14-40)

Solomon's enemies were three in number.

First, there was Hadad, the Edomite. When David conquered Edom a young Edomite prince fled south to the desert of Midian; and, he managed to make his way through the Wilderness of Paran (in the Sinai Peninsula) to Egypt. Obviously, a general massacre occurred in the Edomite invasion, from which Hadad escaped. Following the deaths of David and Joab, he returned to Edom and revolted against Solomon.

Next, there was Rezon. When David's armies defeated Syria, Rezon managed to escape the slaughter. He became a bandit chief, and after Solomon became King, he was able to establish an independent Syrian state at Damascus, which remained an enemy of Israel for a long time.

Finally, there was Jeroboam, the Ephraimite. Solomon recognized how hard a worker Jeroboam was and made him a supervisor of the forced labor among the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim (House of Joseph). One day as Jeroboam was travelling from Jerusalem he met Ahijah, who tore his new robe into twelve pieces and gave Jeroboam ten pieces. This was to symbolize that the Lord would give ten tribes to Jeroboam to rule, and that only one tribe would continue under the rule of Solomon's son, as a favor to David. This was, of course, dependent upon Jeroboam's faithfulness to the Covenant. When Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam, he escaped to the protection of Shishak, an Egyptian ruler. He stayed there until Solomon's death.

The Death of Solomon (11:41-43)

Solomon ruled for 40 years. This is not to be taken as an exact historical number. Following Solomon's death, he was buried in the City of David, that is, in Jerusalem. His

son, Rehoboam, took over as the new King, but this was to be seriously challenged by Jeroboam.

WHY KINGDOMS FALL

When Kingdoms fall, it is no accident. It is part of God's plan on earth, and no Kingdom falls without being warned many times over.

When the people of Israel first desired a King, Samuel warned them of the dangers. Even before Samuel warned them, they had been warned in Deuteronomy 17:14-20:

When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me," you may indeed set over you a king whom the LORD your God will choose. One of your own community you may set as king over you; you are not permitted to put a foreigner over you, who is not of your own community. Even so, he must not acquire many horses for himself, or return the people to Egypt in order to acquire more horses, since the LORD has said to you, "You must never return that way again." And he must not acquire many wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; also silver and gold he must not acquire in great quantity for himself. When he has taken the throne of his kingdom, he shall have a copy of this law written for him in the presence of the levitical priests. It shall remain with him and he shall read in it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, diligently observing all the words of this law and these statutes, neither exalting himself above other members of the community nor turning aside from the commandment, either to the right or to the left, so that he and his descendants may reign long over his kingdom in Israel.

The above needs to be translated into modern language. Three dangers are mentioned, which threaten not only to bring down the King, but also the Nation. They are too many horses, wives, and gold and silver.

"Too many horses" symbolizes "excessive military power." Solomon ruled in a relatively peaceful time, but he still spent an excessive amount of money on military preparation. He had more horses stabled in preparation for war than he needed, and that cost the nation too much money. The same is said of the arms race in our own time. We have enough weapons to destroy each other many times over. The cost is so high that we are unable to commit adequate resources to more constructive projects. This enables nations, such as Japan and West Germany, to catch up, if not pass us up in those areas; and it has been said that the losers of World War II are really the winners. Excessive expenditures on defense contribute to the demise of every nation that gets anxious about its own security. There is a place for security, but "too many horses" will cause the King and his Kingdom to fall.

The second symbol of excess is “too many wives.” In 1 Kings 3:1, “Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt...” These marriage alliances never stopped, and by the end of his life, according to 1 Kings 11:3, Solomon had seven hundred wives, (princesses) and three hundred concubines. All these wives symbolized political alliances that he was making with nations surrounding Israel. There is nothing wrong with forming alliances with other nations, but when those alliances become as numerous as did Solomon’s, then they become what the prophets called “entangling alliances.” It becomes difficult to keep track of all the competing self-interests of the nations with whom you have formed alliances, and that quickly gets you into trouble.

These entangling alliances were bad enough, but what really got Solomon into trouble was the idolatry of his wives and concubines who came from so many different nations and religious traditions.

For when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. For Solomon followed Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not completely follow the LORD, as his father David had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who offered incense and sacrificed to their gods. (1 Kings 11:4-8)

The entangling political alliances established by Solomon and the religious confusion introduced by his wives brought down Solomon’s Kingdom. In 1 Kings 11:11, God says: “Since this has been your mind and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you....”

The final symbol of danger to Solomon’s Kingdom, and to every other Kingdom that violates the principle is the excessive need for gold and silver. Even though silver was as plentiful in Jerusalem as stone (1 Kings 11:27), it was not without a high price. Gold and silver were needed to support Solomon’s building projects, and all this meant high taxes, slavery, and forced labor. People were oppressed in order to provide the military power symbolized by horses, the entangling alliances and support of wives and concubines, and the expensive palaces and other government buildings to make it all work. In the end, none of it worked; and Solomon’s entire Kingdom came crashing down. The same will happen to every other effort to build a nation with excessive military expenditures, entangling political alliances, and high taxation that oppresses people.

The warnings were given, but they were not heeded. Perhaps no prophet confronted Solomon, but that is no excuse. The Law clearly states in Deuteronomy 17:18-19 that the King’s responsibility is to “have a copy of this law written for him in the presence of the levitical priests. It shall remain with him and he shall read in it all the days of his life....” No political leader is exempt from knowing and understanding the principles, which

might bring down his or her nation; and if they are ignored, the Kingdom will fall. We can be certain of it.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Books of 1 and 2 Kings



Elijah Nourished by an Angel by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

16. The Divided Kingdom 1 Kings 12:1—2 Kings 1:18

16. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM (1 Kings 12:1—2 Kings 1:18)				
THE REVOLT OF THE NORTHERN TRIBES (12:1—14:20)				
Jeroboam's Revolt against Rehoboam (12:1-33)	The Prophetic Warning to Jeroboam (13:1-34)		Ahijah's Prophecy against Jeroboam (14:1-20)	
THE KINGS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL (14:21—16:34)				
Judah		Israel		
Rehoboam 922-915 [931-913] (14:21-31)	Nadab 901-900 [910-909] (15:25-32)		Zimri 876 [885] (16:15-20)	
Abijam 915-913 [913-911] (15:1-8)	Baasha 900-877 [909-886] (15:33—16:7)		Omri 876-869 [885-874] (16:21-28)	
Asa 913-873 [911-870] (15:9-24)	Elah 877-876 [886-885] (16:8-14)		Ahab 869-850 [874-853] (16:29-34)	
THE PROPHET ELIJAH (17:1—19:21)				
The Drought (17:1-7)	The Widow in Zarephath (17:8-24)	The Prophets of Baal (18:1-40)	On Mount Horeb (19:1-18)	The Death of Ahab (19:19-21)
KING AHAB OF ISRAEL (20:1—22:40)				
Ahab's Wars with Syria (20:1-43)	Naboth's Vineyard (21:1-29)	Micaiah warns Ahab (22:1-28)	The Death of Ahab (22:29-40)	
JEHOSHAPHAT OF JUDAH 873-849 [870-848] (22:41-50)		AHAZIAH OF ISRAEL 850-849 [853-852] (2 Kings 1:1-18)		

16. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

1 Kings 12:1—2 Kings 1:18

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Revolt of the Northern Tribes 12:1—14:20	The Kings of Judah and Israel 14:21—16:34	The Prophet Elijah 17:1—19:21	King Ahab of Israel 20:1—22:40	Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah 22:41—1:18

THE REVOLT OF THE NORTHERN TRIBES (12:1—14:20)

Jeroboam's Revolt against Rehoboam (12:1-33)

There must have been a problem, for Solomon's son, Rehoboam, felt it necessary to be confirmed as King in Shechem, rather than in Jerusalem, where his father had been anointed. When Jeroboam heard about this he returned from Egypt and he and the people approached Rehoboam concerning the oppression of the Northern Tribes.

Rehoboam asked for three days to consider their request. First, he asked advice from his older advisers and then from his younger advisers. The former recommended adherence to the request of Jeroboam, but the younger advisers recommended even more oppression. Rehoboam followed the advice of his younger advisers. There is no indication that he even thought of consulting God.

The people were angry and threatened the new King, who sent Adoram (Adoniram) to continue the oppression. When Adoram was stoned to death, Rehoboam fled to Jerusalem. The ten tribes made Jeroboam their King in Shechem and Rehoboam prepared to challenge them by gathering together 180,000 of his best soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The Tribe of Benjamin was probably split over the issue. Before Rehoboam could invade the Northern Tribes, the prophet Shemaiah advised him not to fight Israel. Shemaiah was a member of the prophetic party of Judah who favored division. Rehoboam listened to him and went home.

With the Kingdom divided, there was a political need to keep people from going to Jerusalem. So Jeroboam named Bethel and Dan as religious centers. He probably had more of a political reason than a religious one. One golden calf (bull) was placed at each center. The golden calf was not only a symbol of the god, Baal, but a forbidden image as well (Deuteronomy 5:8-9). It has been suggested that these golden bulls served as

pedestals upon which the Invisible Yahweh stood, much as did the two cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant; but Jeroboam built other shrines that could only be described as pagan and he also appointed priests, who were not Levites. One is reminded of the warning given in 1 Samuel 12:14-15. There was apostasy in both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, and no Kingdom could stand with this being the case.

The Prophetic Warning to Jeroboam (13:1-34)

A man of God (prophet from Judah) appeared at Bethel and criticized the establishment of a pagan shrine there. In allowing the Kingdom to split in two, God did not approve of a rival religious system in Bethel. The man of God predicted that Josiah would slay the priests of the illegitimate shrine, and that the altar would finally be torn down. Jeroboam attempted to lay hold of the man of God, but his arm was paralyzed and the altar was torn down immediately. The King asked the prophet to restore his hand, which was done; but the man of God refused to accept Jeroboam's invitation to share food and drink with him. This would have implied acceptance of Jeroboam and the man of God was under divine orders not to do that. In fact he was not to share food and drink with anyone in the northern kingdom.

The man of God (from Judah) is to be considered a true prophet. What follows is the story of a prophet from Bethel, who was not a very faithful prophet, but who is very much impressed by what the man of God has done. This prophet from Bethel, along with his sons, sought out the man of God (from Judah) and invited him to share food and drink. At first, the man of God refused, trying to remain loyal to his divine instructions; but the local prophet lied to him and told him that the Lord had instructed him to make the invitation. Hearing this, the man of God accepted the invitation.

As they were sitting at the table, the prophet from Bethel told the man of God from Judah that he would die for having disobeyed the Lord's instructions not to eat and drink with anyone in Israel. When they finished eating, the man of God from Judah left and met a lion, which killed him. When the prophet from Bethel heard the news, he and his sons buried him in the family tomb. He also instructed his sons to bury himself next to the man of God from Judah. He had not been a very good prophet, but he did admire this man of God who confronted Jeroboam.

Jeroboam had not only been warned, but had been healed as well. He still did not follow the Lord. He had been concerned about Solomon's oppression of the people, but this was not enough to justify him. To make things worse, he appointed priests to the high places from among all the people, paying no attention to the command that priests were only to come from the Tribe of Levi. His involvement with pagan shrines doomed him and his dynasty, which ended with the death of his son Nadab (1 Kings 15:25-30).

Two events indicate the date of the writing of this book. The first is the reference to Josiah, who died in 609 B.C.E. (1 Kings 13:2); and the second is the name of Samaria, which was not given to the Northern Tribes until the fall of Israel in 721 B.C.E. (1 Kings 13:32). The writer was obviously aware of both Josiah and the name Samaria, and so he

probably wrote this book around 600 B.C.E. to interpret historical events that occurred 300 years before his own time.

Ahijah's Prophecy against Jeroboam (14:1-20)

Ahijah, who encouraged Jeroboam to revolt and predicted his rise to the monarchy of Israel, turned against him in bitter disappointment. The writer knew how short-lived the House of Jeroboam was and tried to explain its fall in terms of religious apostasy.

The trouble began with the sickness of Abijah, Jeroboam's son. Jeroboam sent his wife in disguise to the aged and half-blind Ahijah to inquire concerning his child's welfare. The Lord informed the prophet of the deceit and when the Queen arrived, he recognized her and told her that Abijah would die as she returned home; moreover, the Lord would ultimately cut off the House of Jeroboam. The reason given was religious apostasy and the Canaanite fertility goddess, Asherah, whom they worshiped. No punishment could be more severe than to have your son suffer for your sins. This may seem cruel to us today. Ezekiel later taught a principle of individual accountability (Ezekiel 18:1-20), but our personal sins do have a way of affecting our innocent offspring.

As the Queen returned home to Tirzah, the capital, the child died as she came to the threshold of her house. Apparently, Jeroboam had moved the capital from Shechem to Tirzah, where it remained until Samaria was built. The rest of the story of Jeroboam could be read in the Book of the Chronicles of the Bible. Jeroboam's reign lasted 22 years, when his son, Nadab, became King.

THE KINGS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL (14:21—16:34)

Rehoboam (Judah) (922-915 B.C.E.) or [931-913 B.C.E.] (14:21-31)

Rehoboam reigned in Judah for 17 years and began his reign at the age of 41. It was common to give the name of a King's mother in Judah, although this was not done in Israel. She was Naamah, the Ammonite, one of Solomon's foreign wives.

Like Jeroboam in the north, Rehoboam also became corrupt. Illegitimate shrines, pillars, and Asherim were built and male cult prostitution was practiced (14:23ff).

In the fifth year of his reign, Shishak invaded Judah and took the gold shields, which Solomon had made. Shishak was the first ruler of the twelfth Dynasty in Egypt, and his invasion of Judah was primarily to gain booty, rather than to support Jeroboam's revolt. In fact, Egyptian records confirm this. Rehoboam responded by making new shields of bronze, which indicates the decline of his Kingdom.

There was also continual warfare with Jeroboam and that probably helped to deplete the treasury. This warfare consisted more of border skirmishes than of full-scale war.

Upon Rehoboam's death, his son, Abijam, took over as the King of Judah.

Abijam (Judah) (915-913 B.C.E.) or [913-911 B.C.E.] (15:1-8)

Abijam (sometimes Abijah) ruled in Judah for three years, and his mother was Maacah. He followed the sins of his father, Rehoboam, but God gave him a lamp for Jerusalem because of the faith of David. There was continual war between Abijam and Jeroboam. When Abijam died, his son, Asa, became King.

Asa (Judah) (913-873 B.C.E.) or [911-870 B.C.E.] (15:9-24)

Asa reigned in Judah for 41 years and his grandmother was Maacah. Maacah, the mother of Abijam, probably kept the position of Queen Mother, while Asa took over as a minor. Asa was considered a righteous King, who did everything right in the Lord's eyes. He removed the male prostitutes, the idols, and his own grandmother as Queen, because she had an abominable image made for Asherah. He cut the image down and had it burned.

Baasha, King of Israel, threatened Judah by fortifying Ramah in the tribal land of Benjamin. Ramah was located within five miles of Jerusalem. In order to relieve the pressure, Asa sent silver and gold to Benhadad of Damascus (Syria) to establish an alliance. This meant that Benhadad would have to break his alliance with Israel, which he gladly did. He invaded the northern border of Israel and caused Baasha to give up fortifying Ramah. When Asa died, his son Jehoshaphat replaced him as King.

Nadab (Israel) (901-900 B.C.E.) or [910-909 B.C.E.] (15:25-32)

All of the Kings of Israel were considered bad, but some were worse than others. Nadab, the son of Jeroboam ruled for two years. Baasha then conspired against him, assassinated him, and killed all the House of Jeroboam, as prophesied by Ahijah (1 Kings 14:10). This begins a whole series of assassinations in Israel. It must be remembered that there are ten tribes struggling to rule in Israel. In Judah there is essentially only one, which comes out of the lineage of David.

Baasha (Issachar/Israel) (900-877 B.C.E.) or [909-886 B.C.E.] (15:33—16:7)

Baasha, the son of Ahijah, began a new dynasty in Tirzah and ruled for 24 years; but he, too, was an evil king and the Lord raised up Jehu, a prophet, to speak against him. He told him his dynasty would go the way of Jeroboam's. When he died, his son, Elah, succeeded him.

Elah (Israel) (877-876 B.C.E.) or [886-885 B.C.E.] (16:8-14)

Elah reigned for two years until he was assassinated by Zimri, his military commander over half of his chariots. Zimri killed him while he was drunk in the twenty-seventh year of Asa's reign. Zimri, like Baasha, instigated a blood bath against his predecessor's house in fulfillment of prophecy.

Zimri (Israel) (876 B.C.E.) or [885 B.C.E.] (16:15-20)

Zimri's assassination of Elah touched off a civil war in Israel. Omri, a military commander, was made King, after which he attacked Tirzah, the capital. Zimri, recognizing the impossibility of escape, burned down the palace, and was burned up with it. His reign lasted seven days or one week. All this happened during the twenty-seventh year of Asa's reign in Judah.

Omri (Israel) (876-869 B.C.E.) or [885-874 B.C.E.] (16:21-28)

Omri became a very powerful and capable King for twelve years. He conquered Moab, formed an alliance with Sidon (Phoenicia) through the marriage of his son Ahab to Jezebel, and built and moved the capital from Tirzah to Samaria. His reign began with a four, or five year, power struggle with Tibni, but his supporters finally overcame Tibni and his forces. He did not begin reigning until the thirty-first year of Asa's (Judah) reign, but he became known beyond biblical sources. Moabite records confirm their affliction. For more than 150 years the Assyrians referred to Israel as the Land (or the House) of Omri. Archaeologists have also uncovered the wall of his palace in Samaria.

Ahab (Israel) (869-850 B.C.E.) or [874-853 B.C.E.] (16:29-34)

Ahab, the son of Omri, took over in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Asa of Judah. He reigned for 22 years, and he was the worst of all the kings. Religious life in Israel reached an all time low. He even married Jezebel, a Sidonian (Phoenician) princess, the daughter of the Sidonian King, Ethbaal, and attempted to substitute Baal worship for the worship of Yahweh. Baal means "master" or "lord" and the god Jezebel worshipped, was named "Melqart".

It was during Ahab's reign that Hiel of Bethel attempted to rebuild Jericho. Two of his sons, Abiram and Segub, were killed in fulfillment of the ancient curse mentioned in Joshua 6:26. Some scholars have referred to the practice of sacrificing children in such construction to gain divine favor, but these verses seem to be recalling the curse against anyone attempting to rebuild Jericho.

The rest of the Book of 1 Kings deals with events taking place during Ahab's rule.

THE PROPHET ELIJAH (17:1—19:21)

Elijah and the Drought (17:1-7)

Elijah, whose name means "Yahweh is God," approached Ahab and told him there would be a drought in Israel. This was not a popular thing to say, for it was commonly believed that droughts were punishment for sin. For this prophetic statement, Elijah had to seek safety outside of Ahab's reign, and so the Lord directed him across the Jordan to the Brook of Cherith. There, the ravens fed him twice a day and he drank from the waters of the brook until it dried up from the drought.

Elijah and the Widow in Zarephath (17:8-24)

The Lord then instructed Elijah to go to Zarephath, another place beyond Ahab's reign. There he met a widow gathering sticks at the gate. He asked her for water and bread, but she replied that she was about to prepare something for herself and her son. Elijah asked her to take care of him first and he would then provide her with meal and oil that would last until the drought was over. She did as she was told and experienced the same kind of miracle, which Jesus performed with the multiplication of bread and fish.

Later, the woman's son became sick. It was so severe that he stopped breathing. At first she blamed Elijah for revealing her sin to God, for sickness was usually associated with sin. Elijah took the boy into the upper chamber and laid him on his own bed. He stretched himself over the child three times and the soul returned to the child. This, according to most scholars, was not a case of resuscitation, but the result of prayer. The miracle confirmed to the woman that Elijah was indeed a prophet of God.

This woman, a non-Israelite, expresses faith and experiences two miracles as a result. Jesus lifts her up as an example in Luke 4:24-26, where he is confronted with unbelief in his own home town. This woman accepted Elijah as a prophet. Her eyes were opened. The people of Nazareth were unable to comprehend someone greater than a prophet, the Messiah himself.

Elijah and the Prophets of Baal (18:1-40)

After the third year of the drought, Elijah was instructed by the Lord to go to Ahab. He met Obadiah on the way, who along with Ahab, had gone in search of water and grass for the royal animals (horses and mules). Obadiah worked for Ahab, but he remained loyal to Yahweh. He even hid one hundred prophets in groups of fifty, in two caves, taking bread and water to them. There are about two thousand caves on Mount Carmel, and so a cave would have been an excellent hiding place.

Elijah asked Obadiah to tell Ahab that he was coming. Obadiah was at first unwilling to do this for fear that Ahab would respond by killing him. He was afraid that Elijah would disappear again and that he would be accused of supporting Elijah and his call to worship only Yahweh. After Elijah promised not to disappear again, Obadiah agreed to inform Ahab of his desire to meet with him.

Elijah asked Ahab to gather all of Israel together at Mount Carmel along with four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of Asherah. He asked for two bulls, one for the prophets of Baal and one for himself. The prophets of Baal were asked to call upon their god to strike the sacrificial bull with fire, but although they called upon him until mid-afternoon, nothing happened. They even wounded themselves with their swords in an attempt to urge him to act, but no fire appeared. Then Elijah built an altar with twelve stones. It is difficult to understand why he used twelve, for Israel was now made up of only ten tribes, but perhaps twelve is a more meaningful and symbolic number, if one looks back into the tradition of the twelve sons of Jacob. He had a deep

trench dug around the altar, and then placed wood and the sacrificial bull on the top of it. Four jars of water were poured on the bull and the wood three times until the trench was filled with water. Then Elijah called upon Yahweh to strike the sacrifice with fire; the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, the dust and the water were all burned up. Some have attributed the fire to lightning, but there was not a cloud in the sky. The intention of the writer is that something very unusual happened on this day. The issue was not whether one God was greater than the other, but which one really existed. The miracle proved that only Yahweh exists.

Following this miraculous event, Elijah ordered that the prophets of Baal be seized and killed at the Brook Kishon. After that was done, he told Ahab to go eat and drink for rain was on the way. Elijah went to the top of Mount Carmel and bowed down with his head between his knees. He asked his servant to look out to the sea for a rain cloud, and on the seventh time, a small cloud appeared. Soon a great rain fell. Elijah told Ahab to make for Jezreel, but he himself ran ahead of Ahab's horses for the seventeen miles to Jezreel.

Elijah on Mount Horeb (Sinai) (19:1-18)

When Jezebel heard about the outcome at Mount Carmel she swore an oath by the gods that she would kill Elijah. Fearing for his life, Elijah fled through Beer-sheba and beyond into the desert. In the desert he sat down under a broom tree and begged God to allow him to die. He fell asleep and was awakened by an angel—God in human form. After resting and eating food provided by an angel, he continued his journey for another forty days and forty nights without further nourishment. His destination was Mount Horeb (Sinai). Depending upon the route he took, the distance was approximately 200 to 300 miles. He was returning to the place where God had spoken to Moses.

After he arrived at Mount Horeb, he entered a cave where a strong wind, an earthquake, and fire appeared in succession but contrary to his expectation, he did not hear Yahweh speak in any of these natural events. Instead, contrary to all expectations, Yahweh was heard in the whisper of a still, small voice. This caused him to hide his face lest he look at God and die. When God began to question him, he withdrew into self-pity as if the miracle at Carmel had never happened. Before God replied directly to Elijah's complaint, he gave him the threefold mission: (1) to anoint Hazael as King of Damascus, (2) to anoint Jehu as King of Israel, and (3) to choose Elisha as his successor. Elijah did only the last; so Elisha, his successor, was left to carry out the first two. Finally, God informed Elijah that he was not the sole surviving worshiper in Israel. There were 7,000 others.

The Call of Elisha (19:19-21)

Elijah found Elisha plowing with twelve oxen. The name *Elisha* means, "God is Salvation." After Elijah cast his mantle upon the younger man, a sign of prophetic power, Elisha promised to follow him after he kissed his mother and father goodbye. Permission was granted. Elisha also slew his oxen and boiled their flesh with the yokes and shared a meal with his neighbors. He then rose, and followed Elijah as his disciple and future successor.

KING AHAB OF ISRAEL (20:1—22:40)

Ahab's Wars with Syria (20:1-43)

We have a little trouble dating these wars between Israel and Syria. They must have taken place prior to 853 B.C.E., when Israel and Syria formed an alliance against the invading Assyrians.

Benhadad of Syria formed an alliance with 32 kings. These kings were rulers of small independent towns and were usually nothing but figureheads. The intent was to besiege Samaria for gold and silver, but also for their women and children. At first there was some diplomacy going on between Benhadad and Ahab, but it was not very satisfactory. Ahab seemed to agree until Benhadad asked him to open the city up to looting. Ahab refused and Benhadad threatened to destroy the city. The response of Ahab was the proverb (20:11), which is roughly equivalent to, "Don't count your chickens before they're hatched."

Upon the advice of an unnamed prophet, Ahab mustered 232 servants of governors of the districts and 7,000 Israelites, described as all of Israel. This was a reference to representatives of all Israel and is not a count of all of Israel. The decision was to attack Benhadad at noon, a time considered unusual to begin a battle. Benhadad was drunk at the time, along with his 32 kings. The smaller group of 232 attacked first, and when they were fully engaged in battle, the army of 7,000 appeared and overwhelmed the Syrians. The Syrians fled along with Benhadad who escaped on a horse. A prophet told Ahab that the war would resume in the spring.

Benhadad's military council suggested that they lost because Israel's gods were gods of the hills; so they suggested a two-fold change in military strategy. They were to: (1) attack on the plains; (2) and, substitute the Kings for military commanders. Benhadad led his army to Aphek in the spring. Some scholars feel that this cannot be right because wars were usually fought in the fall after the crops were all taken in. This probably means at the beginning of the year, that is, in the fall. The prophet told Ahab that Israel's victory over the Syrians would be complete.

When the two armies camped near Aphek, Israel looked like two little flocks of goats compared with the Syrian arm, which filled the whole countryside. On the seventh day of the encampment, the battle began. Syria lost 100,000 soldiers in one day, and, as the army fled for the city, the walls fell on another 27,000. Benhadad fled to an inner chamber of the city. His servants assured him that the kings of Israel were merciful, and that they should plead for mercy. The servants wore sackcloth and placed ropes on their heads and went to plead for mercy for themselves and Benhadad.

Ahab invited Benhadad to enter his personal chariot, where the two of them made a covenant together. Benhadad promised to restore all the cities taken by his father. Father here does not mean his own father, but his ancestral fathers. Many of these cities had been taken during the reign of Baasha.

Trade relations between Damascus and Samaria were established as part of the covenant, but this whole covenant was not in line with what the prophets believed should have been done. One of a group of prophets ordered a fellow prophet to strike him. The prophet refused, and so the prophet told him that a lion would kill him, which it did. Then he ordered another prophet to strike him and it was done and the prophet was wounded. He wrapped up his wound and stood along side of the road until the King of Israel, Ahab, came along. He told the King that he was in the battle against Syria and had been given the responsibility of guarding an enemy, but that he got busy with other things and the enemy escaped. He had been warned that if the enemy escaped, he would pay for it with his own life. Ahab replied by telling him that he had pronounced his own sentence. At that, the prophet unwrapped his bandages and told Ahab that in letting Benhadad go free he would have to pay with his life. Ahab went home worried and depressed.

Naboth's Vineyard (21:1-29)

Ahab offered to purchase Naboth's vineyard, which was right next door to his palace in Jezreel. He wanted it for a vegetable garden and offered either another vineyard or money, but Naboth could not sell it to him due to legal and religious customs. Ancestral property had to remain within the family and Ahab knew it. That was why he went home so depressed. He knew that Naboth was right.

Jezebel was not going to let legal and religious customs stop her, and so she arranged to have two false witnesses accuse Naboth of cursing both God and the King. The penalty, according to Deuteronomy 17:5-6 and 19:15, was death by stoning. She at least wanted it to look like she and Ahab were acquiring the land according to the Law. According to 2 Kings 9:26, Naboth's sons were also killed, but nothing is said about why they were killed. What is obvious is that while an heir lived, land could not be transferred to the King. What justification was used for the murder of the sons is not given.

Jezebel then told her husband to take possession of Naboth's vineyard, but when he tried to do it, Elijah confronted him. Elijah told him that where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, they would also lick up Ahab's blood. Ahab repented and humbled himself. Because he did that, the Lord put off the punishment of his dynasty until after his death. His dynasty would come to an end with his sons rather than with him.

Micaiah warns Ahab (22:1-28)

During the three years of peace between Israel and Judah, an alliance was formed to hold back the Assyrian threat. Hamath, and perhaps Egypt, joined in this alliance. King Shalmaneser III (859-825 B.C.E.) led his forces through Syria towards Israel and Judah, and the alliance met him at Qarqar in 853 B.C.E. Although Shalmaneser III claimed victory, the alliance seemed to stop his drive into Israel.

It was during this lull that Ahab (Israel) pressed Jehoshaphat (Judah) to help him take Ramoth-gilead away from the Syrians. Jehoshaphat asked Ahab first to inquire of his prophets to find out whether or not God would grant them victory. Ahab asked 400

prophets, who all assured him of victory, but none of this satisfied Jehoshaphat, who asked if there was yet another prophet. Ahab told him about Micaiah, whom he did not like, but agreed to ask him. At first Micaiah, like the rest, said what Ahab wanted to hear. When pressed to tell the truth, he warned Ahab that they would lose and that he would be killed. Zedekiah, one of the 400 prophets, disagreed and urged Ahab to go into battle against Syria. Ahab had Micaiah placed in prison and placed on a bread and water diet until he returned. Micaiah reminded him that he would not be returning.

The Death of Ahab (22:29-40)

Ahab demonstrated his uncertainty about the whole thing when he entered battle in disguise. Jehoshaphat went into battle with his robes on and at first the Syrians mistook him for Ahab. It was a chance shot of a bowman that finally brought Ahab down. About evening time he died. He was buried in Samaria where the dogs licked up his blood and harlots washed themselves in it. The ivory house (22:39), which Ahab built, had been decorated with carved ivory, some of which has been found by archaeological excavation in Samaria.

JEHOSHAPHAT (Judah) (873-849) or [870-848] (22:41-50)

Jehoshaphat began his reign at 35 years of age and reigned for 25 years. His reign began in the fourth year of Ahab's reign. He was considered a good king and is credited, along with his father Asa, with many reforms. He controlled Edom and attempted to imitate Solomon's maritime operations.

AHAZIAH (Israel) (850-849) or [853-852] (22:51-53) (2 Kings 1:1-18)

Ahaziah began his reign in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat's reign in Judah. He reigned for two years over Israel and was condemned like most of the other kings of Israel for worshipping Baal.

During Ahaziah's reign, Moab rebelled against Israel. One day Ahaziah fell off the balcony of the roof of his palace and was seriously injured. He sent messengers to consult with Baalzebub, the god of the Philistine city of Ekron, in order to find out whether he would recover. An angel of the Lord sent Elijah to ask these messengers why they were going to Baalzebub. Did not Israel have a God of its own? Since Ahaziah's mother was Jezebel, it is easy to understand why Ahaziah would rely upon Baalzebub.

Baalzebub means "lord of flies" and is a mocking distortion of *Baalzebul*, meaning "lord of the divine abode" or "Baal the Prince." Later this pagan deity became a synonym for Satan in Jewish theology.¹ Here the idol is intentionally ridiculed by calling it Baalzebub (lord of flies).

¹ See Beelzebub in Mark 3:22 and parallels, Matthew 10:25; 12:24; and Luke 11:15-19, where he is called "prince of demons."

Elijah sent a message through these messengers to Ahaziah that he would surely die. The King in turn sent three officers with 50 men each to get Elijah. Two of them were burned up with fire and the third begged for mercy, which he got. Elijah finally went to Ahaziah and told him face to face that he would die for turning to another god, which finally happened. Having had no sons, his brother Jehoram succeeded him in the second year of Jehoram's reign (Judah), the son of Jehoshaphat.

THE BIRTH OF PROPHECY

Prophecy is present throughout the Old Testament. When Moses was called by God to confront the Pharaoh, he felt inadequate; and so God told him to let his brother Aaron speak for him. Aaron became Moses' "mouthpiece," and the concept of prophecy was born. As it turned out, Moses did most of his own talking. If anyone ever needed a prophet to confront him, it was Aaron when he gave into the pressures of the people and shaped the golden calf.

There have been other prophets as well. Samuel is thought of as a prophet at times and Nathan boldly confronted David over his adultery with Bathsheba. Unnamed prophets also appear from time to time, but the first prophet of any prominence is Elijah.

Elijah did not surface in the best of times, but in the worst of times. King Ahab had married Jezebel, a Sidonian (Phoenician) princess. She was intent on introducing Baal worship in Israel. Because of the corruption of Ahab and Jezebel, Elijah appeared. He tried to demonstrate the power of Yahweh over Baal. Even though he succeeded, he found himself rejected by Jezebel, who swore an oath to have him killed.

One would think that a prophet capable of performing miracles would be followed, but that is usually not the case. Jesus knew that and refused to perform miracles for skeptics. Miracles nurture believers. They do not convince unbelievers.

We usually think of prophets as persons who have a direct line with God, who hear God speaking as we might speak with one another. But having faced the hostility of Ahab and Jezebel, Elijah had difficulty hearing God speak and thought that he alone believed. He fled to Mount Horeb, another name for Sinai, where God had spoken so clearly to Moses. To his amazement, God did not speak through a strong wind, or through an earthquake, or through the fire. Contrary to all expectations, he spoke through the whisper of a still, small voice (1 Kings 19:11-13).

Even prophets, who have heard God speak, need to know that they are not alone. God assured Elijah that at least 7,000 people in Israel have not bowed to Baal (1 Kings 19:18). The prophet's role then becomes that of mobilizing God's people to resist the evil of rulers like Ahab and Jezebel.

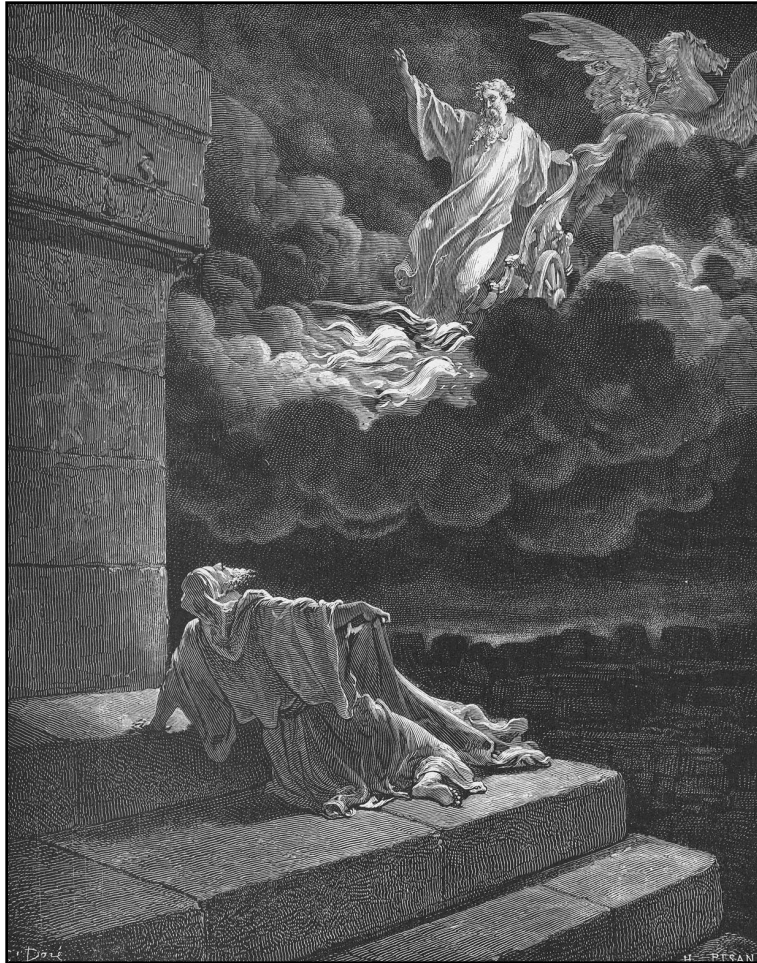
A long line of noble prophets followed in the wake of Elijah. Although we might think that prophecy has long since ceased, this is not the case. Prophets are called whenever evil erupts. God calls them to mobilize his people to combat the evil. Twentieth century

prophets were men like Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. They, like Elijah, will go down in the history books, but they have not been the only prophets. Gandhi was called to free Indians from British rule and King was called to free Blacks from discrimination. Neither of them could have done anything without the 7,000, who had not bowed to Baal. They, like Moses, needed people to follow them out of slavery, through the wilderness, towards the Promised Land.

Prophets are born to combat evil. They may surface before they have a following and they may need to return to Sinai to verify their call. They cannot fight evil on their own. So their birth depends upon the rest of us listening to them and joining them in the battle. No one knows who the next prophet will be, nor does any one know where the next battle will be fought. For this reason it is important for all of us to be listening for the voice of God, whether it thunders from Sinai as it did for Moses, or whether it whispers as it did for Elijah. Who knows? You might be the next prophet. But even if you are not, God is certainly calling you to be one of the 7,000 to support the next prophet.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 2 Kings



Elijah Taken Up into Heaven by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

17. The Prophet Elisha

2 Kings 2:1—8:15

17. THE PROPHET ELISAH (2:1—8:15)			
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17. THE PROPHET ELISHA

2 Kings 2:1—8:15

ASSIGNMENTS				
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ELISHA SUCCEEDS ELIJAH (2:1-18)

Elisha is introduced in this story as Elijah's successor. The two of them walked from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho to the Jordan. As they passed through Bethel and Jericho, sons of prophets informed them what was to happen. "Sons of Prophets" is a term that refers to an order of prophets and not to their biological relationship.

When Elisha and Eliza went to the Jordan, 50 prophets followed them to observe what was about to happen. Elijah parted the river with his mantle (cloak), and they all crossed over on dry ground. This places Elijah in the company of Moses and Joshua.¹

Elijah asked Elisha what he wanted from him, and Elisha replied, "a double share of your spirit." (2:9) This would have been the inheritance of the first-born son, and although Elijah was uncertain about granting it, he told Elisha that it would be his if he could see him as he was taken from him. Then a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and took Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind. Elisha saw it happen and inherited that double share of Elijah's spirit.

The first proof of Elisha's possession of "the double share" was his ability to part the waters with Elijah's mantle. The 50 prophets wanted to go in search of Elijah, but Elisha told them it was of no use. The prophets went in search of him anyway, but could not find him. When they returned to Jericho, Elisha told them, "Did I not say to you, Do not go?" (2:18)

¹ See Exodus 14:21-22 and Joshua 3:13-17.

THE MIRACLES OF ELISHA (2:19-25)

The Healing of the Waters (2:19-22)

The water from the Jericho spring was blamed for making women barren. Elisha, by means of some salt and divine oracle, healed the water. Today the finest spring in Jericho is often referred to as Elisha's fountain.

The Curse on the Jeering Boys (2:23-25)

Elisha had been shaven as a sign of his prophetic mission. When some boys jeered him for his baldness, he cursed them in Yahweh's name. Two she-bears came out of the woods and tore the 42 boys up for their disrespect. This story emphasizes the awful consequences of profaning that which is holy, whether it is God himself, or one of his prophets.

THE WAR AGAINST MOAB (3:1-27)

With the death of Ahab and Ahaziah, Jehoram reigned in Israel for twelve years. He removed a pillar of Baal, but there might have been two. Jehu also removed one (2 Kings 10:26). Jezebel must have had some influence over Jehoram, for according to 2 Kings 9:30, she lived throughout his reign.

With new leadership in Israel, Mesha (Moab) rebelled against Israel by refusing to send the annual 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams. In response, Jehoram formed an alliance with Jehoshaphat (Judah) and the King of Edom, which was a vassal state to Judah; and the three kings, with their armies, marched towards Moab.

After traveling for seven days, Jehoshaphat wanted to seek the advice of a prophet. So the three kings sought out Elisha. Elisha's first response was to ask the three kings why they did not seek out the prophets of the god of their mothers and fathers, meaning the prophets of Baal. Elisha asked for a minstrel to help induce a trance, out of which he could give an oracle from God. His word from God was that the three kings would be victorious over Moab and that water would appear in the dry stream without benefit of wind or rain. The water that appeared was red as blood. The color could be "a play on words," for *Edom* means "red." The water was colored by the red sandstone, which is common in Edom,

As the three kings engaged in battle, Mesha (Moab) was not doing well. The King of Moab took 700 swordsmen in an attempt to break through his opponents just opposite the King of Edom, but he could not do it. In a last ditch effort he sacrificed his eldest son to Chemosh, the god of Moab, in plain sight of his opponents upon a wall. This so impressed the three kings that they gave up the battle and returned home just as victory lay within their grasp. The famous Moabite Stone, discovered in 1868, and now in the Louvre, gives an account of this war from the perspective of Mesha, King of Moab. Victory is claimed for Moab.

THE MIRACLES OF ELISHA (4:1-44)

The Jar of Oil (4:1-7)

The wife of a prophet, upon her husband's death, went to Elisha, because a man whom her husband owed money was trying to take her two sons away. In the *Targum* (an Aramaic translation or paraphrase of the Jewish Scriptures), the husband is identified as Obadiah, the prophet who hid 100 prophets in caves, protecting them from Jezebel. According to Josephus, the money was borrowed to feed the prophets.

Selling children into slavery was legal in Israel (Exodus 21:7), as long as the slaves were treated well (Leviticus 25:39-46 and Deuteronomy 15:12-18). Amos later criticized the selling and buying of anyone, especially the poor (Amos 2:6 and 8:6).

Elisha asked this widow what she had at home. She replied that she had but a jar of oil. He told her to gather empty jars from her neighbors and start pouring olive oil into those jars, after they were all full, she was to sell the oil and pay off the debt. The quantity of oil was limited only by her faith in collecting empty containers.

The Son's Life Restored (4:8-37)

A wealthy woman from Shunem recognized that Elijah was a holy man. She fed him and provided a special room for him containing a bed, table, chair and lamp. For this kindness Elisha wished to repay her, but she asserted her independence. Gehazi, Elisha's servant, noted that she had no son, so Elisha promised her one. She bore a son, in the next scene the lad was stricken with sunstroke in a field. He was quickly taken to the house, where he died in his mother's arms. She laid his corpse on Elisha's bed and set out immediately for Mount Carmel, about 25 miles away, to tell Elisha. Her husband asked why she wanted to go then instead of waiting for the New Moon or the Sabbath, which would have been better days to consult a prophet. He does not seem to understand that his son has died, nor does she bother to tell him.

When the woman arrived, Gehazi tried to keep her from seeing Elisha, but the prophet gave her permission. After hearing what had happened from the woman, since God did not tell him directly, Elisha sent his servant with his wonder-working staff, which he was to lay on the face of the corpse. He maintained complete silence on the journey so as to lose none of the wonder-working power of the staff. The magic did not work. Meanwhile, the woman, with correct intuition, refused to leave the prophet; and in the final scene, Elisha enters the room, prays to Yahweh, and performs a magical life-transference rite, raising the boy from the dead.

The Poisoned Food (4:38-41)

When Elisha went to Gilgal during a time of famine, he, along with some other prophets, cooked up a pot of food. Some of the servants had gathered some poisonous gourds, and

as they were eating them, noticed that they were poisonous. Everyone refused to eat until Elisha threw some good meal into the pot, making the poisonous food edible.

The Multiplication of Loaves (4:42-44)

A man came from Baal Shalishah, bringing Elisha twenty loaves of bread from the first fruit that is, bread intended for the priests. Apparently, prophets could also be included in this offering. Elisha told the man to feed the entire group of about 100 prophets, but the man expressed his reluctance by saying that 20 loaves was not enough. Elisha told him that they would be enough, so the servant set the food out before them, and after they all ate, there was still some left over. This story is a striking parallel to the same kind of miracle performed by Jesus in Matthew 14:13-21 and 15:32-38.

THE HEALING OF NAAMAN (5:1-27)

Naaman was a military commander in Syria. In a raid on Israel, a maid from Israel was brought back to Damascus and given to Naaman as a servant. Naaman was highly respected by the King of Syria; the Lord had given victory to him. There was only one thing wrong; he had leprosy. The servant girl told Naaman's wife of a prophet—Elisha—who lived in Israel and could heal him. So Naaman asked permission to go to Israel. The King of Syria offered to send a letter to the King of Israel.

Armed with his letter from the King of Syria and all kinds of gifts, Naaman set out for Israel. He had ten talents (30,000 pieces) of silver, 6,000 shekels (pieces) of gold, and 10 festal garments (changes of clothes). The King of Israel was apparently a vassal king to Syria. When Naaman arrived, asking to be healed, he was greatly disturbed and tore his clothes as a sign of his anger.

Elisha, upon hearing about Naaman, asked to have him come to his house. When Naaman arrived, Elisha sent a servant to tell him to wash seven times in the Jordan River. This angered Naaman, who wanted Elisha to come out and call upon his God and wave his hand over him, curing him. Naaman even asked why the Syrian rivers of Abana and Pharpar could not be considered in that they were much cleaner than the Jordan. He refused to obey Elisha's command until his servants had a little talk with him. When he washed seven times in the Jordan, he was healed. Out of gratitude, he tried to offer his gifts to Elisha, who refused to take any of them. Then Naaman asked if he could take two mules' burden of earth back to Syria with him so that he could worship Israel's God. Naaman believed that every God belonged to the soil and could not be worshiped apart from that soil. That is why he wanted to take some back to Syria. He insisted that he would loyally worship the God of Israel with one minor exception. On occasion he would be expected to bow down before Rimmon (another name for Hadad), the chief god of Syria. This would be during special state functions. The King of Syria would expect him to accompany him. Elisha's answer is noncommittal. He simply said, "Go in peace." (2 Kings 5:19)

As Naaman began the journey home, Gehazi, Elisha's servant, caught up with him and told him that Elisha had changed his mind. Two prophets had come down out of the hill country in Ephraim and would like Naaman to give them one talent of silver (3,000 pieces), and two festal garments (changes of clothes). Naaman offered them two talents of silver (6,000 pieces) and two festal garments. Gehazi took these gifts home with him. But Elisha, using his prophetic insight, confronted him with his sin of greed. Gehazi's punishment was Naaman's leprosy, which was also to be passed on to his offspring.

THE FLOATING AXE-HEAD (6:1-7)

The group of prophets around Elisha felt the need for more room, so they suggested a building project. Elisha told them to go down to the thick woods of the Jordan Valley to chop down some trees. In the process one of them dropped a borrowed iron axe into the river. Elisha, by his magical powers, caused it to float, so that it could be recovered. This miracle demonstrated divine activity in ordinary events.

THE SYRIAN ARMY DEFEATED (6:8—7:20)

The Capture of a Syrian Army (6:8-23)

The Syrian military plans were repeatedly made known to the Israelite King, the King of Syria suspected an informer. When he asked about it, he was told that Elisha was the informer. The King asked where he was and, upon being told that he was living in Dothan, a city about ten miles north of Samaria, he sent a large force to get him.

In the morning Elisha's servant was dismayed at the sight of the Syrian military force, but Elisha's prayer enabled the servant to see the horses and chariots of fire which surrounded and protected the prophet. In answer to Elisha's prayer, the Syrians were blinded and led to Samaria. The Syrians, then helpless captives, were given their sight back and Elisha ordered the King to treat them hospitably and release them.

The Siege of Samaria (6:24—7:2)

A while later Ben-hadad attacked, making life very difficult in Samaria. A famine and severe inflation resulted. Things got so bad that people were paying high prices for garbage. Further a case of cannibalism distressed the King. Two women had agreed to eat their sons. They ate the first woman's son on the first day, but on the second day, the other woman hid her son. Although, the Mosaic Law rejected cannibalism, it was predicted under siege conditions (Deuteronomy 28:54-57). Josephus describes it later in the Babylonian siege on Jerusalem in 587/6 B.C.

The King became so angry that he threatened to kill Elisha whom, for some unexplained reason, he held responsible for the situation. The King then sent someone to capture Elisha who, upon hearing about it, barred his door. The King followed his messenger and was allowed to enter; whereupon, he expressed his lack of confidence in any divine help. Elisha predicted that within 24 hours the siege would be lifted and food would return to

normal prices. A captain of the King expressed disbelief and Elisha predicted that the captain would die on the following day.

The Syrian Army Leaves (7:3-20)

Four lepers seemed to be worse off than anyone else. Their desperate hunger drove them to seek food from the Syrians. When they arrived, they discovered the Syrian camp empty. The Lord made them hear the sound of chariots and horses, and they feared that the Hittites (and Musrites or Egyptians) had come to help Israel. In fear, they left. The lepers gathered some food and took some silver, gold, and clothing before reporting the good news to the King of Israel. The King suspected a trap, but finally sent out a few men to evaluate the situation. No Syrians were in sight and the siege came to an end. The skeptical captain on duty at the gate that day lost his life in the trample of the excited people, so the word of Elisha was fulfilled.

RESTORATION OF A WOMAN'S PROPERTY (8:1-6)

This section is related to 2 Kings 4:8-37 and although an interval of time has passed, it must precede the story of Naaman, where Gehazi is stricken with leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-27). If not, then Gehazi's disease is not the kind that has forced him into isolation, as leprosy would have done.

Some time after the woman's son was restored to life, she was told by Elisha to go to Philistia for seven years to avoid the coming famine. On her return to Israel, she found her property and possessions taken, so she went to appeal to the King of Israel. This happened at the same time that Gehazi was telling the King the story of how Elisha had restored the woman's son to life. After she confirmed the story, the King ordered her property, including its produce for seven years, returned to her.

ELISHA'S PROPHECY CONCERNING HAZAEL (8:7-15)

When Elisha went to Damascus, Ben-hadad was sick. He sent Hazael to Elisha with gifts to find out whether his sickness would end in death. Elisha told Hazael that it would not, but then he broke down in tears. When Hazael asked him why, Elisha told him that it was because Hazael would become the King of Syria and treat Israel harshly.

When Hazael returned to Ben-hadad, the King asked if he would recover. Hazael assured him that he would, but on the next day he smothered him to death with a wet blanket. Hazael then became the new King of Syria. This fulfills one of the three commands given to Elijah earlier (1 Kings 19:15-16). Those commands were to anoint Hazael King of Syria, Jehu King of Israel, and Elisha as his personal successor. Elijah was only able to carry out the third of the three commands he received in the "sound of sheer silence" at Horeb. It was Elisha's task to carry out the other two, beginning with the anointing of Hazael. The idea behind this is that Israel needed to be punished for its sins and Hazael was divinely ordained to do this work. Elisha predicted it, but was sorry about it. Nevertheless, God's will had to be done.

THE FLOWERING OF PROPHECY

If prophecy begins, or at least takes on an air of authority, under Elijah, it flowers with Elisha. Both prophets confronted kings with the Will of God, as is appropriate for prophets. Previous kings, including David, relied upon the Urim and the Thummim; but now, two men have appeared who know the mind of God without casting the sacred lots.

Their work seems to be twofold: (1) to perform miracles, and (2) to interpret, and predict, political events. Victory is interpreted as God's doing, even when the enemy wins. Defeat is sometimes thought of as God's way of punishing those whom he loves. There is no consistent conclusion that God is on the side of the winners and against the losers. Winning and losing must be interpreted, which is one of the functions of prophecy.

Prophets do not work only within their own nation. What is taking place in other nations must also be understood and interpreted, so prophets are not confined to national borders or political boundaries. Because prophets seek to understand, interpret, and predict, they see things the rest of us do not see. This does not mean that prophets are always right. Many of them make mistakes and many of their prophecies go unfulfilled. The best prophet is not one who is always right in making predictions, but one who faithfully interprets the Divine Will. To be a true prophet is to be God's "mouthpiece." God does not want his prophets to be right in every prediction; rather, he wants them to be faithful in their task, which is to warn of imminent disaster so that it might not have to take place. When prophets are taken seriously, the disasters, about which they prophesy, don't have to happen.

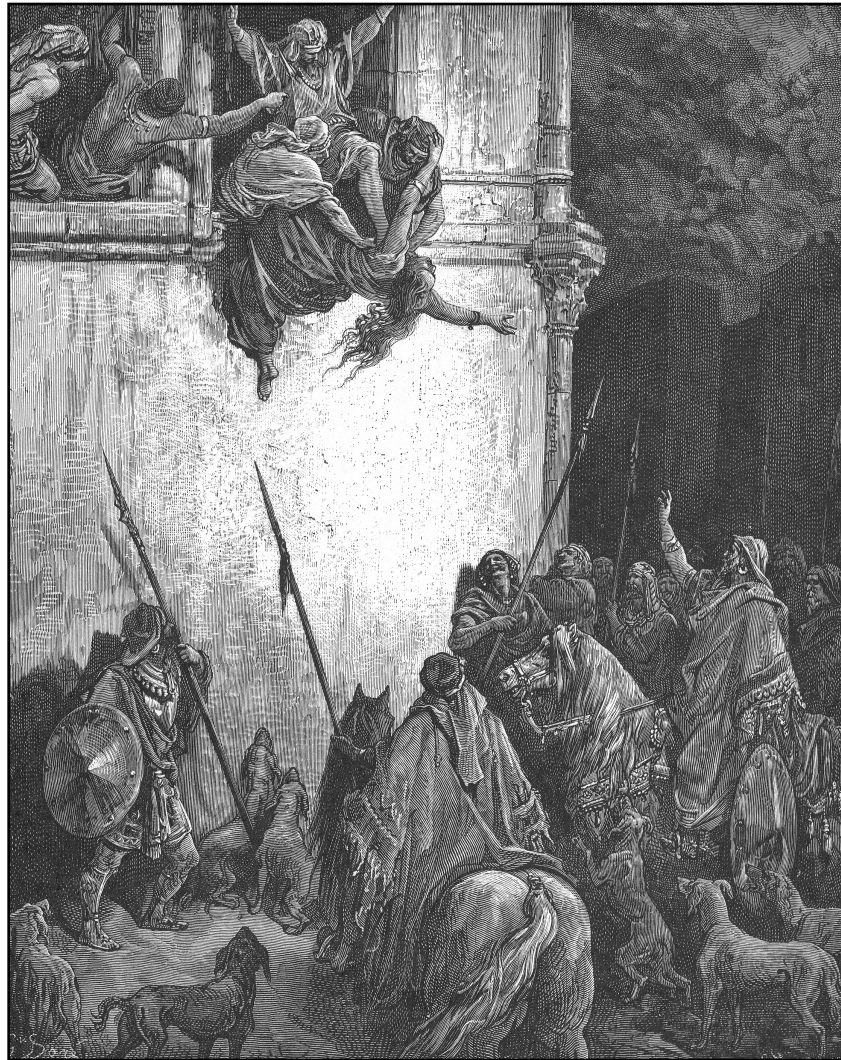
Miracles are performed to demonstrate the authority of prophets, but miracles do not represent their main task. When they are performed, they only seem to nurture believers. Unbelievers are not impressed by miracles, so most prophets use them sparingly. Prophets seem to be able to perform miracles because they are persons of great faith. The flowering of prophecy has to do with the intensity of that faith, which gives prophets divine insight and equips them with divine power.

The flowering of prophecy then is equivalent to the maturation of prophecy. One can discern the flowering of prophets, not by the fulfillment of their predictions, but by the widespread recognition of their prophetic insight. This has nothing to do with the number of people who recognize them as prophets, but with the penetration of their influence across cultural and national borders. Jesus recognized this when he tried to speak prophetically in his own hometown. That they spoke well of him was not evidence that they recognized his prophetic insight, so he said in Luke 4:23-24: "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown." As illustrations of his point, he brought up the faith of the Widow of Zarephath in Elijah, and the faith of Naaman, Syrian Commander, in Elisha.

It is difficult to recognize this flowering in people with whom we are familiar, but when our enemies begin to recognize it in them, then we had better listen. Many prophets want to be wrong in their predictions, but they want to be right in their interpretations of the divine will. Genuine prophets see their task as directing the course of history according to the divine will. Whether they succeed is not as important as whether or not they are in tune with God. Those who are in tune with the God will not be afraid to stand by themselves before kings and presidents. If prophets are killed for their prophecies, they become martyrs.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 2 Kings



The Death of Jezebel by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

18. The Kings of Israel and Judah 2 Kings 8:16—17:41

18. THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH (8:16—17:41)				
ISRAEL				JUDAH
Jehu's Revolt (842-815 or 841-814) (9:1-37)				Jehoram/Joram (849-842 or 848-841) (8:16-24)
Anointing of Jehu (9:1-13)	Assassination of Jehoram/Joram (9:14-26)	Assassination of Ahaziah (Judah) (9:27-28)	Assassination of Jezebel (9:30-37)	Ahaziah (842 or 841) (8:25-29)
Jehu's Purge (842-815 or 841-814) (10:1-31)				Queen Athaliah (842-837 or 841-835) (11:1-20)
Massacre of Ahab's Relatives (10:1-11)	Massacre of Ahaziah's Relatives (10:12-14)	Massacre of Ahab's Relatives (10:15-17)	Massacre of Worshipers of Baal (10:18-31)	The Death of Jehu (10:32-36)
Jehoahaz (815-801 or 814-798) (13:1-9)				Jehoash/Joash (837-800 or 835-796) (11:21—12:21)
Jehoash (801-786 or 798-782) (13:10-25)				Amaziah (800-783 or 796-767) (14:1-22)
Jeroboam II (786-746 or 782-753) (14:23-29)				Azariah (Uzziah) (783-742 or 767-740) (15:1-7)
Zechariah (746-745 or 753-752) (15:8-12)				
Shallum (745 or 752) (15:13-16)				
Menahem (745-738 or 752-742) (15:17-22)				
Pekahiah (738-737 or 742-740) (15:23-26)				
Pekah (737-732) (15:27-31)				Jotham (742-735 or 740-735) (15:32-38)
Hoshea (732 -721 or 732-723/22) (17:1-41)				Ahaz (735-715) (16:1-20)
The End of Israel (722/21)				

18. THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

2 Kings 8:16—17:41

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Early Kings of Judah 8:16-29 and 11:1—12:21	The Reign of Jehu in Israel 9:1—10:36	The Latter Kings of Judah 14:1-22 15:1-7 15:32—16:20	The Kings of Israel 13:1-25 14:23-29 15:8-31	The Last King of Israel 17:1-41

At this point the writer returns to a history of the Kings of Israel and Judah, which was interrupted by the stories of the prophet Elisha.

JEHORAM/JORAM (JUDAH) (849-842 B.C.E.) or [848-841 B.C.E.] (8:16-24)

Joram is a shortened version of the name of Jehoram and the fact that we have a King by this name in both Judah and Israel may be confusing. Jehoram of Judah began his reign at the age of 32, reigning for eight years. His reign was an evil one, for he did everything that was evil in the sight of the Lord. His wife was Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, which might explain something of the evil within his reign. 2 Chronicles 21:2-4 tells us that he killed all of his brothers and their supporters to eliminate any threat to his power.

The Lord did not destroy Judah at this time, because of his promise that David's dynasty would last forever. The "lamp" (8:19) was a sign of this promise. During Jehoram's reign, there were two successful revolts which crippled Judah, one coming from Edom in the southeast and the other coming from Libnah in the southwest (near the Philistine border). Although not much is said about these revolts, it can be assumed that Judah lost its seaport and fortress at Ezion-bever and "easy" access to its southern trading routes to Arabia. The economy would have been in shambles.

AHAZIAH (JUDAH) (842 B.C.E.) or [841 B.C.E.] (8:25-29)

This Ahaziah is not to be confused with his uncle, Ahaziah of Israel (853 B.C.E.). He is the son of Jehoram (Judah) and Athaliah (Ahab's daughter). He began his reign at the age of 22, but only reigned for one year. During that reign he joined forces with Jehoram/Joram of Israel to fight against the Syrians. He, like his father, did everything that was

evil in the sight of the Lord. While there is unity between Judah and Israel, it is not a righteous unity.

JEHU (ISRAEL) (842-815 B.C.E.) or [841-814 B.C.E.] (9:1—10:36)

Jehu's Revolt (9:1-37)

Anointing of Jehu (9:1-13)

Elisha sent a prophet to Ramoth-gilead to anoint Jehu, who was an Israelite commander on guard duty for the city. Thus, Elisha carried out the final command of the sound of sheer silence at Horeb (1 Kings 19:16). This anointing was needed to legitimize Jehu's right to rule. In the Northern Kingdom of Israel there was a strong tradition that a King needed the combination of prophetic designation and public acclamation. Sons could not automatically succeed their fathers.

Following the ceremony Jehu returned to the meeting of the chiefs of staff, from which he had been summoned. They persuaded him to share what had happened and upon being told, proclaimed him as their King. With Jehoram recovering from his wounds at Jezreel 35 miles away, the time was ripe for Jehu's revolt.

Assassination of Jehoram/Joram (Israel) (9:14-26)

Jehu then set out by chariot towards Jezreel, where Ahaziah of Judah was visiting Jehoram. As he and his group approached Jezreel, a guard in the tower saw him coming, and upon being told, Jehoram sent a horseman to find out whether the approaching chariot was friend or foe. When asked, Jehu told the man it was none of his business and that he should fall in behind the rest. A second horseman was sent and the same thing happened. Finally, Jehu was recognized for his crazy driving and King Jehoram and Ahaziah went out to meet him, probably thinking that he was bringing news from the Syrian front at Ramoth-gilead. When the two kings met Jehu, they realized his purpose, but it was too late. Jehu shot Jehoram in the back and through the heart with an arrow; his body was dumped on Naboth's vineyard to fulfill the Lord's promise.

Assassination of Ahaziah (Judah) (9:27-28)

After Jehoram had been assassinated, Ahaziah took off in his chariot, but Jehu ordered him killed as well. They wounded him, but he managed to drive his chariot all the way to Megiddo (12 miles away) where he died. His officials took his body back to Jerusalem where he was buried in the royal tombs.

Assassination of Jezebel (9:30-37)

By this time, Jezebel realized that her doom was sealed. She beautified herself in preparation for death. When Jehu arrived, she called him "Zimri" which was a way of comparing him with that infamous assassin, Zimri, mentioned in 1 Kings 16:8-12. Jehu

ordered her to be thrown down to the street from the palace window, which was done. After she hit the ground, he drove his chariot over her and then went into the palace for dinner. When he ordered her body buried, for she was a queen, there was very little left. The dogs had eaten her flesh in accordance with Elijah's words (1 Kings 21:23).

Jehu's Purge (10:1-31)

The Massacre of Ahab's Relatives (10:1-11)

The capital city of Samaria had not yet fallen into Jehu's hands and so he wrote two letters to its citizens. In the first he challenged them to make a King and enter into civil war with him. They were afraid to do this. In the second letter he told them to take the heads of Ahab's seventy sons (some of which were grandsons) and place them in baskets in two heaps at the entrance of the city. This was the traditional place of judgment. This act proved to Jehu that God was directing the massacre. The victims included all of Ahab's relatives living in Jezreel, as well as his officers, close friends, and priests. None of them were left alive. Jehu was in complete control.

The Massacre of Ahaziah's Relatives (10:12-14)

Jehu then started off for Samaria, the capital city, when he met up with 42 relatives of Ahaziah who were on the way to visit the royal princes and the sons of the Queen Mother. All 42 were killed.

The Massacre of Ahab's Remaining Relatives (10:15-17)

As Jehu continued on his way to Samaria he met up with Jehonadab, a prophet and leader of the Rechabites. The Rechabites were bitter opponents of Canaanite culture and natural foes of the house of Omri and Ahab. They lived in tents instead of houses, and were shepherds instead of farmers. The pagan practices that became part of Israel's settled, agricultural life in Canaan were condemned. Since nomads did not practice winemaking, wine was viewed as a symbol of the corruption found in settled life in Canaan. The Rechabites refused to drink wine, clinging to their nomadic culture, and thus were enabled to resist pagan influences.

Jehu approached Jehonadab with his famous question: "Is your heart as true to mine as mine is to yours?" Jehonadab answered, "It is." "If it is," replied Jehu, "give me your hand." (2 Kings 10:15) This exchange really meant: "Do we think alike?" John Wesley, in his sermon on "The Catholic Spirit" adapted the phrase to mean agreement on major things and to permit differences of opinion on minor things.

Is thy heart right with God?
Is thy faith...filled with the energy of love?
Is thy heart right towards thy neighbor?
Do you show your love by your works?
If it be, give me thy hand.

I do not mean, “Be of my opinion.” You need not.
I do not expect or desire it.
Neither do I mean, “I will be of your opinion.”
If thine heart is as my heart,
If thou lovest God and all mankind, I ask no more: Give me thine hand.

Since Jehu and Jehonadab saw eye to eye, they rode together in Jehu’s chariot to Samaria, where they slaughtered all the rest of Ahab’s relatives. This was according to the word of the Lord as it was told to Elijah.

The Massacre of the Worshipers of Baal (10:18-31)

At first Jehu seemed to worship Baal even more than did Ahab. He invited all the prophets, worshipers, and priests of Baal to the House of Baal, which had been built by Ahab. When they were all inside, he proceeded to offer the sacrifice, but outside, he had ordered 80 men to begin killing everyone. The House of Baal and all its furnishings were destroyed and made into a latrine.

The prophet Hosea condemned the butchery of this time (Hosea 1:4-5). While the Lord commended Jehu, he did not remain faithful to the Lord. He neglected to destroy the golden calves in Bethel and Dan, which, had been established by Jeroboam, and in the end Jehu followed Jeroboam’s example. He did not obey the Lord with his whole heart.

The Death of Jehu (10:32-36)

Jehu had reigned for 28 years and had established a new dynasty, but during this time so many of Israel’s leaders had been killed, that its defensive position was badly weakened. From the north, the Syrian King Hazael stepped in and took all of the Trans-Jordan, which was not to be retaken until Jeroboam II. From the south, Moab attacked Israel and won its final independence. This is recorded on the famous Moabite Stone.

QUEEN ATHALIAH (JUDAH) (842-837 B.C.E.) or [841-835 B.C.E.] (11:1-20)

As soon as Athaliah had heard that her son Ahaziah had been killed, she seized power by killing off all of the royal family, with the single exception of Jehoash (Joash). Being the daughter of Ahab, Athaliah desired to continue with Baal worship and tried to eliminate all opposition.

Jehoash was Ahaziah’s son and legitimate heir, but he was only a child. So Jehosheba, a half-sister to Ahaziah, hid him in the priestly quarters of the Temple, where her husband Jehoiada (2 Chronicles 22:11) served as a priest. He was hidden there for six years.

In the seventh year of Athaliah’s reign, Jehoiada organized a coup d’etat using the Carites (Cherethites), who were mercenaries hired to serve as the royal bodyguards. The priest provided them with spears and shields that had been stored in the house of the Lord and belonged to King David. Jehoash was brought out and crowned King of Judah. When

Athaliah heard all the noise, she went into the house of the Lord and realized what had been done. Jehoiada ordered her slain, but not in the Temple. She was taken through the horses' entrance to the King's house, where she was slain.

After the Queen was killed, a covenant was made between the Lord and the King and the people. Judah became a constitutional monarchy. The final step was to destroy the house of Baal, which was torn down and smashed. After Mattan, the priest of Baal was slain, the new King was taken into the palace and placed on the throne.

JEHOASH/JOASH (JUDAH) (837-800 B.C.E.) or [835-796 B.C.E.] (11:21—12:21)

Jehoash began his reign at the age of seven and reigned for 40 years. He was one of Judah's best kings and did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. At first the real power behind Jehoash was the priest, Jehoiada, but Jehoash eventually assumed power on his own. According to 2 Chronicles 24:15-19, Jehoash strayed following the death of Jehoiada.

One of the main tasks during Jehoash's reign was to repair the Temple, but after 23 years, nothing had been done. The repairs were supposed to be financed through taxes and voluntary offerings, but they never seemed to get into the right hands. Jehoash had a box placed in the temple with a hole in it so that worshipers could give their funds directly. Periodically, Jehoiada and the King's personal representative would empty the chest and make a careful record of the funds. It seems that the priests were using the money themselves, and so Jehoash devised this method to make the funds available for the workmen to repair the Temple. The priests did not suffer greatly because they still received funds from guilt and sin offerings, which could not be used on the sacred building (Leviticus 5:15-16).

In spite of these noble attempts to repair the temple, Jehoash did not tear down the local shrines and the people continued to sacrifice and burn incense in them. The latter years were plagued with political, moral, and religious decline. During this time, Hazael, King of Syria, threatened Judah by penetrating as far as Gath, where he then turned his forces towards Jerusalem. Jehoash was able to buy him off, but to do so, he had to use the temple and royal treasuries. Hazael was probably more interested in controlling the "trade routes" than in "occupying Jerusalem."

All this decline finally led to Jehoash's assassination by Jozacar and Jehozabad in the House of Millo. In the end, Jehoash turned out to be a true grandson of Athaliah.

JEHOAHAZ (ISRAEL) (815-801 B.C.E.) or [814-798 B.C.E.] (13:1-9)

Jehoahaz reigned for 17 years and did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. He followed in the sins of Jeroboam, so the Lord gave him over to King Hazael and his son, Benhadad of Syria. In time of severe oppression, Jehoahaz turned to the Lord and was promised a Savior (13:5), which could be a reference to Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:27). Nevertheless,

Jehoahaz continued in the sin of Jeroboam; and the Asherah (a symbol for the goddess) remained standing in Samaria.

During his reign Israel was greatly weakened militarily and dropped from 2,000 chariots during Ahab's reign to 10 during Jehoahaz' reign. The army had 50 horsemen and 10,000 footmen and was so weak that it was unable to contend with the Syrian threat.

JEHOASH (ISRAEL) (801-786 B.C.E.) or [798-782 B.C.E.] (13:10-25)

Jehoash reigned for 16 years. During this reign there was civil war with King Amaziah of Judah, the death of Elisha, and a victory over the Syrians.

Before Elisha died, he called Jehoash to his deathbed. He told him to shoot an arrow out the window and assured him of victory over Syria. The King then was told to strike the ground with the other arrows, which he did three times. Elisha was angry because he did not strike the ground five or six times, for this would have meant complete victory over Syria. By striking the ground only three times, he would only have three victories over them. After this incident, Elisha died and was buried.

During a raid in the area by some Moabites, a corpse was thrown into Elisha's grave. As soon as it touched his holy bones, it came back to life.

When Benhadad replaced his father Hazael of Syria as King, Jehoash defeated him three times and recaptured the cities that had been taken during the reign of his father Jehoahaz. A premature obituary is given in 2 Kings 13:13, but followed by another in 2 Kings 14:15-16.

AMAZIAH (JUDAH) (800-783 B.C.E.) or [796-767 B.C.E.] (14:1-22)

Amaziah was considered a good King who began his reign at age 25 and reigned for 29 years. Although he was a good king; he was not as good as David. He did not remove the high places and people continued to sacrifice and burn incense to pagan deities. Amaziah executed his father's murderers, but not their children. This was unusual enough to gain a footnote in the record.

Amaziah successfully defeated the Edomites in the Valley of Salt (near the southern end of the Dead Sea); this victory led him to foolishly challenge Jehoash (Israel) into battle. Israel quickly invaded Jerusalem, demolished 600 feet of its wall and looted the temple. Amaziah was captured and taken to Samaria as a prisoner. In his place they elected a sixteen-year-old boy named Azariah, who ruled for ten years. When Jehoash died, Jeroboam II released Amaziah, who lived for another 15 years before he was assassinated in Lachish, a city about thirty miles southwest of Jerusalem.

JEROBOAM II (ISRAEL) (786-746 B.C.E.) or [782-753 B.C.E.] (14:23-29)

Jeroboam II was described as an evil king. Although his reign lasted 41 years and could be characterized as one of expansionism, it only represents an Indian summer in Israel's history. Under Jeroboam II, Israel's power was extended north to Lebanon (Hamath) and south to the Dead Sea (Sea of Arabah). Jonah, the hero of the book of Jonah, was surprisingly his prophetic supporter. After his reign, the nation of Israel fell apart very quickly. It was during this time that Amos (2:6ff; 7:11) and Hosea (1:4-5; 10:7, 15, and 13:16) appeared to condemn the corruption of Israel where such extremes between wealth and poverty began to appear. Only Jonah and Isaiah are mentioned in the book of 2 Kings.

AZARIAH (UZZIAH) (JUDAH) (783-742 B.C.E.) or [767-740 B.C.E.] (15:1-7)

Azariah took over as King at the age of 16, but his father, Amaziah, was not yet dead at that time. Like his father, he was considered a good King, and so his reign lasted for 52 years. But he did not destroy the high places and the people continued to sacrifice and burn incense there. For this God made a leper out of him, so his son, Jotham, performed his royal duties. A limestone inscription has been found in Jerusalem which bears the inscription: "Hither were brought the bones of Uzziah, King of Judah: not to be opened." (Date, 1st Century C.E.)

ZECHARIAH (ISRAEL) (746-745 B.C.E.) or [753-752 B.C.E.] (15:8-12)

Zechariah's reign was the last of the Dynasty of Jehu. When Shallum assassinated him, a whole series of revolts and counter-revolts began. The entire reign of Zechariah lasted only six months.

SHALLUM (ISRAEL) (745 B.C.E.) or [752 B.C.E.] (15:13-16)

His reign lasted for one month. Menahem assassinated him and disemboweled pregnant women in a savage attempt to gain power.

MENAHM (ISRAEL) (745-738 B.C.E.) or [752-742 B.C.E.] (15:17-22)

Menahem ruled for ten years. The Assyrian King Pul/Pulu (Tiglath-pileser III) demanded tribute. He had to pay 1,000 talents of silver (equal to 3,000 shekels), which he raised by taxing 60,000 men 50 shekels each. Assyrian records confirm this tribute money.

PEKAHIAH (ISRAEL) (738-737 B.C.E.) or [742-740 B.C.E.] (15:23-26)

Pekahiah ruled for two years and was assassinated by Pekah and a band of 50 Gileadites.

PEKAH (ISRAEL) (737-732 B.C.E.) or [740-732 B.C.E.] (15:27-31)

The writer claims that Pekah ruled for 20 years, but most scholars insist that this is an error. His rule lasted for 12 years, when Hoshea killed him. The list of conquered towns is very confusing and probably represents the inclusion of two or three lists. The towns were taken by the Assyrian King, Tiglath-pileser, in his campaign of 733-732 B.C.E. The campaign was designed to punish Pekah for his anti-Assyrian plotting and also to put an end to Syria (Aram) by capturing Damascus. Assyrian records indicate that Tiglath-pileser had a hand in Hoshea's assassination of Pekah; hence, Hoshea began his rule with a pro-Assyrian policy. The deportation of Israel also seems to have begun at this time (15:29).

JOTHAM (JUDAH) (742-735 B.C.E.) or [740-735 B.C.E.] (15:32-38)

He began his reign when he was 25 years old and ruled for 16 years. He, like his father Uzziah, was a good King, but like all the others, he did not remove the high places. He did rebuild the upper gate (Benjamin Gate) to the Temple. The attack on Judah from Rezin (Syria) and Pekah (Israel) is ascribed to the Lord, but was probably an attempt to force Judah into an alliance against Assyria.

AHAZ (JUDAH) ([735-715 B.C.E.]) (16:1-20)

Ahaz became King when he was 20 years old and ruled for 16 years as one of Judah's worst Kings. He revived the practice of human sacrifice by offering up his own son (16:3). Under his rule, Judah was attacked from both the North (Syria and Israel) and from the South (Philistia and Edom). In order to deal with these threats, he ignored Isaiah's advice and offered to pay Tiglath-pileser of Assyria for help, so we discover that during this time Isaiah became active as a prophet.

Ahaz stripped the Temple of its silver and gold in order to pay the Assyrian King for help. Tiglath-pileser was glad to accept payment for something he intended to do anyway. After Tiglath-pileser captured Syria and Israel, Ahaz went to Damascus to meet him. Ahaz was so impressed with the Assyrian altar, that he had Uriah build a duplicate one in Jerusalem.

HOSHEA (ISRAEL) (732-721 B.C.E.) or [732-722 B.C.E.] (17:1-41)

Hoshea ruled, but only as a vassal king, for nine years. He had to pay a heavy tribute to Assyria. In order to get out of this situation, Hoshea sought help from King So (Sibu) of Egypt, but was later imprisoned for this effort by Shalmaneser V (727-722 B.C.E.). Shalmaneser began a siege against Samaria that lasted for three years. Sargon II (722-705 B.C.E.) claimed to have been King when Samaria finally fell, but he probably took over immediately after the fall. Sargon's account is interesting. Part of that Assyrian record runs as follows:

I led away as prisoners 27,290 inhabitants and 50 chariots I collected for my royal force. I rebuilt the city and made it populous by settling there people from lands I had conquered. I set up one of my officers as their governor and imposed taxes customary to Assyrian citizenry.

It was a common practice to remove all who might lead or participate in a rebellion. Assyria went much farther than that. Israel itself was settled and controlled by the enemy. When we refer to the “Lost Tribes of Israel,” we mean these exiled Israelites. The mixed people who remained in Israel became the Samaritans.

Samaria was populated with people from Babylon, Cuthah (north of Babylon), Avva (Syrian city), Hamath (Syrian city), and Sepharvaim (Syrian city). Because these newcomers did not follow the Lord, the Lord sent lions among them. The new settlers attributed the lions to their failure to propitiate the god of the land and so they petitioned for the return of some exiled, native priests to teach them the proper cult practices. This was granted; one priest returned to Bethel to teach. What happened then was an assimilation of new and old religious practices. Religions became hopelessly mixed, this becoming the basis for the animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans right up through the time of Jesus.

THE END OF ISRAEL (721 B.C.E.) or [722 B.C.E.]

The writer of II Kings does not blame Israel’s fall on Assyria. The blame is placed on Israel, for Israel could have been saved had she possessed the proper attitude towards God and engaged in religious reform. In Israel’s last ditch effort to save her self, she disregarded the prophets and tried to form military and political alliances, all of which were useless. Her main sins were idolatry, human sacrifice, and divination/sorcery. Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah all warned Israel, but the nation and its people would not listen. This is what brought about the end of Israel.

THE PATIENCE OF GOD

If the history of Israel teaches us anything, it teaches us the patience of God. From Jeroboam to Hoshea every king is described as wicked, ignoring the worship of God and encouraging idolatry and even child sacrifice.

The greatest of the prophets, beginning with Elijah and Elisha and continuing through such prophets as Amos, Hosea, and Micah warned the kings. Although the prophets spoke courageously, none of the Kings listened. They could not see the connection between their covenant with God and their survival as a nation.

No connection exists between how wicked a king was and how long he was permitted by God to reign. Jeroboam II ruled for 41 years and Ahab, Israel’s worst King, ruled for 22 years. God kept hoping that every King, would listen to one of his prophets, but none of them did and Israel finally collapsed.

It does not lie within human nature to exercise the patience that God exercised with Israel. Martin Luther described his own world, not unlike that found in the history of Israel, with the following expression: “The world is like a drunken peasant; if one helps him up on one side of the horse, he falls off on the other side.”¹ In response to such a world, Luther concluded: “If I were as our Lord God, and these vile people were as disobedient as they now be, I would knock the world in pieces.”²

We usually equate the Old Testament with the judgment of God; judgment there is, but there is also patience and love. God would not give Israel up; he kept trying to save her through his prophets. Some of his best prophets tried to call Israel back to God and to save her from her own self-destruction. God continued that kind of action in the New Testament, and he continues to work that way today.

Those who followed Jesus hoped that he would establish the righteous Kingdom that no other King had established. About the best that they could remember was what David had accomplished, so they hoped that Jesus could establish that kind of Kingdom and bring an end to all injustice and oppression. Many were disappointed in Jesus, especially when he made heroes out of Samaritans, who were the descendants of Israel, which was the more wicked, of the two Kingdoms. The Messiah was supposed to exercise judgment, not more patience.

Patience does not mean that God props up kingdoms. He lets them fall from within. He does not bring them down with his own hand. He even allows foreign rulers to bring down the people he loves, but he does not direct their movements. His apparent inactivity is a sign of his patience. This does not mean that God does nothing. He did everything possible, first by calling forth prophets, and then by incarnating himself in Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus resisted every human tendency to lose patience. When his disciples found the Samaritans unwilling to receive Jesus, James and John went to the Lord and asked, “Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” Jesus turned and rebuked them, and took them on to another village (Luke 9:51-56). Jesus was tireless in his effort to call people away from evil and to God, but he exercised the same kind of patience exercised by God with Israel. He found good Samaritans and lifted them up as examples to everyone.

When Jesus’ disciples asked him, following his resurrection, whether he intended to restore the Kingdom, he replied in Acts 1:7, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority.” He was not calling for inactivity.

¹ Quoted in Søren Kierkegaard, *For Self-Examination* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971), pp. 21-22.

² George Buttrick, ed. *Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. VIII (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1952) p. 510. (The quotation is taken from Luther’s *Table Talk*, CXI)

Jesus sent his disciples out to penetrate the entire world with the Good News that God's Kingdom is in the process of being established. The old evil kingdoms of this world are already collapsing.

The Book of Revelation is the promise to those who live through the collapse of their own world that they have nothing to fear. God is still exercising his patience. While there is still time, Christians must proceed under the direction of the Holy Spirit to give hope to the world. God's patience, however, will finally run out; and when it does, then history will come to an abrupt end.

God did not destroy Samaria; human beings did. God did not intervene to save Samaria; instead, he allowed its enemies, mainly Assyria, to bring Israel's history to a close. None of us should pray for the end of history. We should pray that God's patience continues for a long time, so that we can accomplish more of his will.

The more evil we discern in the world, the more we ought to pray for the continuation of God's patience. In his book, *White Corpuscles in Europe*, Allen Hunter tells of an interview he had with a man whom Hitler had driven out of Germany because the man had spoken against the dictator's policies. The interview took place while Hitler was still in power. He was still winning battles and gaining control over more and more territory. Hunter noticed that during the course of the interview, the man remained remarkably calm. When asked if Hitler's successes did not worry and frighten him, he replied that he was concerned and that he would do all he could to stop Hitler. Then he added: "There is God, and I can wait." If God can be patient, so can we; but in God's patience, he is never inactive. Out of the collapse of every nation, God calls forth the faithful, who have learned the lessons of history. Those who have learned these lessons can afford to be patient, for they know that there is God and they can wait, even as they hope.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 2 Kings



The Killing of Zedekiah's Sons by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

19. The Last Kings of Judah 2 Kings 18:1 — 25:30

19. THE LAST KINGS OF JUDAH (18:1—25:30)			
HEZEKIAH (715-687 or 715-686) (18:1—20:21)			
The Reforms of Hezekiah (18:1-12)	The Attack of Sennacherib (18:13-37)	Hezekiah consults Isaiah (19:1-37)	The Healing and Death of Hezekiah (20:1-21)
MANASSEH (687-642 or 686-642) (21:1-18)			
AMON (642-640) (21:19-26)			
JOSIAH (640-609) (22:1—23:30)			
The Book of Law is Found (22:1-20)	The Reforms of Josiah (23:1-25)	The Death of Josiah (23:26-30)	
The Reforms			
1. Public Reading of the Book 2. Renewal of the Covenant with God 3. Removal and burning of the idols	4. Firing of idolatrous priests 5. Elimination of cult prostitution 6. Elimination of child sacrifice	7. Removal of Bethel Shrine 8. Centralization of Worship 9. Renewal of Passover 10. Elimination of mediums and wizards	
JEHOAHAZ/SHALLUM (609) (23:31-35)			
JEHOIAKIM/ELIAKIM (609-598) (23:36—24:7)			
JEHOIACHIN (598) (24:8-17)			
ZEDEKIAH/MATTANIAH (597) (24:18—25:21)			
GEDALIAH (25:22-26)			
A GLIMMER OF HOPE (25:27-30)			

19. THE LAST KINGS OF JUDAH

2 Kings 18:1—25:30

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Reforms of Hezekiah 18:1—20:21	Manasseh and Amon 21:1-26	The Reforms of Josiah 22:1—23:30	Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin 23:31—24:17	Zedekiah and Gedaliah 24:18—25:30

HEZEKIAH (715-687 B.C.E.) or [715-686 B.C.E.] (18:1—20:21)

The Reforms of Hezekiah (18:1-12)

The dates are confused. Hezekiah did not reign during Hoshea; nor did Israel fall during Hezekiah's reign. That all happened when Ahaz was King of Judah.

What is important here is that after Israel fell and Hezekiah became King of Judah, he initiated some very important reforms. He removed the idolatrous shrines (the high places), he broke the pillars, and he destroyed the bronze serpent which had been made by Moses. The people had begun to burn incense before the Nehushtan (serpent or bronze object).

In addition to the above religious reforms, Hezekiah rebelled against Assyria by attacking Philistine territory, which Sargon of Assyria had captured in 713-711 B.C.E. Hezekiah, and other Kings as well, took advantage of a transition in Assyria and unrest in Babylon. Sargon had died and was being succeeded by Sennacherib. The distraction in Assyria was not to last for very long.

The Attack of Sennacherib (18:13-37)

Sennacherib, the King of Assyria, attacked the fortified cities of Judah in 701 B.C.E. According to Assyrian accounts, they captured 46 cities and took 200,150 captives, shutting Hezekiah up like a "bird in a cage." Archaeological excavations at Lachish have confirmed heavy casualties there by unearthing a huge pit containing approximately 1,500 human bodies.

Hezekiah, beginning to read the writing on the wall, sent a message to Sennacherib in Lachish that he was willing to pay tribute. Sennacherib demanded 300 talents of silver

and 30 talents of gold, which Hezekiah had to take out of the Temple and Palace. He even had to strip it from the Temple doors. The only thing Hezekiah had left was his throne and the capital city.

Sennacherib sent the Tartan (commander-in-chief of the army), the Rabсарis (high military official), and the Rabshakeh (high civil dignitary) and a great army to Jerusalem to demand surrender. Eliakim (palace administrator), Shebna (secretary), and Joah (recorder) met them outside the walls near the end of Hezekiah's tunnel. The three Assyrian officials demanded, in the Hebrew language, that Hezekiah surrender unconditionally. Hezekiah's officials wanted to conduct the conversation in Aramaic, so that their own people would not understand. This was not acceptable to the Assyrians, who warned Judah neither to rely on Egypt (an unreliable ally), nor on God (who, according to 18:25, is on Assyria's side). This caused much distress among Hezekiah's three officials.

Hezekiah Consults Isaiah (19:1-37)

Hezekiah made two responses to the Assyrian threat. First, he went into the House of the Lord, to pray. Secondly, he sent Eliakim and Shebna and the senior priests to consult with the prophet Isaiah about the Assyrians. Threat. Isaiah lived in Jerusalem, and was one of the great prophets of Judah and lived during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

Isaiah assured Hezekiah that Jerusalem would be delivered by a rumor (19:7). It is difficult to know what the rumor was, for there are a couple of possibilities. It could have been news of Tirhakah's (Ethiopia) advances or of revolt in Babylon.

Hezekiah prayed for the Lord's help in this deliverance and Isaiah assured him that Jerusalem would not be taken. During the night an angel of the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrians in the camp. In the morning, the Assyrians found all those dead bodies, became frightened, and went home. Herodotus tells of a plague of mice attacking the Assyrian army. It is not clear what happened, but some scholars think that the camp experienced an outbreak of the bubonic plague. Sennacherib never claimed to attack Jerusalem and, apart from the Bible, there is no record of this huge loss of Assyrian life.

What can be confirmed is Sennacherib's return home to Nineveh, where his sons, Adrammelech and Sharezer, killed him with a sword while he worshiped Nisroch. Nisroch is probably a corrupted reference to Marduk, the Babylonian god. Another son, Esarhaddon (681-669 B.C.E.), replaced him as the Assyrian King.

This does not mean that Judah was free of Assyrian domination. Judah was to remain under Assyrian control until the reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.E.). Assyria itself would last until 612 B.C.E. when the Babylonians destroyed Nineveh, its capital city.

A very significant word appears in this chapter. It is "remnant" and it appears in verses 4 and 31. With the loss of the northern kingdom, Judah is the "remnant" who survived the

Assyrian onslaught. As the Babylonians gain power and eventually destroy Judah, there will be an expectation that a “remnant” will survive this as well. Whenever we have a period of decline, we look for a “remnant” to not only survive but also to build again.

The Healing and Death of Hezekiah (20:1-21)

When Hezekiah became sick, Isaiah told him to set his house in order and prepare to die, for he would not get better. Hezekiah prayed and the Lord heard his prayer and gave him an additional fifteen years. The fifteen years has been used to pinpoint the date of the illness, and if it is to be taken literally, the year would have been 701 B.C.E., the year of Sennacherib’s siege on Jerusalem. The sickness would have occurred prior to the siege.

That Hezekiah was healed by Isaiah’s placing a cake of figs on his boil does not rule out divine healing. God can work through our remedies, even if they are not scientifically based.

After Hezekiah recovered, he received some ambassadors from Merodach-baladan, King of Babylon (722-710) and (703-702), whom he showed throughout the temple and palace. This angered Isaiah, who was a neutralist in foreign affairs. He opposed any alliance with any nation and warned that all these things would eventually be carried off to Babylon.

The chapter ends with a note about how Hezekiah was responsible for improving the city’s water supply in preparation for a possible attack. The pool and conduit mentioned have been found and the conduit is commonly referred to as Hezekiah’s tunnel or the Siloam tunnel. It runs from Gihon’s Spring (outside the wall) to the Pool of Siloam (inside the wall). In 1880 an inscription (the Siloam Inscription) was found identifying this tunnel, which runs through 1,700 feet of solid rock and is considered a remarkable engineering achievement for that time.

Hezekiah was known to be a good King, who died a natural death.

MANASSEH (687-642 B.C.E.) or [686-642 B.C.E.] (21:1-18)

With Hezekiah’s death, Judah’s most wicked King began his rule, which lasted for 55 (45) years. Manasseh is compared in his wickedness to Ahab of Israel. Some of the evil he did was as follows:

He rebuilt the shrines (high places); built altars for Baal; made an Asherah; worshipped the host of heaven (astral worship); sacrificed his own son, encouraging child sacrifice; approved of soothsaying and augury; and dealt with mediums and wizards.

It was Manasseh’s reign, according to the author, that angered God to such an extent that now Jerusalem’s fate was sealed (2 Kings 21:12-13). This does not mean that the demise of Judah was all Manasseh’s fault, but that rebellion against God reached its peak under him.

While 2 Kings focuses on the religious situation during the reign of Manasseh 2 Chronicles describes the political context as well. The Assyrian Empire reached its peak during Manasseh's time and that limited many of Judah's options. Although Manasseh was subservient to Assyria, 2 Chronicles 33:11-13 tells of one occasion on which Manasseh was taken to Babylon by the Assyrians as a captive. This may have been related to his participation in an uprising against Assyria in 652-648 B.C.E. Because of his record as a loyal vassal who paid tribute and supported the Assyrian military operations against Egypt, the Assyrians were lenient with him.

2 Chronicles tells a slightly different story of Manasseh's religious involvements. He seems to have gotten rid of the more blatant pagan practices, but his reform did not go far enough. His sending of priests out to local shrines was viewed with horror, even if it encouraged the worship of Yahweh. Worship could only be controlled in Jerusalem. There was too much of a chance of the sacrificial system being tainted by pagan practices out in the local shrines and high places. Sacrifice belonged in Jerusalem, where it could be controlled.

AMON (642-640 B.C.E.) (21:19-26)

Amon followed in his father's footsteps, but his reign lasted only two years. Household officials assassinated him at the age of 24.

JOSIAH (640-609 B.C.E.) (22:1—23:30)

The Book of the Law is Found (22:1-20)

Josiah was Judah's best King and is mentioned as a reformer along with Hezekiah. He began his reign at the tender age of eight and ruled for 31 years. In the eighteenth year of his reign (622-621 B.C.E.), he ordered the Temple repaired, and as workmen were repairing it, Hilkiah—the high priest—found the Book (Scroll) of the Law (Deuteronomy) either in a collection box or among the rubbish. Josiah was immediately notified, after which he appointed a committee of five (Hilkiah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah) to seek divine direction concerning it. The men went to Huldah, a prophetess, who told them to tell Josiah to put this book into practice. Part of her prophecy was that Josiah would die in peace (22:20), but this did not happen. Josiah was to die on the battlefield.

Two well-known prophets were active during this time. They were Jeremiah and Zephaniah. The story of Huldah, a female prophet, is more believable because these well-known prophets are not mentioned. It would have been unusual for the King to seek advice from a female prophet. If someone were making this story up, they most certainly would have had him seeking advice from someone like Jeremiah or Zephaniah. In addition to that, the error concerning Josiah's death would have been covered up.

The Reforms of Josiah (23:1-25)

The following are the reforms accomplished in Josiah's time. Notice that some of the reforms were made in what was once the Northern Kingdom (Israel). He had Jeroboam's altars and the high places of Samaria removed.

1. Public reading of the Book.
2. Renewal of the Covenant with God.
3. Removal and burning of the Idols.
4. Firing (perhaps killing) of idolatrous priests.
5. Elimination of male cult prostitution.
6. Elimination of child sacrifice (at Topheth).
7. Removal of the shrine at Bethel.
8. Centralization of worship.
9. Renewal of the Passover Celebration.
10. Elimination of mediums and wizards.

The Death of Josiah (23:26-30)

In spite of all Josiah's reforms, Judah is doomed. The reforms came too late. Assyria was in a state of collapse and the Neo-Babylonian Empire was rapidly taking its place. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, fell in 612 B.C.E. In order to maintain a balance of power, or to extend his own influence over Syria, the Egyptian Pharaoh, Neco, went to help Assyria make a final stand against the Babylonians at Carchemish. For some misguided reason, Josiah tried to oppose the Egyptian army at Megiddo in 609 B.C.E. and lost his life. Huldah's prediction that he would die a peaceful death did not come true (22:20).

The decisive battle took place at Carchemish in 605 B.C.E. The Egyptians were defeated, and the Babylonians began to extend their influence over Judah, much to the dismay of prophets like Habakkuk, who could not understand why God was using the wicked Babylonians to punish Judah.

JEHOAHAZ/SHALLUM (609 B.C.E.) (23:31-35)

At the age of 23, with popular support, Jehoahaz, one of Josiah's younger sons took over as King of Judah, but he reigned for a mere three months. Neco, the Egyptian Pharaoh, captured and deported him to Egypt, where he died. He also put Jehoahaz' older brother, Eliakim, in power as a vassal king and forced Judah to pay heavy tribute.

JEHOIAKIM/ELIAKIM (609-598 B.C.E.) (23:36—24:7)

Eliakim was set up as a vassal king of Judah in subjection to Egypt and was given a new name, Jehoiakim, as a symbol of that subjection. Eliakim began his reign at 25 years of age and ruled for 11 years. When Egypt was defeated at Carchemish in 605 B.C.E., Judah became a vassal to Babylon and their King Nebuchadnezzar (Nebuchadrezzar). Jeremiah

tended to use the word “Nebuchadrezzar,” which is closer to the way the Babylonians referred to him. While 2 Kings 24:3 blames the inevitable fall of Judah on the sins of Manasseh, Jeremiah blames it on Judah’s rebellion and unfaithfulness to God.

JEHOIACHIN (598 B.C.E.) (24:8-17)

Nebuchadnezzar removed Jehoiachin. According to Babylonian records Jehoiachin surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar on March 16, 597 B.C.E. and was taken off to Babylon with all of Jerusalem’s leading citizens and its treasures. Included among those citizens were his royal court, his harem, the military, and all the social leaders of Jerusalem.

Various figures are given in this first Exile. In 2 Kings 24:14, we are told that the number was 10,000; then in 2 Kings 24:16, the number is given at 8,000 (7,000 + 1,000). What this means is very confusing. It may be a breakdown of different groups or two different accounts. The prophet Jeremiah comes up with an entirely different figure of 3,023 (Jeremiah 52:28), but since his figure is not rounded off, he may only be counting the men.

ZEDEKIAH/MATTANIAH (597 B.C.E.) (24:18—25:21)

Zedekiah became a vassal king at age 21 and reigned for 11 years. He rebelled against Babylon by withholding the tribute, but paid dearly for the revolt. A wider revolt had been planned, but it never materialized; besides, Jeremiah opposed it (Jeremiah 27:3). Both Jeremiah (Jeremiah 37:9-10) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 7:23-27) saw Babylonia as an instrument of divine judgment and fighting against them as futile.

Nebuchadnezzar began the siege on January 15, 588 B.C.E., which ended on July 19, 586 B.C.E. (or August 14, 586, according to the NIV Study Bible). Why it took eighteen months to take Jerusalem is not known. Conditions during the siege were deplorable. By June of 587 B.C.E., Jerusalem was near starvation, as described in Lamentations 4:9-10. Zedekiah broke through the wall in a desperate attempt to escape, but he was quickly captured near Jericho by the Chaldeans and taken to the military headquarters in Riblah. His sons were killed before his very eyes and then he was blinded, bound and taken to Babylon. Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, was put in charge of destroying the palace, the temple, the walls, and every fine building in Jerusalem. The second deportation of 832 persons (Jeremiah 52:29) took place, leaving behind only the poor. According to Jeremiah 52:24-27, 72 ringleaders of the rebellion were arrested, brought to Riblah and executed there. Among them were five temple personnel and seven military officials.

GEDALIAH (25:22-26)

With the abolition of the monarchy, Gedaliah was appointed as a native governor under Chaldean control. This should have meant peace and stability for those who remained. Ahikam, Gedaliah’s father, had been a trusted adviser to Josiah (22:12) and a friend of Jeremiah’s (Jeremiah 26:24). Gedaliah, himself, thought well of Jeremiah (Jeremiah

39:14; 40:6) and had the confidence of most of his fellow citizens (Jeremiah 40:13—41:18). But Ishmael, a member of the deposed royal family, assassinated him (Jeremiah 40:13—41:18). The assassin and his friends were nationalists and the assassination took place in the new provincial capital of Mizpah. A number of other nationalists fled to Egypt out of fear, taking an unwilling Jeremiah with them (Jeremiah 42:18—43:7). Jeremiah probably died in Egypt.

A GLIMMER OF HOPE (25:27-30)

Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C.E. and was succeeded by his son, Evil-merodach, who released Jehoiachin after 37 years of imprisonment. This took place on March 21, 561 B.C.E. Jehoiachin was given a living allowance and allowed to eat at the King's table. Was the intent to restore Jehoiachin's reign in Judah? No one will ever know, for Evil-merodach was assassinated by Nergal-sharezer (560-556 B.C.E.) one year later, thus dashing any possible Jewish hopes for an immediate restoration. The writer of 2 Kings, however, did not know this, so that book ends on a note of hope for restoration.

ONE GENERATION AWAY FROM DISASTER

One thing that leaps out from the study of the Kings of Judah is how good kings follow bad ones and bad ones follow good ones. Unlike Israel, which had no good kings, Judah had at least seven, counting Asa, Jehosaphat, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah. That, of course, leaves 13 bad ones; even the good ones cannot offset the course set for disaster by the bad ones.

Josiah put the most extensive reformation in history into effect, but following his death, the nation moved quickly back on a suicidal path. When Hezekiah turned to God, God stopped the Assyrians and sent them fleeing; but when a generation deserted God, such as happened under Manasseh, the nation's doom was sealed. Josiah's reformation propped things up for awhile, but the shallowness of the people's response was quickly revealed following Josiah's death. If the reformation was genuine, the people were not able to pass their faith on to their children.

Where there is no faith, immorality soon follows. The nation not only collapses from within, but it also opens itself up to external enemies, which for Judah were Assyria and Babylonia. These nations were no better than Judah and, according to the prophets, they too were moving towards self-destruction. It would just take a little longer.

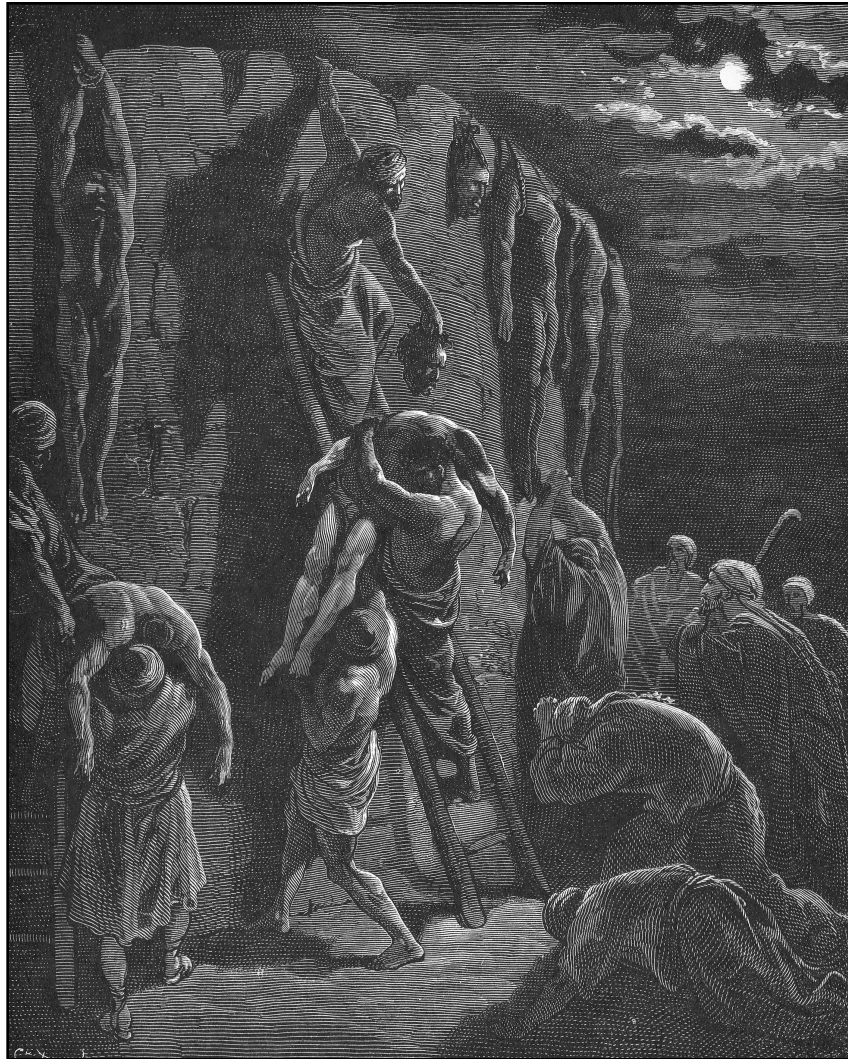
Churches, like nations, live within one generation of disaster or even extinction. Centuries of carefully laid foundations can be destroyed by one rebellious generation. God will allow it to happen, but not without calling forth a "remnant." This means that the disaster, as terrible as it might be, is never complete. It may lie dormant for many years, but it will emerge sooner or later. While prophets may lead, it consists of many different kinds of people.

These remnants usually begin to emerge even before the nation, or church, crumbles. When John the Baptist and Jesus began their ministries, Rome, was already dominating Jerusalem. Jesus predicted, as did Jeremiah and Ezekiel before him, that Jerusalem and its beautiful Temple would not last. This did not stop Jesus from calling disciples and training them to be apostles or ambassadors of the new remnant or the new Israel. Even as everything came crashing in all around these disciples, they confidently organized a Church that would eventually dominate the Roman Empire intent on destroying it.

Like empires and nations the Church too stands just one generation away from disaster; therefore, it must learn how to pass on an authentic faith capable of building solid moral foundations. Nations and Churches must cooperate together in this task. Failure to do so may result in nations and churches becoming extinct. This does not mean that God's mission in the world will come to an end along with their end, but they will forfeit their part and will no longer be identified with the remnant. It is better to be identified with the Kingdom of God, which will never end, than to be identified with the passing kingdoms of this world.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 1 Chronicles



The Bodies of Saul and Sons by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

20. The Lineage of God's Chosen People 1 Chronicles 1:1—9:44)

20. THE LINEAGE OF GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE (1:1—9:44)		
ADAM TO ABRAHAM (1:1-54)		
Isaac: Father of the Hebrews	Ishmael: Father of the Arabs	
THE DESCENDANTS OF JUDAH (2:1-55)		
THE DESCENDANTS OF DAVID (3:1-24)		
David's Descendants to the Exile (3:1-16)	David's Descendants to the Present (3:17-24)	
THE DESCENDANTS OF ISRAEL (4:1—7:40)		
<p>Judah (4:1-23) Simeon (4:24-43) Reuben (5:1-10) Gad (5:11-22) Manasseh (1/2) (5:23-26) Levi (6:1-81) Line of the High Priests (6:1-15) Families of Gershom, Kohath, Merari (6:16-30) Families of the Singers (6:31-48) The Descendants of Aaron (6:49-53) The Levitical Cities (6:54-81)</p>	<p>Issachar (7:1-5) Benjamin (7:6-12) Dan (7:12b) Naphtali (7:13) Manasseh (1/2) (7:14-19) Ephraim (7:20-29) Asher (7:30-40)</p>	
THE DESCENDANTS OF BENJAMIN (8:1-40)		
THE POSTEXILIC CITIZENS OF JERUSALEM (8:1-34)		
The Benjamites (956)	The Priests (1,760)	The Gatekeepers (212)
ANCESTORS AND DESCENDANTS OF SAUL (9:35-44) and (1 Chronicles 8:33-40)		

20. THE LINEAGE OF GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

1 Chronicles 1:1—9:44

ASSIGNMENTS			
Adam to Abraham Judah David 1:1—3:24	Judah, Simeon, Reuben, Gad, Manasseh 4:1—5:26	Levi, Issachar, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Asher 6:1—7:40	Benjamin Postexilic Citizens of Jerusalem Saul 8:1—9:44

INTRODUCTION TO CHRONICLES

1000—587/6 B.C.E.

The Name

The name itself means “the things (events) of the days.” In the Septuagint one finds Chronicles defined as “the things, which were passed over.” 1 and 2 Chronicles, like 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, is really one book; but in the case of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah are to be included in this book.

The Sources

All kinds of sources have been used in the writing of Chronicles: Genesis, Numbers, Joshua, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, and at least 16 (some say 20) other unfamiliar sources. Credit is not always given, even when those sources have been copied.

The Authorship

Because the author has taken a primary interest in the staff of the post-exilic temple, the organization of the priests, Levites, musicians, custodians, etc., it has been suggested that he was a Levite and a singer, but no name can be attached to him. Ezra might be given credit for some of the genealogies, but he cannot be considered the author of the entire work.

The Date

A date as early as 400 B.C.E. has been suggested, and a date as late as 250 B.C.E. has been projected. The latter date spills over into the Greek period and because there is little evidence of Greek influence in Chronicles, most scholars set the date of its writing from 350 to 300 B.C.E.

There is a lot of internal evidence on this late date. The book itself mentions the return from Exile in 537 B.C.E. (2 Chronicles 36:22) and money coined after 515 B.C.E. (1 Chronicles 29:7). If Ezra and Nehemiah were part of story, the date would have to be later than 430 B.C.E. The lists of the descendants of Zerubbabel to the sixth generation suggest a date as early as 400 to 340 B.C.E. (1 Chronicles 3:19-24), but the list of high priests down to Jaddua call for a later date of approximately 322 B.C.E.

The Purpose

The author retells many of the events already recorded in Samuel and Kings, but he does so from a different point of view. He assumes that his readers are familiar with those events, and so there is no need to write everything down. His purpose is not historical, as we understand the term; rather, he has a theological and idealistic purpose. He wishes to avoid a certain pattern of religious life in his day, and so he attempts to tell what a proper kingdom of people under God would be like. The author does this by describing the reigns of David and Solomon as they ought to have been like. David is idealized as the real founder of the temple and its ritual; hence, he is interested primarily in two themes: (1) True Kingship, and (2) True Worship.

The Northern Kingdom is largely ignored, for lack of a good example, so the author follows David's line through the Southern Kingdom. The greatest lesson of history, he suggests, is that "prosperity" and "well being" depend on a nation's faithfulness to God; "idolatry" and "neglect" always result in judgment and disaster. Sinful people cannot thwart God's eternal purpose. This point is summarized in 2 Chronicles 36:15-16 and is a lesson every age needs to learn, including our own.

The LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place; but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD against his people became so great that there was no remedy.

Chronicles was written for a new generation of people, who needed to see and understand their past. This is why the genealogies have been included. The main focus however was on the future and how past mistakes could be avoided.

1 and 2 CHRONICLES			
1 Chronicles 1-10	1 Chronicles 11-29	2 Chronicles 1-9	2 Chronicles 10-36
Genealogies Adam to Saul	David's Reign	Solomon's Reign	The Kingdom of Judah

The Outline

- A. The Lineage of God's Chosen People. (1 Chronicles 1-9)
- B. The Death of Saul (1 Chronicles 10:1-14)
- C. The Reign of David (1 Chronicles 11:1—29:30)
 - 1. Troubles and Achievements (1 Chronicles 11:1—22:1)
 - 2. Preparations for Building the Temple (1 Chronicles 22:2—29:30)
- D. The Reign of Solomon (2 Chronicles 1-9)
 - 1. The Building of the Temple
 - 2. The Dedication of the Temple
 - 3. Later Events in Solomon's Life
- D. The Kingdom Divided (2 Chronicles 10-36)
 - 1. Jeroboam and Rehoboam
 - 2. Asa: A God Fearing King
 - 3. Jehoshaphat's Reign
 - 4. The Temple Repaired by Joash
 - 5. The Reforms of Hezekiah
 - 6. Jerusalem Spared from the Assyrians
 - 7. The Idolatry of Judah
 - 8. The Reforms of Josiah
 - 9. The Fall of Jerusalem
 - 10. The Exile
 - 11. The End of Israel (722-721 B.C.E.)

The lists of genealogies are not intended to be complete. In line with his purpose the author emphasizes the family of David, the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi. These family trees provide a foundation for and an introduction to, the historical and theological themes, which he takes up in Chapter 10.

ADAM TO ABRAHAM (1:1-54)

These lists have been drawn from Genesis, although the spelling of many names is slightly different here. Attention quickly narrows to Abraham as the main character and his two sons: (1) Isaac (Father of the Hebrews) and (2) Ishmael (Father of the Arabs). When Isaac's sons, Jacob and Esau are named, Jacob is not given his personal name. Instead he is called by his community name—ISRAEL. Esau is given special attention as the brother of Israel and the Father of Edom (Seir). A notation is made that Edom had kings before Israel (1:43), but the author also wants to make clear that they were replaced by chiefs, who are then listed in 1:51b-54.

As with the children of Noah, and then of Abraham, Chronicles lists first that line which is not Israel's ancestry. He saves the best for last. He also omits people that do not fit in with his purpose, such as Cain.

THE DESCENDANTS OF JUDAH (2:1-55)

The 12 sons of Israel are named in accordance with Genesis 35:22-26 with the exception that Dan is listed in seventh place instead of in ninth place. Usually genealogical lists exclude Levi and include Ephraim and Manasseh instead of their father Joseph. The author does not proceed to deal with the genealogies of these sons in this order; rather, he emphasizes Judah as being the most important of the sons.

The Royal Line of David springs from the union of Judah and Tamar, a Canaanite woman who was also his daughter-in-law (Genesis 38:46:12, and Leviticus 18:15). Her name also appears in the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew 1:3.

David is called the seventh son of Jesse here (1 Chronicles 2:15), but in 1 Samuel 16:10-11 and 17:12 Jesse had eight sons and David is the eighth son.

THE DESCENDANTS OF DAVID (3:1-24)

In tracing the descendants of David, the author uses non-biblical sources as well and traces the lineage right down to his own time. The chapter is divided into two parts: (1) David's descendants to the Exile (3:1-16), and (2) David's descendants to the present (3:17-24). Bathshua (3:5) should be thought of as Bathsheba. While it is difficult to make sense out of this chapter, it is very important in dating the time in which the Chronicler was writing.

THE DESCENDANTS OF ISRAEL (4:1—7:40)

Judah (4:1-23)

Since Judah became the most important of the tribes, the Chronicler begins by describing its genealogy first. In verse ten there is an interruption as he quotes the prayer of Jabez, who calls upon God for a blessing. One can note in the presence of Caleb, an adopted

Israelite, and Bithiah, a Pharaoh's daughter (4:18), that there was intermarriage going on between Israelites and other tribes.

Simeon (4:24-43)

This genealogy helps us to understand that Simeon did carry on as a separate tribe for some time, but by the time of David, had lost its identity. The Tribe of Simeon had close geographical and historical connections to the Tribe of Judah. These connections contributed to its eventual absorption by Judah.

Reuben (5:1-10)

This Tribe had been connected with Judah, but by remaining East of the Jordan, it lost power and influence. The Joseph Tribes became dominant, but David still sprang from the Tribe of Judah. The author in these verses tries to explain what happened. Reuben, the firstborn, had defiled his father's bed (Genesis 35:22 and 49:4) and lost the birthright. It was not the birthright that was passed on to the Joseph Tribes, but the blessing (Genesis 48:8-12). The descendants of Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, went on to make up the core of the northern nation of Israel, but it was the Tribe of Judah, which gained preeminence and produced a Prince in David, the prototype of the Messiah to come.

Gad (5:11-22)

The Tribe of Gad was north of Reuben and seems to have been much stronger and more important. Included in this section is a story of the military alliance of the Eastern Tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. They possessed a standing army of 44,760 men who made war on the Hagarites, from whom they took 50,000 camels, 250,000 sheep, 2,000 asses, and 100,000 prisoners. The numbers are probably exaggerated. The Hagarites were bedouins living in Northern Arabia.

An important point made in this section is that battles are won not by human power, but through obedience to God. Those who do not submit may expect to lose (1 Chronicles 5:20,22, and 25-26).

Manasseh (1/2) (5:23-26)

This was a prolific tribe on the east side of the Jordan, which spread all the way to the Lebanon mountain range. Its apostasy, along with that of the Tribes of Reuben and Gad led to its exile by Tilgath-pilneser (Tiglath- pileser), King of Assyria. (2 Kings 15:29) The King's name was Pul. God stirred up foreign kings because of Israel's unfaithfulness; Israel's punishment was exile. Punishment also awaited the Assyrian King as the Babylonians rose to power. With unfaithfulness comes the never-ending cycle of the rise and fall of kings and nations.

Levi (6:1-81)

The Tribe of Levi was a warlike tribe that became a priestly caste. The line running through Zadok produced the high priests, which are here traced down to the Exile. Other Levites, not of the privileged, priestly family, performed auxiliary duties in the Temple such as singing. Singing was introduced by David with the institution of the musical service as it existed in the Author's own time. Prominent family names were associated with these singers; they are from the family of Kohath, Samuel's grandson, Heman (6:33), from the family of Gershon, his right hand associate, Asaph (6:39), and from the family of Merari, his left hand associate, Ethan (6:44). The author himself probably belonged to one of these groups. In summary, to be a priest, one had to be a descendant of Aaron; but to be a high priest, one had to be a descendant of Zadok.

The list of cities is not complete, nor is the spelling of every city correct; but these are the places where the Levites lived, being dispersed throughout Israel. In this way they could help to hold Israel together. They controlled the six cities of refuge and 42 other towns with their surrounding pastureland. The cities of refuge existed to provide sanctuary for anyone who killed another person unintentionally. Such a person was protected from vengeance until a fair trial could be given (Numbers 35:9-15).

- A. The Line of the High Priests (6:1-15)
- B. The Families of Gershon, Kohath, and Merari (6:16-30)
- C. The Families of the Singers (6:31-48)
 - 1. Heman (Kohath)
 - 2. Asaph (Gershon)
 - 3. Ethan (Merari)
- D. The Descendants of Aaron (6:49-53)
- E. The Levitical Cities (6:54-81)

Issachar (7:1-5)

It is obvious that this genealogy is taken from a military census by its references to warriors and chiefs. The basis for the census can be found in Numbers 26:23-25.

Benjamin (7:6-12)

Zebulun should appear in this position, and since Benjamin appears in Chapter 8, some scholars assume that the author made a mistake here. The difficulty with that is that none of these genealogies are listed anywhere else with those of Zebulun. (See Genesis 46:17-27 and Numbers 26:23-50.) What is clear is that we have another example of a genealogy drawn from a military census.

Dan (7:12b)

This is probably part of the genealogy of the tribe of Dan, but the text is hopelessly corrupted. Some would say that there is no genealogy for Dan just as Zebulun has been omitted.

Naphtali (7:13)

This genealogy is very brief, but it does correspond to Genesis 46:24-25.

Manasseh (7:14-19)

Elements of the Tribe from both the East and West are included in this genealogy. It, along with Ephraim, made up the major portion of the northern tribe of Israel. The genealogy here is similar to those found in Numbers 26:29-34 and Joshua 7.

Ephraim (7:20-29)

Ephraim, along with Manasseh, made up the bulk of the nation of Israel. In this section we not only have a genealogy that goes back to Joshua, but a couple of stories from those pioneering days. The move westward is part of this record.

Asher (7:30-40)

The author moved through these Northern Tribes (Issachar to Asher) very quickly. They were only important to him when they served David (7:2). That is why so many of the genealogies are taken from military sources.

THE DESCENDANTS OF BENJAMIN (8:1-40)

Benjamin is given special treatment because Jerusalem originally belonged to this tribe (Joshua 18:28). From this tribe came Saul, the first King (1 Chronicles 8:33-40). This author did not like Saul (10:13-14), but Saul was the first King and predecessor of David.

THE POSTEXILIC CITIZENS OF JERUSALEM (9:1-34)

In this section we have lists of families who returned from captivity to live in Jerusalem. The source (*Kings*), is not the same as the 1 and 2 Kings of the Bible. There must have been another source named "*Kings*."

Following their return from Exile, they adopted the name of Israel, which, before the Exile, had been reserved for the Northern Tribes. Those who returned did so for religious reasons, and are described in terms of groups, such as the Israelites (laypersons), Priests, Levites, Gatekeepers, and Temple Servants. Numbers are given for the Israelites (956), the Priests (1,760), and the Gatekeepers (212).

ANCESTORS AND DESCENDANTS OF SAUL (9:35-44)

This is a repetition of what we find in 1 Chronicles 8:33-40. It appears a second time in anticipation of the next chapter.

LOOKING INTO THE REAR VIEW MIRROR

Looking at our genealogy is like looking into the rear view mirror. It helps to know what lies behind us as we drive into the future. This is especially true if a look back can aid us in not repeating the mistakes of the past. The purpose for taking a look back is to gain a perspective for moving into the future with confidence.

Two other genealogies play an important part in the Bible, and they are those found at the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew and Luke. In Matthew 1:1-17 the genealogy moves forward from Abraham through David to Jesus, but in Luke 3:23-38 the genealogy moves backwards from Jesus through David and Abraham to Adam. The reason for the difference is the reader, which in the case of Matthew would have been Jewish and in the case of Luke, Gentile. Both Jew and Gentile need to look in the rear view mirror to see where they have come from, so that they can move towards unity under one God.

It is fruitless to try to measure time through these genealogies. Their purpose is neither scientific nor historical, but theological. They make a theological statement about whom we are. And who are we, but children of God, our common Creator? When we lose sight of why we have been created, we need to look into the rear view mirror for an answer. In Adam we discover that we, Jew and Gentile, have all been created in the image of God, and in Abraham we discover a special purpose for those who have heard the call of God and responded to it. They are to become a light and blessing to all the nations of the earth. These are theological statements, not historical records. They give us an identity and tell what we have been called to do.

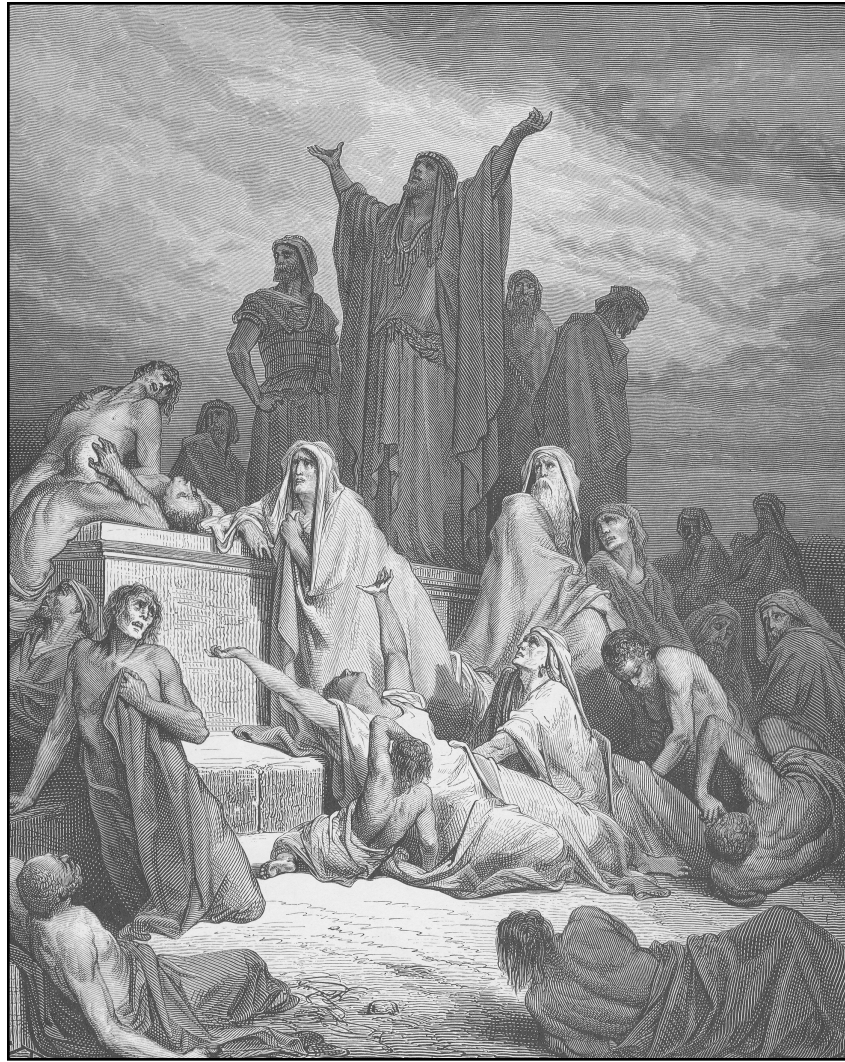
Within the genealogies we will find people who have been grafted in, such as Caleb, the Kenizzite (Numbers 32:12), and Bithiah, a Pharaoh's daughter (1 Chronicles 4:15 and 18). Ruth, the Moabite, and Rahab, the harlot from Jericho (Matthew 1:5) are two more examples. There are plenty of skeletons in the genealogies, both in terms of race and morality. But we must ask the question, "Does it matter?" The answer of course is, "No." What matters is looking in the rear view mirror to discover that we are children of God and have been called to be a light to the world so that all might be saved.

Being racially pure and morally just does not insure anyone a place in the Kingdom of God. This is made implicitly clear by John the Baptist as he prepared people for the coming of Jesus. As the Pharisees and Sadducees came to him, he said to them in Matthew 3:7-9, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

What is going on here? If anyone were racially and morally pure, it would have been these two groups, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees represented the liberal tradition of Judaism and the Sadducees a more conservative tradition; but both groups, according to their own understanding, tried to live out what they believed. Wherein did they go wrong and what is John trying to say to them? Baptism was used by Jews as a symbol of cleansing Gentiles from their contamination in idolatry and was used with those who were being converted to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. John was pointing out that even Jews needed such cleansing and that unless the Pharisees and Sadducees recognized their real contamination baptism would not do them any good. Neither would their claim to be children of Abraham. They needed to look into the rear view mirror of their own sacred history. Only those who can read that history will be helped by it.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 1 Chronicles



The Plague in Jerusalem by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

21. The Reign of David 1 Chronicles 10:1—22:1)

21. THE REIGN OF DAVID (10:1 – 22:1)		
THE DEATH OF SAUL (10:1-14)		
DAVID BECOMES KING (11:1 – 12:40)		
The Capture of Jerusalem (11:1-14)	David's Mighty Men (11:10-47)	David's Supporters (12:1-40)
DAVID TAKES THE ARK TO JERUSALEM (13:1 – 17:27)		
The Ark is Moved from Kiriath-Jearim (13:1-14)		
David's Activity in Jerusalem (14:1-17)		
David's Family (14:1-7)		David's Wars (14:8-17)
The Ark Arrives (15:1-29)	The Dedication of the Ark (16:1-43)	The Desire to Build a Temple (17:1-27)
DAVID'S MILITARY CONQUESTS (18:1 – 22:1)		
David's Leaders (18:1-17)		
Joab: Commander-in-chief Jehoshaphat: Recorder or press secretary Zadok and Ahimelech (Abiathar): Priests	Shavsha (Seraiah): Secretary for annals/records Benaiah: Commander over bodyguards David's Sons: Chief officials	
The Conquest of the Ammonites and Syrians (19:1-19)		
The Conquest of the Ammonites and Philistines (20:1-8)		
Joab Captures Rabbah (20:1-3)	Conquest of the Philistine Giants (20:4-8)	
David Takes a Census (21:1 – 22:1)		
Judah: 1,100,000 (800,000) Soldiers	Israel: 470,000 (500,000) Soldiers	
The Three Choices		
Three Years of Famine	Three Months of Devastation	Three days of Pestilence

21. THE REIGN OF DAVID

1 Chronicles 10:1—22:1

ASSIGNMENTS				
David Replaces Saul 10:1—12:40	The Ark Is Moved To Jerusalem 13:1—14:17	The Ark Arrives And Is Dedicated 15:1—17:27	David's Military Victories 18:1—20:8	David Takes A Census 21:1—22:1

THE DEATH OF SAUL (10:1-14) (1 Samuel 31:1-13 and 2 Samuel 1)

For the writer of Chronicles, Saul's attempt to found a Kingdom ended in failure, but since he had been the first anointed King, the writer must make some kind of passing reference to him. Saul's miserable failure, concludes the author, was due to his disobedience of the Lord (1 Samuel 15:17-35) and his dealings with a medium (1 Samuel 28:8-14). Saul and his three sons (Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua) all died together. Because Saul did not want to die at the hands of the Philistines, he committed suicide by falling on his own sword.

Having made this brief reference to Saul, the author is now ready to tell the story of David. As he does so, he omits all references to his life in exile from the court of Saul, his reign in Hebron, and the Bathsheba incident. David is to be idealized.

DAVID BECOMES KING (11:1—12:40)

The Capture of Jerusalem (11:1-9) (2 Samuel 5:1-10)

All the elders of Israel anointed David King in Hebron, after which he captured Jerusalem. His seven and one-half year reign at Hebron and his warfare with the house of Saul were both passed over. In taking Jerusalem, David made whoever struck the Jebusites first his military commander. The man who received the honor was Joab.

David's Mighty Men (11:10-47) (2 Samuel 23:8-39)

Apparently David had three men close to him—Joab, Jashobeam and Eleazar. These three were favored, because they went after water for David when he was thirsty. This happened when the Philistines were camped in the valley of Rephaim. The mighty three penetrated the Philistine camp, at the risk of their own lives, and drew water out of the

well of Bethlehem and returned it to David. David in turn recognized their great feat, but refused to drink the water because it symbolized such a great sacrifice. This was not an insult, but an act of the greatest respect.

Two other men ranked high in David's sight. The first was Abishai, who became the leader of the thirty; the second was Benaiah, who became the chief of David's bodyguard. These positions were given for military heroism. Abishai, the brother of Joab, killed 300 men; Benaiah killed two great Moabite warriors (Ariel - great warrior), a lion, and an Egyptian seven and one-half feet tall. To end the chapter, a number of other supporters are named.

Samuel's Order of the Thirty

- | | | |
|-------------|----------------------|---------------|
| 1. Asahel | 11. Heleb | 21. Ahaim |
| 2. Elhanan | 12. Ittai | 22. Eliphelet |
| 3. Shammah | 13. Benaiah | 23. Eliam |
| 4. Erika | 14. Hiddai | 24. Hezro |
| 5. Helez | 15. Abialbon | 25. Paarai |
| 6. Ira | 16. Azmaveth | 26. Igal |
| 7. Abiezer | 17. Eliahba | 27. Bani |
| 8. Mebunnai | * 18. Sons of Jashen | 28. Zelek |
| 9. Zalmon | 19. Jonathan | 29. Naharai |
| 10. Maharai | 20. Shammah | 30. Ira |
| | 31. Gareb | |
| | 32. Uriah | |

Chronicle's Order of the Thirty

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Asahel | 11. Ithai | 21. Hopher |
| 2. Elhanan | 12. Benaiah | 22. Ahijah |
| 3. Shammoth | 13. Hurai | 23. Hezro |
| 4. Helez | 14. Abiel | 24. Naarai |
| 5. Ira | 15. Azmaveth | 25. Joel |
| 6. Abiezer | 16. Eliahba | 26. Mibnar |
| 7. Sibbecai | 17. Hashem | 27. Zelek |
| 8. Illai | 18. Jonathan | 28. Naharai |
| 9. Maharai | 19. Ahiam | 29. Ira |
| 10. Heled | 20. Eliphai | 30. Gareb |
| 31. Uriah | 41. Eliel | |
| 32. Zabad | 42. Jeribai | |

* We do not know the number of sons.

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| 33. Adina (30) | 43. Joshaviah |
| 34. Hanan | 44. Ithmath |
| 35. Joshaphat | 45. Eliel |
| 36. Uzzia | 46. Obed |
| 37. Shama | 47. Jaasiel |
| 38. Jeiel | |
| 39. Jediael | |
| 40. Joha | |

David's Supporters (12:1-40)

We seem to have accounts of David's supporters joining him first at Ziklag (12:1-22) and then at Hebron (12:23-40). The first tribe mentioned is Benjamin, Saul's own tribe. Even some of Saul's own kinsmen joined David's growing army. In addition to Ziklag, David had three hideouts, or strongholds; they were the Cave of Adullam, En-gedi, and Ziph.

Supporters from the following tribes joined him at Ziklag:

1. Tribe of Benjamin. (12:1-7)
2. Tribe of Gad. (12:8-15)
3. Tribe of Benjamin and Judah. (12:16-18)
4. Tribe of Manasseh. (12:19-22)

The following supporters gathered at Hebron for three days, where they celebrated David's coronation as King. A kind of census was taken to demonstrate how widespread David's support was (12:23-40).

1. Judah - 6,800
2. Simeon - 7,100
3. Levi - 4,600
4. Aaron - 3,700
5. Benjamin - 3,000
6. Ephraim - 20,800
7. Manasseh (1/2) - 18,000
8. Issachar - All of the relatives of the 200 chiefs
9. Zebulun - 50,000
10. Naphtali - 37,000
11. Dan - 28,600
12. Asher - 40,000
13. Reuben/Gad/Manasseh (1/2) - 120,000

Commanders and Chiefs

1. Zadok - 22 Commanders
2. Issachar - 200 Chiefs

THE ARK IS MOVED (13:1-14) (2 Samuel 6:1-11)

David consulted with his supporters and decided to move the ark from Kiriath-Jearim to Jerusalem. Actually, this incident is out of order, for the ark was not moved immediately following the capture of Jerusalem. The author places this story here in order to emphasize David's concern for religious matters over and against military matters, a theological statement.

During the movement of the ark, Uzzah and Ahio drove the cart; when the oxen stumbled, Uzzah attempted to steady the ark with his hand. As soon as he touched the ark, he died. This caused them to leave the ark at the home of Obededom for three months. They were afraid to take it on into Jerusalem at this time.

DAVID'S ACTIVITY IN JERUSALEM (14:1-17) (2 Samuel 5:11-25)

These events are described in 2 Samuel as happening before the moving of the ark from Kiriath-Jearim. But here in Chronicles, they happen while the ark is at the home of Obededom for three months.

Three things happen to David that demonstrate how much God is with him. They are: (1) Hiram, King of Tyre, bestows gifts upon him, (2) he has many children, and (3) he wins many battles. The theology of the time was that these things could not have happened without God's divine blessing.

David's Family (14:1-7)

David traded with Hiram of Tyre for materials and labor to build himself a palace, to house his increasing number of wives and his 13 children: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet, Nogath, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Beeliada, and Eliphelet.

David's Wars (14:8-17)

After inquiring of God, David responded to two Philistine raids. The Philistines were defeated both times and the fame of David spread to all lands.

THE ARK ARRIVES (15:1-29) (2 Samuel 6:12-19)

Here we have an expanded version of the taking of the Ark into Jerusalem. First, David built a house (palace) for himself and a tent for God. The original tabernacle remained in Gibeon. Only the ark was brought to Jerusalem. The Levites were given the task of transporting it on their shoulders with poles following the commandments of Moses.

A choir of singers and instrumentalists were to accompany it. According to the Chronicler, the singing guilds of Heman, Asaph, and Ethan were appointed. Some of the

instruments used were harps, lyres, and cymbals. Trumpets were blown ahead of the ark as it moved toward Jerusalem.

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, the Levites sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams. This differs from what is said in 2 Samuel 6:13, where we are told that David himself offered an ox and a fatling. As the ark entered Jerusalem, Saul's daughter, Michal, watched David dance and make merry before the Ark and despised him in her heart.

THE DEDICATION OF THE ARK (16:1-43)

Samuel mentioned none of these events. The Levites who carried the ark to Jerusalem were appointed by David to minister before the ark with praise and thanksgiving. Extracts from various Psalms were brought together in verses 8-36 (Psalm 105:1-15; 96:1-13; and 106:1, 47-48). They are represented in verses 8-22, 23-33, and 34-36 respectively.

Two holy places have been mentioned: one in Jerusalem (the ark), and one in Gibeon (the Tabernacle) where Zadok, the priest, and his Levitical assistants offered sacrifices as well. In Jerusalem Asaph was in charge of worship.

DAVID'S DESIRE TO BUILD A TEMPLE (17:1-27) (2 Samuel 7:1-29)

David looked at his cedar palace and felt guilty that he had only provided the Lord with a tent. He consulted Nathan, who agreed with the idea of a Temple, but that night, the Lord told Nathan in a dream that David was not to build the Temple. Instead, God intended to build a house for David, that is, a dynasty.

At this point we might ask the question, "Did God also mean a building or did he mean that his people would be his Temple?" It seems to me that Stephen, in his speech recorded in Acts 7:47-48, interpreted God to mean the latter.

DAVID'S MILITARY VICTORIES (18:1-17) (2 Samuel 8:1-18)

David expanded his influence of power by defeating the armies of the Philistines, the Moabites, the Kingdom of Zobah (Hadadezer), the Syrians, and the Edomites. When Tou, King of Hamath, heard that he had defeated Hadadezer, King of Zobah, he sent his son Hadoram to congratulate him and present him with articles of gold, silver and bronze. David dedicated these articles, along with the silver and gold he had taken in war from the Edomites, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, and the Amalekites. Solomon used much of it in the construction of the Temple and its equipment.

David's kingdom became powerful and wealthy, but he ruled his own people with justice and equity. The following were the leaders who helped him:

- Joab - (son of Zeuriah) He was the commander-in-chief of David's armies.
- Jehoshaphat - He was David's recorder, which would be similar to a press secretary, or foreign relations minister.
- Zadok and Ahimelech - Priests. It should be Abiathar instead of Ahimelech. During Solomon's reign, Zadok is elevated and Abiathar is banished.
- Shavsha - David's secretary was responsible for annals and records. In 2 Samuel, the name is Seraiah.
- Benaiah - He acted like another military commander who exercised power over the Cherethites and Pelethites, Philistine mercenaries, who now operate as David's personal bodyguards.
- David's sons - They were the chief officials. In 2 Samuel they are called priests. David also performed various priestly functions and in that sense acted like Melchizedek, the priestly King of Jerusalem. (Genesis 14:18) Perhaps that is why David and Jesus are later compared to Melchizedek. On the other hand, the author of Chronicles might be aware of the fact that only Levites can become priests; hence, he gives David's sons administrative tasks.

DAVID DEFEATS THE AMMONITES AND THE SYRIANS (19:1-19) (2 Samuel 10:1-19)

With the death of Nahash, the Ammonite King, David sent some men to console his successor, Hanun. The princes of the Ammonites suspected a trick and advised Hanun to have them shaved, their garments removed at the waist, and sent away in shame. When they returned to David, he told them to wait in Jericho until their beards grew back. Then they were to return.

After the Ammonites realized that they had made an enemy of David, they formed an alliance with Syria. They hired 32,000 chariots and charioteers. This was an enormous number. Shalmaneser III claimed that the alliance he defeated at Qarqar had placed 3,940 chariots in the field against him, so one can see how prepared Hanun thought he was for battle against David. When David heard about the alliance and its preparations, he sent Joab and his whole army against both armies. Caught in the middle, Joab took some men against the Syrians and put the rest under his brother Abishai's command against the Ammonites. As the Syrians began to flee, the Ammonites did likewise.

Having sensed imminent defeat, the Syrians sent for Shophach, their commander beyond the Euphrates, to bring reinforcements. David gathered all of Israel to meet the challenge, crossed the Jordan and defeated the Syrians. Shophach was killed, and his army made peace with David and vowed never to help the Ammonites again.

CONQUEST OF THE AMMONITES AND PHILISTINES (20:1-8) (2 Samuel 12:26-31 and 21:15-22)

Joab Captures Rabbah (20:1-3) (2 Samuel 12:26-31)

In the following spring, a time when kings went to war, Joab led an army into the land of Ammon and took the city of Rabbah. Amman, the capital of Jordan, is modern day Rabbah. It was during the attack on Rabbah that David committed adultery with Bathsheba back in Jerusalem, recalled Uriah to Jerusalem, only to send him back to be killed in the attack on Rabbah. The crown was taken off the Ammonite idol, Milcom, along with a jewel, which David placed in his own crown. The Bathsheba story is not told in Chronicles. The reason is not only because the writer does not want to reveal the darker side of David, but, because he is more intent on showing the divine plan of God,

Conquest of the Philistine Giants (20:4-8) (2 Samuel 21:15-22)

According to 2 Samuel 21:19, Elhanan, the Bethlehemite, killed Goliath, the Gittite; but in 1 Samuel 17, David killed Goliath, the giant. This account in Chronicles is probably an attempt to reconcile the two stories found in Samuel. Elhanan killed Lahmi, the brother of Goliath.

DAVID TAKES A CENSUS (21:1—22:1) (2 Samuel 24:1-25)

While 2 Samuel 24:1 indicates that God commanded David to take a census, the author of Chronicles attributes this act to Satan. A significant theological change may have occurred between the writing of Samuel and Chronicles. Whereas in the past, evil deeds could be attributed to God, now evil deeds must be attributed to another source. Satan, which means “adversary,” is the one to whom this evil deed is credited. The writer of Chronicles is unwilling to attribute this contradictory act to God. While the act does seem malicious, it must also be remembered that, in the Old Testament, Satan was a minister of God (an angel). The census, however, does not appear to be God’s idea, so we must admit that Satan is not carrying out God’s will in calling for the census.

Joab did not want to take the census, but he finally obeyed David, whose authority as King was above his own as a military commander. Not including the tribes of Levi and Benjamin, he came up with 1,100,000 soldiers for Israel and 470,000 soldiers for Judah. The numbers are different in Samuel where we are told that the soldiers of Israel number 800,000 plus the 500,000 soldiers of Judah (2 Samuel 24:9).

For taking the census, God (through Gad, David’s seer) gives David three choices: (1) three years of famine, (2) three months of devastation, or (3) three days of pestilence/plague. David choice was to fall into the hands of the Lord rather than men. As the pestilence began, 70,000 Israelites died and an angel was about to destroy Jerusalem, when God changed his mind and stopped him. The angel was standing midair above Ornan’s threshing floor holding his sword in his hand. In 2 Samuel 24:16-25, the owner

of the threshing floor was Araunah, but the reference is to the same person. The differences can be attributed to a foreign name that Samuel and Chronicles transliterate.

David and his leaders bowed before the angel and David prayed that he himself be punished, but not the people (21:17). The Angel of the Lord then told David to build an altar to the Lord at Ornan's threshing floor. When Ornan and his four sons saw the angel, the sons ran and hid. David offered to purchase the floor at the full price in order to stop the pestilence. Ornan offered it to him for nothing, but David insisted on paying the full price of 600 shekels (pieces) of gold (\$10,000). 2 Samuel 24:18-25 gives a sum of 50 shekels. Some have explained that the lower figure was only for the threshing floor, while the higher figure was for the whole site on which the Temple was built. This could be, but it might be that the writer of Chronicles exaggerated the figure to give the Temple site more value and importance.

David built an altar there and offered burnt and peace offerings. The Lord responded by sending fire from heaven upon them, burning the sacrifices up. The fire symbolized God's approval of the site for future worship, and his rejection of Gibeon, where the Tabernacle had been. David expressed fear of returning to Gibeon lest he have to face the sword of the angel again, but having the Temple in Jerusalem also proved expedient later on. The angel plays a more important part in Chronicles than in Samuel. The writer of Chronicles may have a concept of a transcendent God, who has to deal with his people through intermediaries.

PEEKING INTO THE FUTURE

Although David wanted to build a Temple for God, the task was passed on to his son Solomon. David could only have a peek into the future, which Nathan describes for him in 1 Chronicles 17:10b-12:

Moreover I declare to you that the LORD will build you a house. When your days are fulfilled to go to be with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever.

This peek into the future may focus on Solomon and his building of a Temple, but Solomon's reign did not last forever. It fell from corruption within, so this peek into the future goes far beyond Solomon's completion of the Temple and his declining reign. The focus is on the reign of Jesus and the Temple he is building.

Ezekiel gave an even more intense peek into the future as he described the restoration of Israel with a New Jerusalem and a New Temple, but the most powerful image of all is the Temple that God will build within his own people. This is described in Ezekiel 36:25-28:

I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the

heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Even with Ezekiel the peek into the future is focused on history, which will end; so we must move further through the Bible to find the object upon which this initial peek is focused.

It is the angel Gabriel, in his preparation of Mary for pregnancy, who clarifies the peek into the future. After telling Mary that she will give birth to a son, whom she is to name Jesus, Gabriel says in Luke 1:32-33:

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

Now if we expect the reign of Jesus to last forever within history, we will be disappointed. That he did not seize power is one reason why Judaism rejected him as their Messiah. The peek into the future moves our eyes far beyond history, enabling us to see his eternal reign, where in the order of Melchizedek, he rules both as our Anointed King and our High Priest. His reign however does not begin in the future. It begins now and that is why we are given this peek into the future.

The purpose of God is to begin building his temple (or house for David) in the present, but as long as we only focus on buildings, we miss the point. The kind of Temple God was trying to build for David was human. It was to be made out of the community of faith, who were, to use Ezekiel's imagery, being cleansed with clean water, having their hearts purified from idolatry. The Holy of Holies was not a room containing the Ten Commandments, but a heart so cleansed that it wanted to obey the Ten Commandments.

The High Priest was also to be the Anointed King, who had descended from David and who would reign forever, not being limited by human mortality. The Old Testament, in Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 28:16, warns us not to stumble over the cornerstone of God's Temple. It gives us a peek into the future. Ephesians 2:19-22 describes that peek more clearly:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

The Apostle Peter, who was told by Jesus in Matthew 16:18 that he was building his Church on a rock, was inviting him to be joined to himself, the chief cornerstone. Peter in

turn invites everyone, Jew and Gentile alike, to become living stones, joining the Spiritual Temple. The passage is 1 Peter 2:4-5:

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

In *Joshua*, a contemporary novel about Jesus living and ministering in our own time, there is a poignant passage in which Joshua, who is Jesus of old, says, "Like Judaism, once Jerusalem disappeared, the spirituality of the Jewish people began to thrive."¹ Once we give up the idea that the Temple is a building, we are on our way to a deeper spirituality. John confirms this in Revelation 21:22, when he says that in the New Jerusalem there will be no temple, for "its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb." Every living stone must connect itself up to the chief cornerstone of this living Temple, who is Jesus Christ.

¹Joseph F. Girzone, *Joshua* (Macmillan Publishing Company: New York, 1987), p. 208.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 1 Chronicles



Model of Solomon's Temple

22. Preparations for the Temple (1 Chronicles 22:2—29:30)

22. PREPARATIONS FOR THE TEMPLE (22:2—29:30)			
PHYSICAL RESOURCES NEEDED TO BUILD THE TEMPLE (22:14)			
100,000 Talents of Gold 1,000,000 Talents of Silver (1 talent equals 75 pounds)	Bronze Iron Wood Stone	Colored Stones (29:2) Marble (29:2)	
HUMAN RESOURCES NEEDED TO RUN THE TEMPLE			
38,000 Levites 20 Years (23:3) 30 Years (23:27) 24,000 Supervisors 6,000 Officials/Judges 4,000 Gatekeepers 4,000 Musicians Treasurers (26:20-28)	Sons of Levi (23:6) Gershonites Kohathites Merarites	Priests (24:4) (24 Divisions) Eleazar (16 Divisions) Ithamar (8 Divisions)	Singers (25:1) (24 Divisions) Asaph Heman Jeduthun 4,000 (23:5) 288 (25:7)
MILITARY COMMANDERS (27:1-15)			
Joahobeam Dodai Benaiah	Asahel Shamhuth Ira	Helez Sibbecai Abiezer	Mahari Benaiah Heldai
TRIBAL ADMINISTRATORS (27:16-24)			
Eliezer (Reuben) Shephatiah (Simeon) Hashabiah (Levi)	Zadok (Aaron) Elihu (Judah) Omri (Issachar)	Ishmaiah (Zebulun) Jeremoth (Naphtali) Hoshea (Ephraim)	Joel (West Manasseh) Iddo (East Manasseh) Jaasiel (Benjamin) Azaarel (Dan)
ADMINISTRATORS OF ROYAL PROPERTY (27:25-31)			
Adiel (King's Treasuries) Jonathan (Local Treasuries) Ezri (Farm Labor)	Shimei (Vineyards) Shiphmide (Wine Cellars) Baalhanan (Trees)	Joash (Olive Oil Storage) Shitrai (Cattle in Sharon) Shaphat (Cattle in Valley)	Obil (Camels) Jehdeiah (Donkeys) Jaziz (Sheep & Goats)
PERSONAL ADVISERS (27:32-34)			
Jonathan & Jehiel Ahithophel (Jehoiada) Abiathar	Attended King's Sons Counselor Priest	Hushai Joab	Friend (Official Title) Chief Military Commander
FUNDING (29:14b & 17b)			

22. PREPARATIONS FOR THE TEMPLE

1 Chronicles 22:2—29:30

ASSIGNMENTS				
Gathering the Materials 22:2-19	Work of the Levites 23:1-32 26:1-32	Work of the Priests and Musicians 24:1—25:31	Military and Civil Organization 27:1-34	Instructions and Gifts 28:1—29:30

GATHERING THE MATERIALS (22:2-19)

Since David could not build the temple and his son Solomon was young and inexperienced, he decided to make preparations by selecting the site, amassing the materials, and laying the plans. He organized a large slave labor force of Canaanites (aliens). The materials gathered for the task were stone, wood, iron, bronze, silver and gold. The amount of gold (100,000 talents) and silver (1,000,000 talents) is astronomical. This amount of gold and silver has been estimated at about 5 billion dollars, but the amount might be exaggerated in order to emphasize the value of the temple.

Why does David not build the temple? The reason, according to 1 Chronicles 22:8, is because of his involvement in bloodshed. Due to his military involvements, David simply did not have the time and energy to engage in a project of such enormous size. The task of building the temple simply had to be left to Solomon, who would reign in a more peaceful time. Solomon, which means “peaceful” in Hebrew, was his throne name.

THE WORK OF THE LEVITES (23:1-32)

After the Levites were counted, they were organized into three divisions according to the sons of Levi: Gershonites, Kohathites, and Merarites. The census included Levites 30 years and older. There were 38,000 of them. 24,000 were to be put in charge of the house of the Lord, 6,000 to be made officers and judges, 4,000 to be gatekeepers, and 4,000 to offer praise with instruments.

In 1 Chronicles 23:27, David changed the minimum age to 20, because they no longer had to carry the tabernacle and its equipment. The main work of the Levites, upon completion of the Temple, was to assist the Aaronic priests in the temple services. The Temple services consisted of a banquet of bread and meat, in honor of the God of Israel, overseen by the Davidic king.

THE WORK OF THE PRIESTS (24:1-31)

The Aaronic priests who descended from Eleazar and Ithamar were divided into 24 divisions. There were 16 divisions from the larger and more important family of Eleazar and eight divisions from the family of Ithamar. They were to be in charge of the temple sacrifices on a rotating basis, each division serving for two weeks out of the year. The order of rotation was determined by casting lots.

THE WORK OF THE MUSICIANS (25:1-31)

The musicians were also to be divided into 24 groups and they, too, would cast lots for their duties. They were to be grouped under the names of the three great musicians who are named in the Psalms. They are Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun. Heman also had a reputation for being a seer to the King.

According to 1 Chronicles 23:5 their number is 4,000, but according to 1 Chronicles 25:7, the number is 288. Could the 288 be the more skilled? Their task is to prophesy with the use of lyres, harps, and cymbals. This seems to indicate that they were closely related to prophetic circles.

OTHER LEVITICAL OFFICES (26:1-32)

Gatekeepers (26:1-19)

The gatekeepers came from three families and were assigned to their gates by lot. (East/Shelemiah; North/Zechariah; South/Obededom; and West/Shuppim and Hosah) One of the gates was mentioned by name, and that is the gate on the west side, Shallecheth. The word *colonnade* is unknown, but the Good News Bible translated it as “pavilion.”

Prior to the Temple, they were carriers of the Ark and the Tabernacle; but now they are in charge of security.

Treasurers (26:20-28)

Their primary task was to take care of the gifts dedicated to the Temple, including the considerable spoils of war. The spoils were frequently used for the repair of the Temple (26:27).

Officers and Judges (26:29-32)

Officials were chosen from both sides of the Jordan for matters pertaining to God and the affairs of the King.

MILITARY AND CIVIL ORGANIZATION (27:1-34)

Military Commanders (27:1-15)

These men probably came from David's special guard of "mighty men." (See Chapter 11) There were 12 commanders with 24,000 men each. That would make a total of 288,000 men. Although the numbers seem unrealistic, they are in line with the writer's dream of a marvelous future kingdom. Each commander and his men were to be responsible for one month of active duty. The commanders were as follows:

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Jashobeam | 7. Helez |
| 2. Dodai | 8. Sibbecai |
| 3. Benaiah | 9. Abiezer |
| 4. Asahel | 10. Maharai |
| 5. Shamhuth | 11. Benaiah |
| 6. Ira | 12. Heldai |

Tribal Administrators (27:16-24)

A tribal administrator was appointed over each tribe. No reason is given for omitting the tribes of Gad and Asher.

Administrator	Tribe
Eliezer	Reuben
Shephatiah	Simeon
Hashabiah	Levi
Zadok	Aaron
Elihu	Judah
Omri	Issachar
Ishmaiah	Zebulun
Jeremoth	Naphtali
Hoshea	Ephraim
Joel	West Manasseh
Iddo	East Manasseh
Jaasiel	Benjamin
Azarel	Dan

Administrators of the Royal Property (27:25-31)

1. Azmaveth - King's Treasuries
2. Jonathan - Local Treasuries
3. Ezri - Farm Labor
4. Shimei - Vineyards
5. Zabdi - Wine Cellars
6. Baal-hanan - Olive and Sycamore Trees

7. Joash - Olive Oil Storage
8. Shitrai - Cattle in the Plain of Sharon
9. Shaphat - Cattle in the Valley
10. Obil - Camels
11. Jehdeiah - Donkeys
12. Jaziz - Flocks (Sheep and Goats)

Personal Advisers (27:32-34)

1. Jonathan & Jehiel - Attended the King's Sons
2. Ahithophel (Jehoiada) - Counselor
3. Abiathar - Priest
4. Hushai - Friend (An Official Title)
5. Joab - Chief Military Commander

One clarification needs to be made. After Ahithophel sided with Absalom, Jehoiada replaced him as David's Counselor. Abiathar did not succeed him, but was David's Priest.

DAVID'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TEMPLE (28:1-21)

David presented his son Solomon to the people and gave him a solemn charge (28:9-10) before he committed the plans for the Temple to his care. Along with being chosen, comes responsibility.

None of the palace intrigues, violence, and murder associated with Solomon's accession in 1 Kings 1-2 are mentioned. The plans that David turned over to Solomon were given to him by God in much the same way as Moses received the plans for the Tabernacle. What differences exist between the Tabernacle and the Temple, David and Solomon made under God's direction.

GIFTS FOR BUILDING THE TEMPLE (29:1-30)

Having given a general personal gift before the gathered congregation, David challenged the others to give generously as well. They responded with such generosity, that David offered one of the most beautiful prayers of the Old Testament. From it we have elements of our Lord's Prayer (29:11) and a familiar prayer for our own offerings to God (29:14b). "Darics of gold," mentioned in 29:7, are Persian coins minted under Darius I (522-486 B.C.E.). Since such coins were not in use at that time, this phrase helps us to understand when the passage was written. The writer would have been familiar with Persian coins used in his own time and he would have been attempting to update the value of talents. At the time in which these gifts were given, gold and other precious metals were weighed in "talents." This was a measurement of weight. One talent weighed about 75 pounds, and even at today's prices, would be enough to make a person rich.

Following the offerings for the building of the Temple, many sacrifices and burnt offerings were given and the people engaged in much eating and drinking. Solomon was

made King a second time and Zadok was anointed his Priest. The chapter finally concludes with a summary of David's reign. He reigned for 40 years, seven years in Hebron and 33 years in Jerusalem, and then died.

STAFFING FOR MINISTRY

It has been estimated that the building of Solomon's Temple was a project that came close to \$5,000,000,000 (Billion) dollars, not including the cost of staffing it. Even if that figure is highly exaggerated, a simple listing of the building materials and the priests and musicians needed to run the operation is impressive enough to make any modern religious building project pale in comparison. The project would be more like attempting to build the most modern skyscraper.

What is even more impressive is the relative ease with which everything seems to be supported financially. According to 1 Chronicles 29:17b, David says, "...in the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you." No bake sales, rummage sales, bazaars, dinners, or raffles. The whole thing is supported with free will offerings, or what later came to be called the Temple Tax. Jewish synagogues today do not live off the voluntary contributions of their members, but actually assess each member according to his or her resources. No offering is taken in the context of worship.

While nothing can be done without financial resources, the next step in this building project is even more important. How shall those resources be spent, on the building or staffing for ministry? Both are important, but the former exists only for the latter. The building is not the focus of ministry; it is the place out of which ministry operates. The focus of ministry needs to be on the reconciliation of people to God.

There are no concrete guidelines in Scripture to help us balance how we use our resources. What percentage should be used on buildings and what percentage on staffing? There is no easy answer to this. The New Testament Church had no alternative but to operate out of the homes of its members. That same mode of operating kept the church alive in China for years. Churches do not need buildings, but most congregations want a place to call home. Whatever the size of the building, it needs to make ministry possible. It does not need to be lined with silver and gold, but it does need to be constructed well enough so that people are not spending all their time maintaining the building.

When financial resources are insufficient and budgets need to be cut, the unfortunate thing is that we always cut staffing and program. Once the building is in place, we must maintain it, but we frequently lose control over the rising costs of that maintenance. This happened in Israel as well as in modern times. In hard times some of the silver and gold was sold off, and the Temple went for years without receiving proper maintenance. Not much is said about how all this affected the staffing of the Temple, but if they were anything like us, it must have had its effect.

Ministry has changed drastically over the years, but certain elements have remained the same. David began the practice of making music a part of worship. There were 24 divisions of priests and 24 divisions of singers. Were they all volunteers or were they professionals, receiving salaries on which to live? The latter is probably the case.

I once attended a large Church connected to a college campus and was somewhat shocked to discover that they paid people to sing in the choir. While this may not be a common practice, it is a common practice to pay choir leaders and organists. When I first discovered this, it was difficult for me to understand. I thought that church members should volunteer their musical gifts, but I quickly found out that you cannot rely on volunteers in certain positions, particularly where the position requires a high level of skill and a great deal of time.

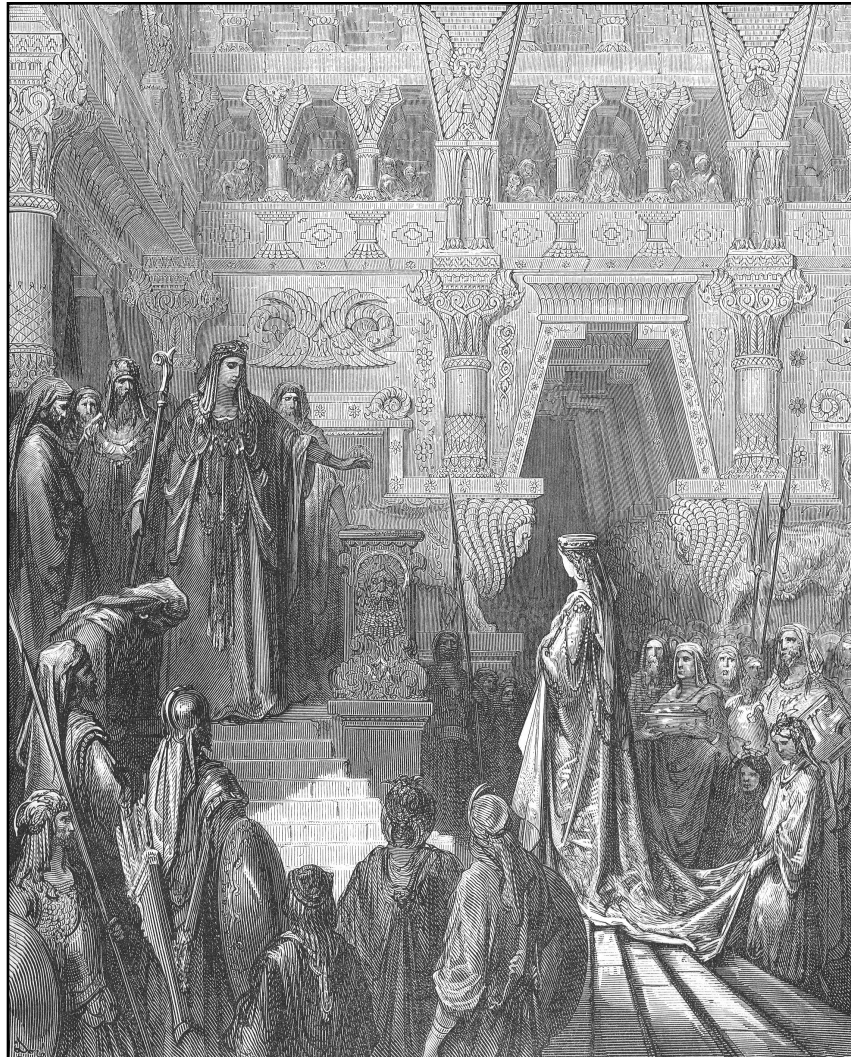
When resources are in short supply, what are the priorities for developing the ministry of the Church? The priestly, or sacramental aspects of ministry, without a doubt come first; and they relate to the ministries of baptism, the Lord's Supper, marriage, and death. All four of these significant times in our lives require ministry, so they must receive a high priority.

Music, however, is closely related to most of them. In my opinion, music should be the first arena in which ministry is expanded. In addition to choir directors, churches ought to hire song leaders. I have discovered that volunteers will not lead the hymns, Sunday after Sunday. Our Jewish friends know this and hire full time cantors. They do not expect their Rabbi to be skilled at leading music. The Rabbi is, as the name implies, a teacher of Scripture and it is unfair to expect such a person to maintain the building. That will make him or her inefficient in ministry. That is not what we want in a religious leader.

Secretarial and janitorial services are assumed. Churches ought not to hire pastors to do secretarial and janitorial work. It is not because they are above such tasks, but because performing these tasks makes them inefficient in what they have been hired to do. Ministry suffers when it is not backed up with secretarial and janitorial services. The next step beyond a music ministry is a sound youth ministry. Sometimes music and youth ministries can be combined, but that too is rare. Music and youth ministries attract people, making it necessary to hire a pastor of discipleship and caring ministries.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 2 Chronicles



Solomon receives the Queen of Sheba by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

23. The Reign of Solomon 2 Chronicles 1:1—9:31

23. THE REIGN OF SOLOMON (1:1—9:31)				
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOLOMON’S KINGDOM (1:1-17)				
Solomon’s Wisdom and Knowledge (1:1-13)		Solomon’s Wealth and Honor (1:14-17)		
THE TEMPLE				
Preparations for the Temple (2:1-18)		Construction of the Temple (3:1-17)		
The Temple Equipment (4:1—5:1)				
Altar of Bronze Molten Sea	10 Lavers 10 Golden Lampstands	10 Tables 100 Basins of Gold Pots		
Placing the Ark in the Temple (5:2-14)				
Solomon’s Address and Prayer (6:1-42)				
Solomon’s Address (6:1-11)		Solomon’s Prayer (6:12-42)		
Consecration of the Temple (7:1-22)				
Divine Approval (7:1-10)		Divine Admonition (7:11-22)		
SOLOMON’S ACHIEVEMENTS (8;1-18)				
20 Cities	No Israelite Slaves	Pharaoh’s Daughter	Feasts Observed	Gold from Ophir
THE QUEEN OF SHEBA’S VISIT (9:1-12)				
SOLOMON’S WEALTH AND WISDOM (9:13-29)				
THE DEATH OF SOLOMON (9:30-31)				

23. THE REIGN OF SOLOMON

2 Chronicles 1:1—9:31

ASSIGNMENTS			
Solomon's Rise to Power 1:1—2:18	Solomon Builds the Temple 3:1—5:14	Solomon Dedicates the Temple 6:1—7:22	Solomon's Achievements and Death 8:1—9:31

This version of Solomon's reign is idealized compared to the account found in Kings. Unfavorable references to Solomon are all omitted. Those events which have been omitted are: (1) the troubles Solomon faced as he seized power (1 Kings 1-2), (2) Solomon's marriage to the Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kings 3), (3) Solomon's worship of foreign gods, (4) Solomon's love of foreign women, and (5) Solomon's political and military troubles at the end of his reign (1 Kings 11). In idealizing Solomon the author of Chronicles emphasizes Solomon's building of the Temple and his organization of its affairs.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOLOMON'S KINGDOM (1:1-17)

Solomon's Wisdom and Knowledge (1:1-13) (1 Kings 3:1-15)

Although David had brought the Ark to Jerusalem, the Tabernacle and the brass altar for making sacrifices remained in Gibeon. Solomon led a group of his leaders to Gibeon where 1,000 burnt offerings were made to God. God appeared to Solomon in the night and asked him what he wanted. Solomon asked only for wisdom. His prayer for wisdom is recorded in 2 Chronicles 1:8-10. God answered his prayer, granting him wisdom; and because he did not ask for possessions, wealth, and honor, God gave him those things as well. Did God actually give those things to him, or did God give him the talent to acquire them? I believe the latter, for in the end, God does not agree with what Solomon has done with his talents; and Solomon's Kingdom falls from within.

Solomon's Wealth and Honor (1:14-17) (1 Kings 10:26-29)

Horses and chariots were imported. The horses came from Asia Minor and the Chariots from Egypt. The latter were more valuable. Horses were worth 150 shekels of silver and the chariots 600 shekels of silver. The new King made gold and silver as plentiful in

Jerusalem as the stones. Not only were the horses and chariots imported, they were also exported to the Kings of the Hittites and to Syria.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE TEMPLE (2:1-18) (1 Kings 5:1-18)

In preparing for the building of the Temple, Solomon sought help from Hiram (Hiram), King of Tyre. He needed materials such as gold, silver, bronze, iron, fabrics, cedar, cypress, and algum. The timber was sent in rafts to the nearest good port, Joppa, and then transported to Jerusalem.

Solomon needed someone who was trained to work with these materials, for most Israelites lacked the necessary skills to take on such an ambitious project. Hiram (Hiram) sent Huramabi This man, chosen by Hiram, was half-Israelite, with his mother coming from Dan and his father from Tyre.

A census was taken of the aliens, which numbered 153,600. 70,000 of them were to bear burdens, 80,000 were to work in the quarry, and 3,600 were to oversee the work.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE (3:1-17) (1 Kings 6:1-38 & 7:15-22)

The site of the temple was on Mount Moriah, where Abraham offered his son Isaac (See Genesis 22:2) and where God spoke to David. There is some question as to whether this is the same location as referred to in Genesis, but no other Moriah is mentioned in the Bible. The Temple was to be 60 cubits long (90 feet), 20 cubits wide (30 feet), and 30 cubits high (45 feet) (See 1 Kings 6:2). The vestibule was to be 20 cubits long (30 feet) and 120 cubits high (180 feet). The height of the vestibule must be an error since the height of the temple itself is only 30 cubits (45 feet).

The Holy of Holies, where the Ark was to be kept, was 20 by 20 cubits (30 by 30 feet), and inside of it were placed two cherubim of wood, with their wings extended. Together they extended 20 cubits (30 feet). The cherubim were images of power, having lion bodies, human heads, and widespread wings. A huge amount of gold was used to cover the walls in the Holy of Holies and a veil of blue, purple, and crimson was hung to divide it from the Holy Place. "Parvaim" (3:6) refers either to the source of the gold, possibly from Ophir, or its quality or purity.

In front of the Temple were constructed two pillars, 35 cubits high (52 feet), called Jachin and Boaz. The symbolism of these pillars eludes us, but it has been suggested that they mean "God establishes," and "He comes with power."

THE TEMPLE EQUIPMENT (4:1—5:1) (1 Kings 7:23-51)

Listed below are the main pieces of equipment mentioned in this passage.

Altar of Bronze

The altar, not mentioned in 1 Kings 7, but mentioned in 1 Kings 8:64 and 2 Kings 16:14, was 20 by 20 cubits (30 by 30 feet). It was 10 cubits high (15 feet). It had to be large enough to hold the large quantities of animals sacrificed upon it.

Molten Sea

The molten sea was 10 cubits (15 feet) across and 5 cubits deep (7 1/2 feet). Twelve gourds (oxen) supported it, with 3 facing in each direction. The Sea held 3,000 baths (2,000 according to 1 Kings 7:23-26). Its purpose was to provide the priests with a place to wash, but since it was probably around 10 feet off the ground, it might have been difficult to use. It was located on the southeast corner of the building.

10 Lavers

These were used to rinse off what was used for making the burnt offerings. Five of them were on the north side and five on the south side.

10 Golden Lampstands

Five were on the north side, and five on the south side.

10 Tables

Five were on the north side and five on the south side. Only one would be in use at a time. Twelve freshly baked loaves would be placed on a table each Sabbath, and on the following Sabbath, they would be replaced by 12 newly baked loaves.

100 basins of Gold Pots, Shovels and Basins

PLACING THE ARK IN THE TEMPLE (5:2-14) (1 Kings 8:1-9)

The Ark was placed in the inner sanctuary, called the Holy of Holies by the Levites (5:4). In 1 Kings 8:3 the priest brought it in. Only the priests, however, could place it in the inner sanctuary (5:7). The poles were so long they could be seen from the holy place, but not from outside. The Ark was placed in position in the midst of joyful music and singing. The Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun represent family guilds of singers. The glory of God's presence filled the Temple with a thick cloud, just as it did on Mount Sinai, when the Ten Commandments were delivered to Moses.

SOLOMON'S ADDRESS AND PRAYER (6:1-42)

Solomon's Address (6:1-11) (1 Kings 8:12-21)

The address is very similar to that given in Kings. The covenant is described as beginning with Israel's history and not simply at Sinai.

Solomon's Prayer (6:12-42) (1 Kings 8:22-53)

The Temple is described as the House of God, even though it cannot possibly contain God (See 6:18). It is not a house of worship in which the congregation gathers. The people assembled in front of the Temple, where the altar and great basin stood. Solomon offered his prayer standing and then kneeling before the altar with his raised hands towards the heavens. He prays on a platform in full public view. In his prayer he, of course, asked God to be on their side against their enemies, but he also asked God to hear the prayers of foreigners who acknowledged Him and prayed to Him.

CONSECRATION OF THE TEMPLE (7:1-22)

Divine Approval (7:1-10) (1 Kings 8:62-66)

God expressed his approval of the new Temple by consuming with fire the sacrifices and filling the Temple with his glory. The great feast was concluded with more sacrifices offered by the King and his people. Solomon offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep and the seven-day festivity ran into the weeklong Feast of Tabernacles. After the final day of solemn meeting, on the twenty-third day of the seventh month, they were all instructed to go home.

Divine Admonition (7:11-22) (1 Kings 9:1-9)

Following the dedication ceremonies, God appeared to Solomon in a dream agreeing to fulfill all of his petitions in prayer. If he does not keep God's statutes, however, the people will be uprooted from the land, and the magnificent Temple will be deserted. (See 1 Kings 9:2-9)

SOLOMON'S ACHIEVEMENTS (8:1-18) (1 Kings 9:10-28)

The 20 Cities

In 1 Kings 9:10-14 Solomon ceded these cities to Hiram to raise needed money; but here, he rebuilt the cities given by Hiram (Hiram). Did Solomon redeem them? We do not know, but Israelites were settled in them.

No Israelite Slaves

While Solomon did make use of forced labor, he did not use Israelites in this way. Israelites were the officers and overseers. According to 2 Chronicles 250 the Israelites were officers (8:10) and 3,600 overseers (2:18); but in 1 Kings 9:23 and 5:16, 550 of them were officers and 3,300 overseers. The total number is the same, even if the breakdown is different.

Pharaoh's Daughter

Solomon's Egyptian wife was not allowed to live in the palace, nor was she to go near the Temple, for she was a foreigner. Therefore, Solomon had to build a special house for her. He may have been concerned for her safety. It was dangerous to approach holiness. See 1 Chronicles 13:9-10, where Uzzah died because he touched the Ark.

The Feasts Observed

All the religious feasts were observed, including the three annual ones: (1) the Feast of Unleavened Bread, (2) the Feast of Weeks, and (3) the Feast of Tabernacles.

Gold from Ophir

In a joint operation, the servants of Solomon and Hiram brought back for Solomon 450 talents of gold. The amount in 1 Kings 9:26-28 is 420 talents.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA'S VISIT (9:1-12)

The Queen of Sheba came because she heard so much about Solomon and his wisdom; and although she came with hard questions, Solomon's answers confirmed what she had heard. Before going home she gave him 120 talents of gold, spices and precious stones. Solomon was a great host.

SOLOMON'S WEALTH AND WISDOM (9:13-29) (1 Kings 10:14-28)

Gold was Solomon's most valuable possession. One year's income of gold amounted to 666 talents. His shields and drinking vessels were made of gold. His ivory throne was overlaid with gold. Although silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks were brought to Israel from Tarshish, the gold was more valued than all the other possessions. Silver was hardly worth anything, for it was as plentiful as stones.

Although Tarshish is a Mediterranean seaport, the author may be referring to a type of ship. The Ships of Tarshish were built to carry cargo long distances. One of these ships was capable of making a round trip voyage lasting as long as three years. This would explain the exotic goods mentioned in this chapter, which could only have come from more distant ports.

Solomon had 4,000 stalls for his horses and chariots, and 12,000 horsemen. He ruled from the land of the Philistines to the Euphrates, with his influence extending as far south as Egypt. Archaeology has unearthed some of these stable complexes. One of the most impressive, with stalls for 450 horses, has been excavated at Megiddo.

THE DEATH OF SOLOMON (9:30-31) (1 Kings 11:41-43)

In accordance with his idealization of Solomon, the writer of Chronicles omits any mention of Solomon's numerous foreign wives and concubines, his idolatry, and his political and military problems. At his death he was buried in the city of David his father.

THE LIMITATION OF DIVINE POWER

It is dangerous to draw hard and fast conclusions, but I have noticed something very interesting in the worship of Israel in two brief passages. In the first passage, the musicians and singers end by proclaiming God's goodness and love, but they say nothing about his power. (2 Chronicles 5:11-14)

Now when the priests came out of the holy place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without regard to their divisions, and all the levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, their sons and kindred, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the altar with one hundred twenty priests who were trumpeters). It was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the LORD, and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the LORD, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever," the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.

In the second passage, which follows Solomon's prayer, fire burns up the burnt offering and the sacrifices, the glory of the Lord again fills the Temple, and this time the priests worship the Lord, placing the emphasis on his goodness and love, without mentioning his power. (2 Chronicles 7:1-3)

When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. The priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD's house. When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever."

While I am not prepared to suggest that Solomon and his contemporaries did not believe in an all-powerful God. The fire burning up the sacrifices is indeed a symbol of power, but the power is not used to eliminate the wicked. When the Israelites went up against

their enemies, they believed that God would give them the victory. What interests me in the two passages I have singled out is the absence of any reference to this kind of power in their addressing God in worship. The God, whom they are worshipping, is a good and loving God, but nothing is said about his power.

It was Harold Kushner, who first brought to my attention the idea that there is a basic inconsistency in claiming that God is good, loving, and powerful.¹ In a world as messed up as our own, God cannot be all three, which is to say that he cannot fully express all three. For Kushner, one must be given up. Since he is not willing to give up that God is good and loving, he must give up God as all-powerful. One should not draw the conclusion from this that God could not be all-powerful, only that he has chosen to limit his power. He has not, however, limited his goodness and his love. That continues to be fully expressed through the prophets and in the life, ministry, and passion of Jesus Christ. His power eventually gets finally expressed in the resurrection, even though that is an isolated example.

Why does he not express it all the time? The answer is relatively simple. He does, but in hidden and partial ways. When the Temple was finished and dedicated, God warned Solomon: (2 Chronicles 7:17-20)

As for you, if you walk before me, as your father David walked, doing according to all that I have commanded you and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, then I will establish your royal throne, as I made covenant with your father David saying, “You shall never lack a successor to rule over Israel. But if you turn aside and forsake my statutes and my commandments that I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will pluck you up from the land that I have given you; and this house, which I have consecrated for my name, I will cast out of my sight, and will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples.

God permits his people to rebel against him. He places a limitation on his own power over them, allowing them to disobey for the sake of their own humanity; but if they choose to go against him, they must also pay the consequences for their disobedience. The consequence is the loss of their land and their temple. This loss does not need to be permanent, as 1 Chronicles 7:14-16 suggests:

...if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. For now I have chosen and

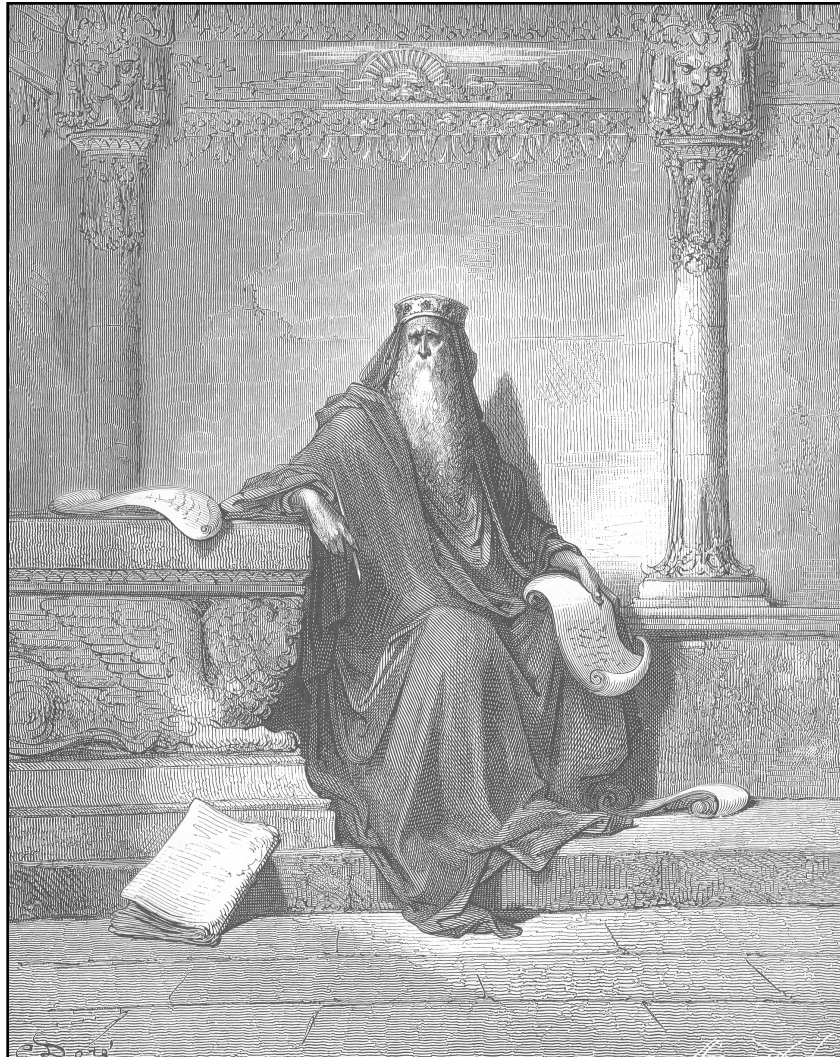
¹Harold S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: Schocken Books: New York, 1981), pp. 37-43.

consecrated this house so that my name may be there forever; my eyes and my heart will be there for all time.

While I cannot conclude that God's power is not expressed in the world, I can agree with Kushner's dilemma. If evil exists in the world, God is not using all of his power to combat it, or it would have been eliminated long ago. On the other hand, God is using his goodness and his love to win us back to himself; and it is only under such conditions that we can remain human. If there is to be reconciliation with God, God will have to win us over by the power of his goodness and love.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 2 Chronicles



Solomon as an Old Man by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

24. The Kings of Judah I 2 Chronicles 10:1—20:37

24. THE KINGS OF JUDAH I (10:1 – 20:37)			
REHOBOAM (931-913 B.C.E.) (10:1 – 12:16)			
The Division of the Kingdom (10:1-19)	The Beginning of the Kingdom (11:1-23)	Rehoboam turns Unfaithful (12:1-16)	
ABIJAH(M) (913-911 B.C.E.) (13:1-22)			
ASA (911-870 B.C.E.) (14:1 – 16:14)			
Asa's Victory (14:1-15)	Asa's Reform (15:1-19)	Asa's Apostasy (16:1-14)	
JEHOSHAPHAT (870-848 B.C.E.) (17:1 – 20:37)			
Jehoshaphat's Power (17:1-19)			
Sent Out to teach the Law			Military Commanders
<i>Princes</i>	<i>Levites</i>	<i>Priests</i>	<i>Commanders</i>
Benhail Obadiah Zechariah Nethanel Micaiah	Shemaiah Nethaniah Zebadiah Asahel Shemiramoth Jehonathan Adonijah Tobijah Tobadonijah	Elishama Jehoram	Adnah 300,000 Jehohana 280,000 Amasiah 200,000 Eliada 200,000 Jehozabad 180,000 Totals 1,160,000
Jehoshaphat's Reign (18:1 – 20:37)			
Jehoshaphat's First Alliance with Israel (Ahab) (18:1-34)	Jehoshaphat's Legal Reforms (19:1-11)	Jehoshaphat's Victory (20:1-30)	Jehoshaphat's Second Alliance with Israel (Ahaziah) (20:31-37)

24. THE KINGS OF JUDAH I

2 Chronicles 10:1—20:37

ASSIGNMENTS		
Rehoboam and Abijah 10:1—13:22	Asa 14:1—16:14	Jehoshaphat 17:1—20:37

The dates and reigns of the Kings of Judah are given in parallel sections in 1 and 2 Kings. Many of them include a period of co-regency with a predecessor, so there is often some overlap. In Chronicles the Kings of Israel are not recognized. Only David's descendants are the nation's true Kings. Sometimes Judah is referred to as Israel, which is an indication that the writer considers the ten tribes part of the nation. At least he perceives elements in Israel, which continue to be loyal to God and his rightful king.

REHOBOAM (931-913 B.C.E.) (10:1—12:16)

The Division of the Kingdom (10:1-19) (1 Kings 12:1-19)

Rehoboam, Solomon's son, went to Schechem to be proclaimed King. Why this was not done in Jerusalem is unclear. Jeroboam returned from Egypt and represented Israel before the new King. On their behalf he asked that the oppression be made lighter. Rehoboam asked for three days to think about it and ask the advice of two groups: the old men and the young men. The old men recommended an easing up of the oppression, but the young men recommended making things even more difficult.

On the third day Jeroboam and his people came before Rehoboam to get the bad news. Rehoboam would follow the advice of the young men and make things even more difficult. Hadoram (Adoram/Adoniram) was sent to oppress the people, but they rose up against him and killed him. Rehoboam then had to flee home to Jerusalem, where he reigned over Judah, and Jeroboam became King over Israel. (See 1 Kings 12:20) The nation was split in two.

The Beginning of the Kingdom (11:1-23) (1 Kings 12:21-24)

Upon returning to Jerusalem, Rehoboam gathered together 180,000 warriors with the intent of returning to Israel, but Shemaiah, with the Word of the Lord, warned him not to do this, thus avoiding a civil war. Instead, Rehoboam fortified the cities of Judah and

Benjamin to stand against Israel and Egypt. Commanders were placed in each city along with food, oil, and wine.

Refugee priests and Levites streamed into Judah when Jeroboam appointed his own sons as priests and set up two centers of idolatry, one in Dan and the other in Bethel (1 Kings 12:26-33). Jeroboam's Canaanized version of Yahweh worship made it impossible for those loyal to Yahweh to remain.

Rehoboam took 18 wives and 60 concubines, and had 28 sons and 60 daughters. Two of the wives are named. They are Mahalath, who gave birth to Jeush, Shemariah, and Zaham; and Maacah, the favored wife, who gave birth to Abijah (Abijam), Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith. Abijah (Abijam) was named the chief prince. Other sons were distributed throughout the districts and fortified cities of Judah and Benjamin, along with plenty of provisions for their welfare.

Rehoboam Turns Unfaithful (12:1-16) (1 Kings 14:25-28)

As the reign of Rehoboam grew strong, he abandoned the Law of the Lord, and led his people astray. In his fifth year Shishak (Sheshonq I of the 22nd Dynasty of Egypt) attacked Judah with 1,200 chariots and 60,000 horsemen. With him were Libyans, Sukki-im, and Ethiopians. They easily took the fortified cities and penetrated right up to Jerusalem. Records of this invasion can be found engraved on the Egyptian Temple of Karnak and on a pillar in Megiddo. It took place in 926 B.C., or in the fifth year of the reign of Rehoboam.

Shishak's successful invasion was interpreted as a sign of Rehoboam's disloyalty to God. Shemaiah quickly called for a national repentance, which, if done, would at least avoid the total destruction of Judah. God promised to spare Jerusalem, but the people were to become servants of Shishak. Shishak and his men took the treasures of the Palace and Temple, which Rehoboam tried to replace with bronze replicas. Conditions were still pretty good in Judah, and Rehoboam was able to finish out a reign of seventeen years before he died of natural causes and was buried in Jerusalem, the City of David.

ABIJAH(M) (913-911 B.C.E.) (13:1-22) (1 Kings 15:1-8)

He was the son of Rehoboam's favorite wife and ruled over Judah for three years. During his reign he gathered 400,000 warriors to face 800,000 of Jeroboam's warriors.

As they faced one another, Abijah gave a speech directed at Jeroboam on Mount Zemaraim, which is unknown as a mountain, although there was a town by that name five miles northeast of Bethel. In his speech Abijah reminds Jeroboam that God is on Judah's side and has made a "covenant of salt" with them. A covenant of salt refers to an eternal covenant, which cannot be broken (Leviticus 2:11-13 and Numbers 18:19). Salt was used in making such covenants, especially with God. Abijah accused Israel of being unfaithful in the manner in which they selected priests and in their possession of two golden calves,

one in Bethel and the other in Dan. On the other hand, Judah had a valid priesthood because their priests descended from Aaron and were Levites.

Jeroboam responded with an ambush sent around to the rear, but Judah's priests sounded some trumpets and the ambush was destroyed. Israel then fled, but not before Judah had slain 500,000 of its men. During his reign, Abijah took 14 wives and had 22 sons and 16 daughters before he died and was buried in the City of David (14:1a).

ASA (911-870 B.C.E.) (14:1—16:14) (1 Kings 15:9-24)

Asa's Victory (14:1-15)

Asa had the foreign altars, high places, pillars and Asherim taken down. The most important of these was the "high places," which were built for worship of idols and the offering of human sacrifices. This means that Asa urged Judah to seek the Lord and obey his laws and commandments. This resulted in peace and prosperity during which time he built cities and surrounded them with walls, towers, gates and bars. A standing army was also put in place with 300,000 men coming from Judah and 280,000 from Benjamin.

Zerah (an unknown King) led an army of 1,000,000 against him in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. Along with his men he had 300 chariots. Zerah is described as an Ethiopian, but that may mean either an Egyptian or Arabian chieftain. He could also be considered a Cushite. When Asa saw the threat before him he appealed to God for help. The Ethiopians were pursued as far as Gerar, where all fell and none remained alive. Asa and his men took booty and plundered the cities around Gerar taking from them their cattle, sheep and camels.

Asa's Reform (15:1-19)

Azariah, the prophet, told Asa that the Lord would be with him as long as he was on the Lord's side. Asa responded by putting away all his idols and by repairing the altar of the Lord. Many from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon deserted Israel and its idolatry to settle in Judah. They saw that God was with Asa, so they joined up with him. Sacrifices consisting of 700 oxen and 7,000 sheep were made during the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign.

They all entered into a covenant with the Lord, and who refused were to be put to death. An oath was made with loud voices and shouting and accompanied with the sound of trumpets and horns. Asa even removed his grandmother Maacah as the queen mother because of her image for Asherah. Asherah was a goddess of fertility associated with Baal, a male fertility god. Both were forbidden under Asa's reign. Since the Asherah was made out of a wooden pole, covered with metal, it could easily be crushed and burned, which was done at the brook Kidron.

Asa was blameless and even though the high places were not taken out of Israel, peace continued until the thirty-fifth year of his reign.

Asa's Apostasy (16:1-14)

Baasha, the King of Israel, began fortifying Ramah, which was a threat to Judah. Asa responded by buying an alliance with Benhadad, King of Syria. Asa gave Benhadad treasures of silver and gold from the Temple in order to encourage him to attack Israel from the north. This would make it impossible for Baasha to continue the threat from Ramah. This was done, and while Israel was preoccupied with Syria from the north, Asa took stones and timbers from Ramah and built Geba and Mizpah.

Hanani, a prophet, criticized Asa for relying on another King and not on the Lord; reminding Asa that his victory over the Ethiopians and Libyans was due to his reliance on the Lord. The prophet's words angered Asa who responded with more cruelty on the people and imprisonment and torture for Hanani. The word stocks is used for an instrument which caused pain by twisting the body. This is the first recorded instance of the physical punishment of a prophet.

In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa's feet¹ became diseased as punishment for this apostasy. He turned to physicians (medicine men) rather than to God and finally died in the forty-first year of his reign. In the end he responded to his own problems as he did to political problems. There seems to be a loss of faith in God as he relies on Syria to solve his political problems and physicians to solve his medical problems. In his death his people honored him by burning spices (Jeremiah 34:5).

JEHOSHAPHAT (870-848 B.C.E.) (17:1—20:37)

Jehoshaphat's Power (17:1-19)

Jehoshaphat's power was primarily religious and military. In the third year of his reign he sent out five princes, nine Levites, and two priests to teach the Book of the Law to the people.

Officials (Princes):	Levites:	Priests:
Benhail	Shemaiah	Elishama
Obadiah	Nethaniah	Jehoram
Zechariah	Zebadiah	Tobijah
Nethanel	Asahel	Tobadonijah
Micaiah	Shemiramoth	

The surrounding lands and kingdoms became afraid of Judah, but the reason was not only its faith. Jehoshaphat built up a tremendous army. Even the Philistines brought him presents of silver. The Arabs (nomads who settled in Edom and Moab) presented him

¹ Feet can be a euphemism for the male sexual organs. Thus, Asa suffers death and dishonor from a venereal disease and was therefore cremated.

with 7,700 rams and 7,700 goats. His military power could be seen in the following numbers under five commanders.

Adnah	300,000
Jehohana	280,000
Amasiah	200,000
Eliada	200,000
Jehozabad	180,000
Totals	1,160,000

Jehoshaphat's Alliance with Ahab (18:1-34) (1 Kings 22:1-28)

When Jehoshaphat went to Samaria to form a marriage alliance with Ahab, Ahab suggested a political and military alliance as well. The marriage of Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, to Ahab's daughter, Athaliah, was to bring Judah and Israel closer together. Instead, the alliance introduced idolatry into Judah again and nearly brought about the extinction of the royal family.

When Ahab asked Jehoshaphat to go with him in battle against Ramoth-Gilead, a border city at the edge of Israel and Syria (east of the Jordan), Jehoshaphat insisted that they first ask Israel's prophets. Ahab asked his 400 prophets, who all affirmed and supported the military campaign. Jehoshaphat asked if all his prophets had been asked. Ahab told him that there was one more, who never prophesied anything good about him. His name was Micaiah. Zedekiah, one of the 400 prophets, demonstrated what they would do to the Syrians at Ramoth-Gilead by wearing iron horns, which symbolized that Judah and Israel would push the Syrians until they were destroyed. Micaiah at first said what Ahab wanted to hear, but Ahab knew that this was not how Micaiah usually answered and so he pushed him for the truth. Micaiah then told him that they would be scattered as sheep without a shepherd. Zedekiah then slapped Micaiah on the cheek, and Ahab had him put back in prison, on a bread and water diet.

As Jehoshaphat and Ahab went into battle, Ahab disguised himself; at the same time, he encouraged Jehoshaphat to wear his royal robes. The Syrians had instructed their captains not to bother with anyone else but the King of Israel. At first they attacked Jehoshaphat, but quickly discovered their mistake. Ahab was finally mortally wounded by chance. He had himself removed from battle, propped himself up and lasted the day. At sunset he died.

Jehoshaphat's Legal Reforms (19:1-11)

Jehoshaphat was able to escape back to Jerusalem, where Jehu, the prophet and son of Hanani, criticized him for his alliance with Ahab. Although Jehoshaphat had made a serious mistake, he was still considered a good King for having destroyed the Asherahs and for having set his heart on seeking God.

Having survived as King, his next task was to reform the legal system. Judges were appointed in the fortified cities and local law courts were established. High standards were set, for these judges were judging for God (19:6b-7).

In Jerusalem a Supreme Court was established with two presiding officers: (1) Amariah, the chief priest, whose task was judging ecclesiastical matters, and (2) Zebadiah, a lay judge, whose task was judging civil matters. The Levites served as officers of the court. (See Deuteronomy 17:8-13)

Jehoshaphat's Victory (20:1-30)

When the Moabites, Edomites and the Neunites (from Mount Seir) threatened Judah in Hazazon-Tamar (Engedi, but probably Tamar which is further south), Jehoshaphat sought help from the Lord. Jahaziel, a prophet, told him that God would be with him and that he would gain a victory without even having to fight. His army was to take its position, stand its ground, and watch God give it the victory. They went to Tekoa where they saw their enemies destroy one another. When it was all over, they gathered up the spoil, spent the fourth day blessing the Lord in the Valley of Beracah, and then went home to enter the House of the Lord to the sound of harps, lyres, and trumpets.

Jehoshaphat's Second Alliance with Israel (20:31-37)

Jehoshaphat began his reign at the age of 35 and ruled for 25 years. His reign, for the most part was good; according to 17:6, he managed to remove the high places. The high places were platforms on which cult objects stood. The places themselves were considered holy, which is why they were so difficult to remove. Like many other Kings, Jehoshaphat tried to reform the people; but according to 20:33, he was not completely successful. He may have removed them, but the people continued to worship at the places themselves. Although Jehoshaphat looked to the Lord, the people he ruled did not, making his task extremely difficult.

In the end, Jehoshaphat formed another alliance with Ahaziah, King of Israel, who was evil. They built ships in Ezion-geber, located on the Gulf of Aqaba, to go to Tarshish. Eliezer prophesied against him for this, and the ships were all destroyed. Finally, Jehoshaphat died and was buried in the City of David (21:1).

UNPAID PROPHETIC ADVISERS

The best advice a political leader can get is from one of his or her unpaid prophetic advisers. They may not say what a leader wants to hear, but that is precisely what a leader needs to hear.

The Bible is filled with such examples, but none better than what is contained in these few chapters. Asa is considered a good King, because he listened to Azariah, who warned him in 2 Chronicles 15:2b: "The LORD is with you, while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you abandon him, he will abandon you." Asa took his

advice and initiated a reform movement. It is just too bad that he ignored the advice of another prophet, Hanani, and relied instead on an alliance with the Syrian King, Benhadad. Hanani was punished with imprisonment for his free advice, becoming the first prophet to suffer physical punishment at the hands of a political leader.

His son, Jehoshaphat, relied on political and military alliances too, but he was a little kinder to his unpaid prophetic advisers. He started his reign out by sending five officials (princes), nine Levites, and two priests to teach the Book of the Law to the people; but at the same time, he made two alliances with Israel, one with its worst, King Ahab, and the other with his son Ahaziah, who was not much better. Whatever weaknesses Jehoshaphat's reign had was due to his paying too little attention to his unpaid prophetic advisers, who clearly warned him to rely fully on the Lord. Jehoshaphat knew that there was something wrong with paying too much attention to paid prophetic advisers. In his first alliance with Ahab, their common purpose was to conquer Ramoth-Gilead on the Syrian border. Ahab had 400 prophets affirming that this was indeed God's will, but Jehoshaphat demanded to know if there were any dissenting prophets. There was only Micaiah, which goes to prove that the others knew that it was to their own advantage to tell the King what he wanted to hear. Paid advisers usually do that, even if there are exceptions.

What is interesting about most of the unpaid prophetic advice is that it does not encourage victory through military alliances or even through military operations. The path to victory is through loyalty and obedience to the Lord. The little known prophet, Jahaziel informed Jehoshaphat that victory could be attained without political alliances and military operations. In 2 Chronicles 20:17, he said: "This battle is not for you to fight; take your position, stand still, and see the victory of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you."

One of Jehoshaphat's greatest reforms was the establishment of a kind of Supreme Court in which there would be a chief justice for the Lord and another for the king. While nothing is said about whether these judges were paid or unpaid, their common role is made very clear in 2 Chronicles 19:6b-7:

Consider what you are doing, for you judge not on behalf of human beings but on the LORD's behalf; he is with you in giving judgment. Now, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care what you do, for there is no perversion of justice with the LORD our God, or partiality, or taking of bribes.

The best way to get judges to carry out this kind of a task is to separate their support from the state, especially the judge who represents the Lord. This does not mean that the judge who represents the Lord should be elected by or supported by the people. This would make him or her say what the people want to hear.

Most of the unpaid prophetic advisers are not judges, or even priests, but simple prophets, most of whom have no dependent means of support. There are exceptions to this, of course, and there are also paid prophets who remain faithful.

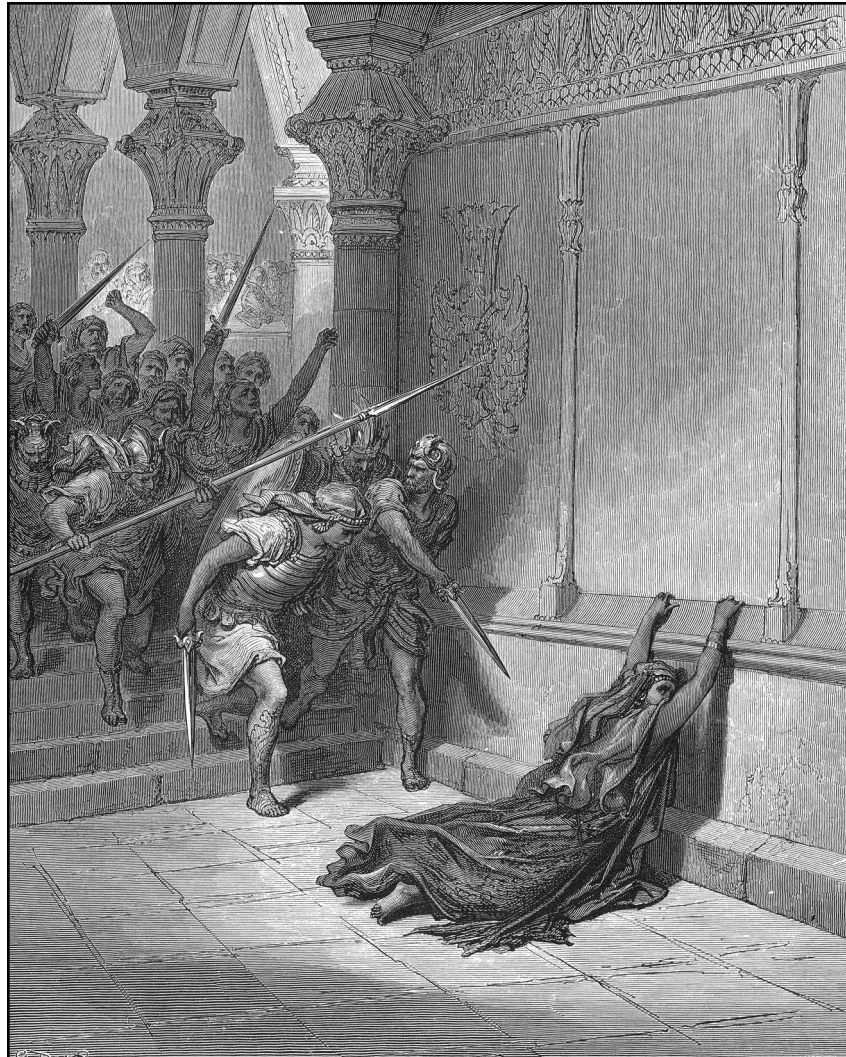
A modern example of a Church that is gradually becoming aware of the difficulty of being prophetic to political leadership that controls it is the Anglican Church of Great Britain. Since the reign of Henry VIII, British governments have had the last word in choosing the Archbishop of Canterbury, the head of the Anglican Communion. While in previous centuries, kings or queens made this appointment, today it is the prime minister. In 1977, the Archbishop, Dr. Robert Runcie, called for a new way to choose the Archbishop, and Bishop Richard Harries of Oxford, commenting on this problem, said: "We have a system which we cannot justify theologically." Part of the problem had been the tension that developed between Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the Church of England, which had been dealing with a large number of controversial issues.¹

If the goal of prophecy, including Supreme Court justices, is to be fulfilled, we must separate payment for such services from the self-interest of the Government. The same, however, needs to be said in regard to the self-interest of the Church and the general public. Paid professionals in these areas must have a kind of "freedom of the pulpit or bench" and a commitment to give advice based on a continual search for the divine will in political and religious matters. Although there might be such a thing as a reliable "paid prophetic adviser," the "unpaid prophetic advisers" are more reliable. The same tension that exists between a President and his or her cabinet exists between a bishop and his or her pastors. If the people who support them are seeking to be fully committed to the Lord, "paid prophetic advisers" can work; but if that basic commitment erodes, then we can only rely upon "unpaid prophetic advisers." This became a problem towards the end of Jehosaphat's reign. The final comment in 2 Chronicles 20:32-33 is: " He walked in the way of his father Asa and did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD. Yet the high places were not removed; the people had not yet set their hearts upon the God of their ancestors." Under such circumstances, a King needs "unpaid prophetic advisers," who will encourage him on and take the message to the people.

¹Inside the American Religion Scene, April 2, 1990, p. 1.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of 2 Chronicles



The Death of Athaliah by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

25. The Kings of Judah II 2 Chronicles 21:1—28:27

25. THE KINGS OF JUDAH II (2 Chronicles 21:1 – 28:27)					
KING	AGE	REIGN	MORALS	DEATH	BURIAL
Jehoram (21:1-20) 848-841 B.C.E.	32	8 Years	Evil	Bowels came out	City of David
Ahaziah (22:1-9) 841 B.C.E.	22(42)			Killed by Jehu	
Athaliah (22:10 – 23:21) 841-835 B.C.E.					
Joash (24:1-27) 835-796 B.C.E.	7	40 Years	Good/Evil	Killed by Servants	Not with the Kings
Under Jehoiada			Good		
Under Princes			Evil		
Amaziah (25:1-28) 796-767 B.C.E.	25	29 Years		Assassi- nated	City of David
Uzziah (26:1-23) 767-740 B.C.E.	16	52	Good/Bad		With the Kings
Jotham (27:1-9) 740-735 B.C.E.	25	16	Good		City of David
Ahaz (28:1-27) 735-715 B.C.E.	20	16	Evil		Not with the Kings
War with Syria and Israel (28:1-4)	The Prophet Oded (28:9-15)	The Edomite and Philistine Threat (28:16-21)		The Sins of Ahaz (28:22-27)	

25. THE KINGS OF JUDAH II

2 Chronicles 21:1—28:27

ASSIGNMENTS			
Jehoram and Ahaziah 21:1—22:9	Athaliah and Joash 22:10—24:27	Amaziah and Uzziah 25:1—26:23	Jotham and Ahaz 27:1—28:27

JEHORAM (848-841 B.C.E.) (21:1-20) (2 Kings 8:17-24)

Jehoram had six brothers named Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael and Shephatiah. Their father, Jehoshaphat, gave these six sons gifts of silver, gold, and valuable possessions together with the fortified cities of Judah; but to Jehoram, he gave the Kingdom. Jehoram was his firstborn and came to power at the age of 32 and reigned for eight years. As soon as he became King he slew all his brothers and some of the princes of Israel as well. Jehoram was an evil king, and his wife Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, contributed to his wickedness.

During Jehoram's reign Edom and Libnah revolted. Elijah sent him a letter (although by this time Elijah was dead) which told him that he would die of a disease of the bowels and that his people, children, wives, and possessions would experience a plague. The Philistines and Arabs invaded Judah, taking possession of the King's house and his sons, except for Jehohaz (Ahaziah). After two years, Jehoram's bowels came out and he died in great agony. There was no rite in his honor and no one regretted his death. They buried him in the city of David, but not in the tombs of the Kings.

AHAZIAH (841 B.C.E.) (22:1-9) (2 Kings 8:25-29; 9:21-28)

Ahaziah took over at age 22. Forty-two is a mistake, for that would make him older than his father. His mother, Athaliah, along with some of Ahab's advisers counselled him, and the result was extreme wickedness.

An alliance was formed with Jehoram, King of Israel, to make war on King Hazael of Syria at the border city of Ramoth-gilead. The Syrians wounded Joram in the battle and Ahaziah went to visit him. At this point he went out with Jehoram (Israel) to meet Jehu, whom the Lord had anointed to destroy the house of Ahab. He killed the princes of Judah along with the sons of Ahaziah's brother. Ahaziah went into hiding in Samaria (not the

city), but he was found and taken to Jehu who killed him. He was buried out of respect to Jehoshaphat. There was no one capable of taking over the throne from his immediate family.

ATHALIAH (841-835 B.C.E.) (22:10—23:21) (2 Kings 11:1-16)

Athaliah seized power and destroyed all the royal family except for one son, Joash, who was taken away by Jehoshabeath, a daughter of Jehoram, and was hidden in a bedchamber in the Temple for six years.

In the seventh year Jehoiada, a priest, entered into a pact with five military commanders (Azariah, Ishmael, Azariah, Maaseiah, and Elishaphat) who went throughout Judah and gathered Levites together. They all went to Jerusalem to make a covenant in the House of God to support Joash as King. They set up guards, one-third of them in the Temple, one-third of them at the King's house, and one-third of them at the Gate of Foundation. No one was allowed to enter but the Levites and priests. All the guards had weapons and were under instructions to kill anyone who entered without proper authority. After the King was crowned and then anointed by Jehoiada, then they all cried, "LONG LIVE THE KING".

Athaliah heard all the noise and discovered them celebrating with the new King. She rent her clothes and cried, "TREASON! TREASON!" Jehoiada ordered her taken out of the house of the Lord and killed at the entrance of the Horse Gate of the King's house.

Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and the people and the King that they should be the Lord's people. Here we have a three-way covenant between the people, their King, and their God.

They then went to the House of Baal and tore it down along with its altars and images, and killed Mattan, the Priest of Baal. The Levitical priests were put in charge of the Temple, and Joash was taken to the palace where he was placed on the royal throne.

JOASH (835-796 B.C.E.) (24:1-27) (2 Kings 12:1-16)

Under Jehoiada's Influence (24:1-16)

Joash was placed in power at the age of seven and reigned for 40 years. Due to the influence of Jehoiada, he was a good king for the first part of his reign. During this time, he restored the Temple. To finance this operation he sent priests and Levites out to collect money from the people. A chest was placed outside the gate of the Temple to receive the taxes laid on the people, which were based on Moses' tax law to finance the Tabernacle. The princes and people kept filling up the chest, enabling them to hire masons and carpenters to begin the work. Workers of iron and bronze were also brought, but still there was an excess of money. The excess was used to make utensils, dishes, and vessels of gold and silver. All these things were used in worship. Jehoiada died at the ripe old age

of 130 and he was buried among the kings because of all his good deeds. This was an honor not bestowed upon Jehoram (21:20) and Ahaziah (22:9), who were Kings.

Under the Princes of Judah (24:17-27)

After Jehoiada died, Joash came under the influence of the princes of Judah. They led the people back to serving Asherim and idols. The Lord responded by sending prophets, but no one listened, including Joash. Finally, Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, spoke out. The response was stoning and death.

The Lord's punishment was to send the Syrians to Jerusalem to destroy all the princes and take the spoil to Damascus; and all this was done with but a handful of men, because the Lord was executing judgment on Joash. When the Syrians departed, leaving Joash wounded on his bed, his own servants, Zabad and Jehozabad, finished him off. because he was responsible for Zechariah's death, he was not buried among the Kings.

AMAZIAH (796-767 B.C.E.) (25:1-28) (2 Kings 14:2-20)

Amaziah took over as King at the age of 25 and ruled for 29 years. As soon as power was firmly in his hands, he killed the servants who had slain his father; but he did not kill their children.

Next, he assembled 300,000 of the men of Judah who were of military age (20 years and older), and hired 100,000 men from Ephraim for 100 talents of silver. This would have been about three and one half tons of silver. A man of God warned him not to form an alliance with Israel (Ephraim), for God was not with Israel. At first Amaziah worried about the 100 talents of silver he had already paid to the Ephraimites, but the man of God assured him that the Lord could give him much more. Amaziah sent the Ephraimites home, but they went home angry. At least three reasons have been given as to why Amaziah was not to use any soldiers from Israel: (1) Israel had forsaken God; (2) Israel was unreliable because of its friendship with Edom; and (3) such a reliance was based on human power.

Amaziah then led his army to the Valley of Salt where 100,000 men of Seir were killed. Another 10,000 were captured alive. These 10,000 men were taken to the top of a rock and thrown down, dashing them to pieces. Meanwhile, men who were not used in battle against Edom, were sent back to Judah. Along the way, they killed 3,000 persons and took spoil with them.

After the battle against Edom, Amaziah brought back the gods of Seir (Edom). It was normal enough to raid your enemy's Temple treasury and even to deprive them of their gods, but it was not normal to set them up as your own gods. While they might have been your enemy's source of power, they could never be your's. Amaziah made the mistake of worshipping and making offerings to them. The Lord sent another prophet who questioned the wisdom of worshipping the gods of a defeated people, but the king questioned his authority to speak as a royal counselor. The prophet was silenced, but not

before warning Amaziah that he would be destroyed by the Lord. Amaziah no longer relied upon God, but upon his own human resources, including the Edomite idols.

After having defeated Edom, Amaziah turned towards Israel and challenged King Joash (Jehoash). Joash replied with a parable, which was a warning for Amaziah to stay at home. Amaziah would not listen, so Judah and Israel faced each other in battle at Bethshemesh. Israel; defeated Judah and Joash captured Amaziah and took him to Jerusalem, where Joash tore down 400 cubits (200 yards) of the city wall. He then seized all the gold and silver, and all the vessels from the Temple and returned to Samaria.

Amaziah lived 15 years longer than Joash, but a conspiracy arose and he was assassinated at Lachish. They brought him on horseback down to Jerusalem where he was buried with his fathers in the City of David.

UZZIAH (767-740 B.C.E.) (26:1-23) (2 Kings 14:21-22, 15:1-7)

Uzziah began his reign at 16 and ruled for 52 years. At first he was a righteous king. A man named Zechariah functioned for him in much the same way as did Jehoiada for Joash. As long as Uzziah sought God, the nation experienced prosperity.

God helped him to defeat the Philistines and the Arabs and the Ammonites paid him tribute. His fame spread all the way to the border of Egypt. He became famous for his building activities (towers in Jerusalem), his military preparations and fortified cities, and his great interest in husbandry and agriculture.

All of his success led to his downfall, as he grew arrogant. His arrogance led him to burning incense in the Temple, an act reserved for the Aaronic priesthood. Azariah and 80 priests warned him, and chased him out of the Temple. With a censer in his hand and the priests looking on, leprosy began to appear on his forehead. He remained a leper to his death, and had to live in a separate house. His son, Jotham, had to govern for him. Although his leprosy excluded him from the Temple, it did not exclude him from being buried among the Kings.

JOTHAM (740-735) (27:1-9) (2 Kings 15:32-38)

Jotham began his reign at 25 years of age and ruled for 16 years. Since Uzziah was unable to rule for his last 11 years, Jotham's reign overlaps with his father's reign.

He was a totally good king who did not make the mistake of his father, who entered the Temple to burn incense. While he was good, his people were not. They were corrupt. Nevertheless, he became known for building on to the Temple and for military preparedness throughout Judah. Judah defeated the Ammonites during his reign, receiving the following items for three consecutive years from them.

100 talents of silver (4 tons)
10,000 cors (50,000 bushels) of wheat

10,000 cors (50,000 bushels) of barley

When he died, he was buried in David's City.

AHAZ (735-715 B.C.E.) (28:1-27) (2 Kings 16:1-5, 7-9)

The Evil Reign of Ahaz (28:1-4)

Ahaz took over at the age of 20 and ruled for 16 years. His reign was evil and the writer compares it to that of the Kings of Israel. Molten images were made for the Baals and incense was burned in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom (Valley of Gehenna, south of Jerusalem). He even burned his sons as an offering. His apostasy was very widespread, penetrating the whole of Judah (28:4).

War with Syria and Israel (28:5-8)

Rezin, King of Syria, captured a great number of Israelites and took them to Damascus. Pekah, King of Israel, defeated Judah and killed 120,000 in one day. Zichri, an Ephraimite (Israelite) warrior, killed Maaseiah, the King's son, Azrikam, the Palace commander, and Elkanah, who was next in authority to the King. Israel also captured 200,000 women and children and took them and the spoil to Samaria.

The Prophet Oded (28:9-15)

Oded warned Israel that it could not take advantage of the defeat of Judah because of its own sins. The captives had to be sent back. To attempt to keep them would bring down the wrath of the Lord on Israel. Four chiefs of Israel, Azariah, Berechiah, Jehizkiah, and Amasa listened to the prophet, gave provisions to the captives, and sent them to Jericho.

The Edomite and Philistine Threat (28:16-21)

As the Edomites invaded, taking many prisoners, and the Philistines made raids, taking many villages in Judah, Ahaz asked Assyria for help. The help would not be effective. God was punishing Judah through its enemies. Ahaz needed to turn to God, not to Tilgath-pilneser of Assyria for help. Assyria could not be of any help, for Assyria was an oppressor, not a liberator. Ahaz offered to pay tribute, but that could not help.

The Sins of Ahaz (28:22-27)

Ahaz became more and more faithless. He sacrificed to the gods of Damascus who had defeated him. His rationale was that they had helped Syria; maybe they could help him. It only brought more disaster. This only made Ahaz more faithless. He destroyed the vessels in the Temple and closed up the Temple itself. Altars were built to the Syrian gods in every corner of Jerusalem. Ahaz built high places in every city of Judah, where incense could be burned to the Syrian gods. When he finally died, his wickedness had become so great that he was not even buried with the other kings.

THE RISE AND FALL OF KINGS

The Bible is filled with the rise and fall of kings. Two kings had great potential because they had sound advice. The first was Joash under the guidance of Jehoiada and the second was Uzziah under the guidance of Zechariah. Both of these kings were evaluated as good as long as they maintained the covenant between Judah and its God. As soon as they launched out on their own, their kingdoms began to wane and the evaluation of them turned negative.

What caused them to forget the good advice that they had received? The death of Jehoiada marked the beginning of the decline for Joash. He began listening to other advisers, who drew him away from the nation's covenant with God. Jehoiada's son, Zechariah, warned him in 2 Chronicles 24:20: "Thus says God: Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has also forsaken you."

Uzziah showed even more promise than did Joash, and he had as good a spiritual adviser in the prophet Zechariah, but his reign also went into a sharp tailspin. "But when he had become strong, writes the Chronicler in 2 Chronicles 26:16, "he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was false to the LORD his God, and entered the temple of the LORD to make offering on the altar of incense." He like Saul, the first King, moved beyond submission to God, allowing his own arrogance to initiate the fall. This was one of Charles A. Beard's lessons from history, which can be summed up as follows: "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad with power."¹ It is not that God wants to destroy kings, but he has created a moral universe in which it is impossible for kings to succeed apart from his commandments. "Pride goes before destruction," warns Proverbs 16:18, "and a haughty spirit before a fall." Although none of the commandments opposes arrogance directly, this is described as one of the seven deadly sins in Proverbs 6:16-19. The entire list is as follows:

1. Pride
2. Covetousness
3. Lust
4. Anger
5. Gluttony
6. Envy
7. Selfishness

These are called deadly sins because they have a way of making kings think that they are gods, a violation of the first commandment.

¹E. Stanley Jones, *The Way* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), p. 37.

“When nations do not take God’s way,” asks E. Stanley Jones, “does their toil end in smoke?” His answer is, “Inevitably.”² Why? Because there is a moral law written into the universe and, like the laws of physics, it always has the last word. The law cannot be violated without paying a price. No one breaks the law, but many break themselves over the law. If kings fit into it they succeed, but if they do not, they perish. This moral universe is not a human creation, but God’s. He has never tried to keep it a secret, and has called forth a people to demonstrate it to the world. God was reluctant from the beginning to place kings over his people, because he knew what power would do to them.

Not every king has given in to the corrupting influences of arrogance. Some kings even try to lead people into obeying the commandments. Jotham was one of those kings, but he had difficulty convincing those under him. 2 Chronicles 27:2 evaluates his kingdom as follows: “He did what was right in the sight of the LORD just as his father Uzziah had done — only he did not invade the temple of the LORD. But the people still followed corrupt practices.” Many modern leaders experience the same difficulty. The People’s resistance to God’s ways undermines their leaders ability to govern. In such cases the judgment falls not on the king, but on the rebellious people.

Kings are prone to give people what they want, not what they need. Any king who gives in to this temptation cannot be considered a successful king. Jesus tried to lead people to live under the “reign” of God, but like Jotham, he discovered that this was not the will of the masses. Realizing that they were out of touch with God, he quickly sensed the inevitability of the cross. People understood his claim, and mocked it by crowning him with thorns and posting a sign above his head in three languages. His reign breaks the cycle for us, not that it does not continue with contemporary political leaders, but that we now know the direction in which history is moving, “...for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.” (Revelation 17:14) Every king has the divine responsibility to lead the nation and its people in that direction, even if the people rebel.

²*Ibid*, p. 196

SACRED STORIES

The Stories in 2 Chronicles



The Entrance to Hezekiah's Tunnel

26. The Kings of Judah III

2 Chronicles 29:1—36:23

26. THE KINGS OF JUDAH III

2 Chronicles 29:1—36:23

ASSIGNMENTS				
Hezekiah Cleanses the Temple and celebrates Passover 29:1— 30:27	Hezekiah's Reform and the Assyrian Threat 31:1—32:33	Manasseh and Amon 33:1-25	Josiah's Reform and His Tragic End 34:1—35:27	The End and Hope of the Kingdom of Judah 36:1-23 Ezra 1:1-3

HEZEKIAH (715-568 B.C.E.) (29:1—32:33) (2 Kings 18-20)

In the account on Hezekiah, told in 2 Kings, the emphasis is on the political activity of Hezekiah, but here in 2 Chronicles, the emphasis is on religious reform.

The Cleansing of the Temple (29:1-36)

Hezekiah took over when he was 25 years old and reigned for 29 years. One of his first tasks was the cleansing and rededication of the Temple, which had been closed by Ahaz. It took 16 days to clean it up, after which Hezekiah gathered together some of his officials and brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven goats as a sin offering for the Kingdom, the Sanctuary, and Judah. Religious reform began within the first month of the new King's reign.

The Priests of the sons of Aaron and the Levites were reinstated to their tasks in the Temple. The Levites had cymbals, harps, and lyres, while the priests had trumpets. This all happened according to what God commanded through the prophets of David, Gad and Nathan. Asaph was another person from David's time, who greatly influenced the place of music in Israel's worship.

The congregation brought 70 bulls, 100 rams, and 200 lambs as burnt offerings and, they brought 600 bulls and 3,000 sheep as consecrated offerings. There were so many offerings that there were not enough priests to take care of them; so the Levites, who were more upright than the priests, had to assist.

The Great Passover Celebration (30:1-27)

After the Temple was put back in proper order, Hezekiah ordered a national observance of the Passover in Jerusalem. The subjugated Israelites were also invited, but many of them scorned the invitation, although those from the north came. They had to start the observance late because many of the priests were still unsanctified. The Law permitted postponement.¹ (Numbers 9:1-14). The enthusiasm was such that the feast was prolonged for another seven days; nothing like it had taken place since the time of Solomon. It was a “joyous” occasion (30:23 and 36).

The Reform of Religious Life (31:1-21)

Hezekiah’s religious zeal resulted in the destruction of the pagan cultic centers in both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Apparently, the Assyrians did not exercise strict control in the fallen Kingdom of the North. The pillars, Asherim, high places, and altars had all been destroyed. Hezekiah then turned to a reorganization of the Temple personnel and the re-establishment of the tithe as a means of supporting the priests and Levites (31:4-8).

The Assyrian Threat (32:1-33)

Sennacherib, from Assyria, finally turned towards Jerusalem. In preparation for this threat, Hezekiah stopped the flow of water from the springs outside the city. This diversion of water resulted in the famous tunnel, which Hezekiah built. This famous Tunnel is still in use today.

As Sennacherib approached Jerusalem, he warned that no one else’s gods could stop him, and it was, therefore, useless for Hezekiah and his people to even try. Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah prayed, and the Lord heard their prayers. The Lord, in the form of an angel, cut off all the invading warriors, commanders, and officers. Sennacherib and his men had to go home in shame and with loss of face, having lost 185,000 men; and in the end, Sennacherib’s sons murdered him. See 2 Kings 19:35-37 for the details, which are only summarized here.

The people brought gifts to the Lord and precious things to Hezekiah. He was exalted in the sight of all the nations, but in the end he too had to die. He was buried along with the other descendants of David, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him, for he had been a good king.

MANASSEH (686-642 B.C.E.) (33:1-20) (2 Kings 21:1-9 & 17-18)

Manasseh began his reign at the tender age of 12 and ruled for 55 years. This was the longest reign of all the Kings of Judah. He was also one of their worst kings. The account in 2 Kings has nothing good to say about him, but in Chronicles a change takes place. His

¹ See Numbers 9:1-14

sins were numerous and included such things as (1) the desecration of the temple, (2) the worship of heavenly objects, (3) human sacrifice, and (4) the use of magic (soothsaying, augury, sorcery, mediums and wizards).

The Assyrian commanders finally captured Manasseh and led him back to Babylon with hooks or rings in his nose. Captured kings were treated in this manner to humiliate them. Although Kings does not mention this incident, Assyrian inscriptions included Manasseh's name as a vassal of Esahaddon and Ashurbanipal. It seems likely that Manasseh was caught up in the revolt of Ashurbanipal's brother and was then called to Babylon for an accounting, following Ashurbanipal's victory.

The writer of Chronicles probably included this account to help his readers understand how God could allow an evil king to rule for such a long time. Usually it was thought that God would bring down an evil king and not allow him to reign. Manasseh repented and returned to Judah to try to rectify the damage he had done, but this time, the people refused listen to him. This demonstrates that what one puts in motion cannot always be controlled or changed. Evil became worse in Judah than it had ever been among the pagan peoples, whom they had displaced.

AMON (642-640 B.C.E.) (33:21-25) (2 Kings 21:19-26)

Amon followed his father at the age of 22, but only reigned for two short years. His rule was even worse than his father's and his own servants assassinated him. The people conspired against those who were responsible and anyone related to the assassination was put to death in his own home.

JOSIAH (640-609 B.C.E.) (34:1—35:27) (2 Kings 22-23)

Josiah's Reforms (34:1-7)

Josiah took over as King at the age of eight and reigned for 31 years. In his twelfth year, he began a purge of Judah and Jerusalem. Kings marks the beginning of this reform following the discovery of the Law in the Temple, but Chronicles has the reform beginning prior to the discovery of the Law. They made dust of the images and scattered their dust over the graves of those who once sacrificed to them. Such activity took place beyond Judah, extending into the towns of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, and as far away as Naphtali.

Discovery of the Law (34:8-33)

In Josiah's eighteenth year, he sent Shaphan, Maaseiah, and Joah to repair the Temple. They delivered the funds to Hilkiah, the High Priest, who, along with the Levites, saw to it. Jahath and Obadiah were given responsibility for overseeing the project, but it was Hilkiah, himself, who discovered the Law (Deuteronomy 5-27) and reported it to Shaphan, who took it to the King and read it before him. Josiah's immediate response was to rend his clothes and then send Hilkiah to find out what the Lord wanted him to do.

Hilkiah sought advice from the prophetess, Huldah (wife of Shallum), who told him that the people would meet with judgment, but Josiah himself would die before it came to pass because he had been penitent and humbled himself before the Lord. Josiah then made a Covenant with the Lord and had the entire Book of the Law read before the elders of Judah.

The Passover Feast (35:1-19)

Josiah initiated the celebration of the Passover Feast, the likes of which had not been experienced since the days of Samuel. Early instructions for the Passover can be found in Exodus 12:1-14 and Deuteronomy 16:1-8. Josiah contributed 30,000 lambs and 3,000 bulls in the eighteenth year of his reign and invited all the people to participate.

Josiah's Tragic End (35:20-27)

Neco, the King of Egypt, marched towards Carchemish, where he intended to assist remnants of the Assyrian army hold out against Babylonian mop-up operations. The Assyrian Empire had already been defeated by Babylon in 612 B.C.E. with the taking of Nineveh, its capital city. What did Neco hope to accomplish? He was probably trying to create a buffer between this new power in the east and Egypt. At the same time Josiah was probably trying to maintain Judah's independence or survival.

Josiah opposed Neco at Megiddo in 609 B.C.E. Neco, not being able to understand what Josiah was doing, warned him that he was opposing God. Josiah refused to listen to him and was wounded by Neco's archers. They put Josiah in a chariot and took him back to Jerusalem where he died.

Neco went on to Carchemish, but was soundly defeated in 605 B.C. by the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar. Perhaps Josiah sensed the danger in such opposition. On Neco's way home to Egypt, however, he deposed and deported Josiah's successor, Jehoahaz, making Judah subservient for the time being to Egypt.

JEHOAHAZ (609 B.C.E.) (36:1-4) (2 Kings 23:30-35)

The people chose Jehoahaz as their King, but he only lasted for three months. He began his rule at the age of 23. Neco, the King of Egypt, deposed him and took him to Egypt. A heavy tribute was put on Judah amounting to 100 talents of silver (7,500 pounds) and one talent of gold (75 pounds). Jehoahaz's brother, Eliakim, was made the new king, but Neco had his name changed to Jehoiakim.

JEHOIAKIM (ELIAKIM) (609-597 B.C.E.) (36:5-8) (2 Kings 23:26—24:7)

He began his rule at 25 and reigned for 11 years, but he was an evil king. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, moved against him and took him along with some of the vessels from the Temple to Babylon. Jehoiakim began as a puppet from Egypt and ended up as a captive in Babylon.

JEHOIACHIN (CONIAH) (36:9-10 B.C.E.) (2 Kings 24:8-17)

Jehoiachin took over as king at the age of 18. That he was a mere eight is a mistake. Perhaps the ten was confused with the length of his rule, which is described as three months and ten days. That he was 18 is supported by the fact that he had wives and children (2 Kings 24:15 and Jeremiah 22:28).

In the spring of the year, Nebuchadnezzar had Jehoiachin brought to Babylon along with the vessels of the Temple. According to Babylonian records, this occurred on March 16, 597 B.C.E. He, his family, and all the leading citizens were taken to Babylon in the first deportation. Zedekiah replaced him as king and, although he is called Jehoiachin's brother, he was really his uncle (See 2 Kings 24:17 and Jeremiah 27:1).

ZEDEKIAH (597-586) (36:11-21) (2 Kings 24:18—25:21 and Jeremiah 52:1-11)

Zedekiah was Judah's last king. He began his reign at 21 and ruled for 11 years. Like many others before him, he was an evil king who hardened his heart towards God. The prophets, one of which was Jeremiah, tried to warn him, but all their warnings were ignored. The priests also refused to heed the prophetic warnings and, after a long siege, Jerusalem fell to Babylon. The walls were broken down, the Temple destroyed, the palaces burned, and according to Jeremiah (Jeremiah 52:16, 29) 832 people were exiled to Babylon. Only the poorest of the land were left.

The exile was in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy that the people would have to spend a sabbath (70 years) in exile. The exile ended after Persia defeated Babylon in 539 B.C.E., but the Temple was not rebuilt until 515 B.C.E. The Sabbath would have lasted from 586 B.C.E. until the rebuilding of the Temple in 515 B.C.E., a period of 71 years, rounded off to 70.

THE NEW HOPE (36:22-23 B.C.E.) (Ezra 1:1-3)

When the book of Ezra was detached from Chronicles, these verses were retained both at the end of Chronicles and in the beginning of Ezra. Chronicles simply could not end on a pessimistic note. Even though Jeremiah spoke of God's impending judgment, he also spoke of God's continuing love for his exiled people and their eventual return (Jeremiah 24:4-7). A similar note of hope ended the account given in 1 and 2 Kings (See especially 2 Kings 25:27-30). Cyrus' first year as king would have been in 538 B.C., but the end of the exile would not be considered complete until the walls and Temple have been rebuilt, which would have been 515 B.C.E.

GOING DOWN WITH THE SHIP

There is an ancient custom that when a ship goes down, the captain must go down with it, unless he can get everyone else out first. He must at least try his best to save all of his passengers and then his crew before he has a right to abandon the ship.

What happens when one knows the nation is going down? Does the leader have to go down with it, or does he or she have a right to escape? We have some modern examples of political leaders fleeing their countries to live out their exile in some degree of comfort. The leaders of Iran and the Philippines come to mind, both of whom died in exile. The kings of Judah, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin, also died in exile.

There is of course always the dream that the leader might be able to return and resume power where he or she left off, but rarely does that happen. If one has been deposed because of corruption and injustice, then the hope of returning is dismal, particularly if God does unseat corrupt and oppressive leaders.

What should a leader do when the handwriting is on the wall? The ship is going down. Manasseh is probably one of those leaders who brought Judah to the brink of its disaster, if not to the point of no return. The King of Assyria took him into exile. This seems to have brought him to repentance. At least 2 Chronicles 33:12-13 seems to indicate so when it says:

While he was in distress he entreated the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. He prayed to him, and God received his entreaty, heard his plea, and restored him again to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD indeed was God.

This same incident is not reported in 2 Kings, where there is no hint of anything good done by Manasseh. The author includes this incident not because he wants to say something good about Manasseh, but because he thinks that this ought to be the response of a corrupt leader who has been taking his nation down the wrong path. It may be too late to save his political career and even the nation itself, but acknowledging his wrongdoing and turning to God in his time of distress is not a bad thing to do. In fact it is the only good thing he can do. Not many leaders are capable of it.

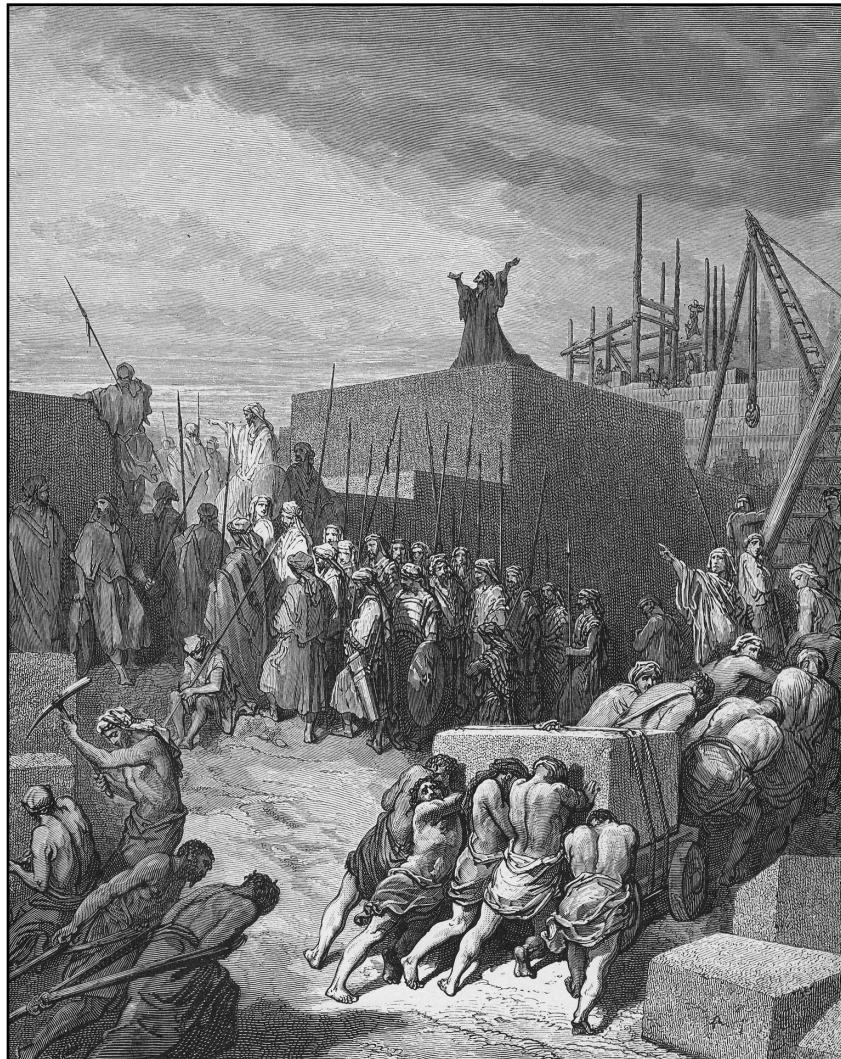
Repentance and humbling oneself before God and one's people may not save the nation, but it is a step in the right direction. It is better than taking all the wealth one can smuggle out of the country and running with it. When Jeremiah saw the end in sight, his advice was to submit to the Babylonian King. That did not seem like the patriotic thing to do, but Jeremiah was calling the King of Judah to go down with the ship. Given his prophetic insight, the ship was going to sink. That captain had no right to flee, particularly when he could not save his crew and the ship's passengers. The only responsible thing to do is to turn to God in repentance and humility, and stay with the ship, accepting whatever may come. Running with the nation's resources to make a comfortable life for oneself will not work in the long run. It is better to turn those resources over to the new leaders and rely upon their mercy.

The more evil a leader has been the more unreasonable this advice seems. What is feared most is a ruthless execution, and we have seen such acts take place in recent times. That is why most leaders will not stay with the sinking ship. They seek exile, taking as many resources as they can with them.

Why go down with the ship? It's the right thing to do. It offers a leader a final opportunity to make things right with God and with the people he or she has been misleading. Can repentance at such a time be genuine? Is this not just a sneaky effort to save one's own skin? Not really. No one can guarantee the safety of the leader. The safety of a righteous king, such as Jesus, could not be guaranteed, nor can the safety of a wicked king be guaranteed. When the ship goes down and the captain cannot get everyone out safely, he will probably die. It is still important to do, even in the last moments, because the biblical affirmation is that God will raise his people up. No one has done so much evil that he or she cannot find forgiveness, even in the last moments of life.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of Ezra



Rebuilding the Temple by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

27. Rebuilding the Temple

Ezra 1:1 — 10:44

27. EZRA (1:1 – 10:44)		
THE RETURN UNDER SHESHBAZZAR (1:1 – 2:70)		
Cyrus' Proclamation (1:1-4) [539 B.C.E.]	Gifts for the Temple (1:5-11) [5,469 Articles]	Lists of Returning Jews (2:1-70) [42,360]
REBUILDING THE TEMPLE UNDER ZERUBBABEL (3:1 – 6:22)		
The Laying of the Foundation (3:1-13) [Tishri (7th month) 520 B.C.E.]	The Halting of the Work (4:1-24)	The Completion of the Temple (5:1 – 6:22)
EZRA RETURNS WITH NEW EXILES (7:1 – 8:36)		
Ezra's Commission (7:1-28) [April 8, 458 B.C.E.]	Ezra's Journey (8:1-36) [August 4, 458 B.C.E.]	
RELIGIOUS REFORM 9:1 – 10:44)		
The Problem of Mixed Marriages (9:1-15)	The Agreement to Divorce their Wives (10:1-44)	17 Priests 10 Levites (1 Singer, 3 Gatekeepers) 84 Lay People

27. REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Ezra 1:1—10:44

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Return under Sheshbazzar 1:1—2:70	Building the Temple 3:1—4:24	The Completion of the Temple 5:1—6:22	Ezra Returns with New Exiles 7:1—8:36	Religious Reforms 9:1—10:44

INTRODUCTION TO EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

538-433 B.C.E

The Name

Although these two books are a continuation of 1 and 2 Chronicles, they have been given the names of Ezra, the scribe, and Nehemiah, the governor.

The Sources

There are numerous sources used.

The Author

The author is unknown, but he is the same person who wrote Chronicles. It has been suggested that he was a disciple of Ezra, or even Ezra himself. The supporting evidence that he might be Ezra is that the Book of Ezra was written in the first person. Whatever might be the case, he was at the least, a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Date

If the above is true, then we are looking at a date of around 450 B.C.E. with 350-300 B.C.E. being the very latest.

The Purpose

Ezra and Nehemiah are a supplement to Chronicles. They tell the story of how the people returned from captivity, restored the true faith, rebuilt the Temple, and fortified

Jerusalem. The whole process began with the overthrow of Babylonia by Cyrus, the King of Persia, in 539 B.C.E. There is some confusion as to whether Ezra or Nehemiah returned first. What casts doubt upon Ezra's returning first? The answer is that Nehemiah makes no reference to Ezra, which indicates that Ezra had not yet returned to Israel.

Reading the Scripture leaves one with the impression that Ezra arrived first. Ezra left Babylonia in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes, and Nehemiah left in the twentieth year. Since there were three Persian Kings named Artaxerxes, one cannot be certain which one is being named. If Nehemiah returned in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes I, and Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes II, this would place Nehemiah's arrival in 445 B.C.E. and Ezra's in 397 B.C.E.

There are several internal reasons in Scripture for placing Nehemiah in Jerusalem prior to Ezra. They are as follows:

1. Nehemiah found Jerusalem sparsely settled (Nehemiah 7:4). By the time Ezra arrived, Jerusalem had a large population (Ezra 10:1).
2. Nehemiah had to rebuild the city wall after he arrived (Nehemiah 2:11-12, 16-17). The wall was already standing in Ezra's time (Ezra 9:9).
3. While Nehemiah had to appoint people to act as Temple Treasurers (Nehemiah 13:13), a group of priests was already acting as treasurers in Ezra's time (Ezra 8:33).
4. Eliashib was the high priest during the time of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 3:1, 20), but during the time of Ezra, the high priest was Eliashib's son, or even his grandson, Jehohanan (Ezra 10:6).

There is also some external evidence from an archaeological find, but none of it is conclusive. Liberal scholarship places Nehemiah in Jerusalem first, and conservative scholarship places Ezra first.

Whether Ezra or Nehemiah arrived first does not matter all that much. What is significant is that this period of time was one of the most important in the history of Israel. Ezra initiated a new era in which the Pentateuch, the first five books, became more than a book of Laws. Ezra made it a manual of instruction covering every detail of life. The Torah became Scripture, and Ezra became the father of Judaism.

EZRA			
1-2	3-6	7-8	9-10
The First Return	Construction of the Temple	Ezra Returns with New Exiles	Religious Reforms

NEHEMIAH		
1:1—7:73a	7:73b—10:39	11:1—13:31
Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem	The Reforms of Ezra	The Memoirs of Nehemiah

The Outline

A. Ezra (1:1—10:44)

1. The Return under Sheshbazzar (1:1—2:70)
2. Rebuilding the Temple under Zerubbabel (3:1—6:22)
3. Ezra Returns with New Exiles (7:1—8:36)
4. Religious Reform (9:1—10:44)

B. Nehemiah (1:1—13:31)

1. Nehemiah's Return to Jerusalem (1:1—7:73a)
2. The Reforms of Ezra (7:73b—10:39)
3. The Memoir's of Nehemiah (11:1—13:31)

THE RETURN UNDER SHESHBAZZAR (1:1—2:70)

Cyrus' Proclamation (1:1-4)

The policy of Babylon had been to deport the peoples they conquered, but with the fall of Babylon to Persia a new policy was to emerge. Cyrus, King of Persia, made a proclamation allowing all exiled people to return home. This took place in 539 B.C.E., and seemed to be the fulfillment of Jeremiah 29:10.

Although Cyrus seems to give the LORD credit for his victories in Ezra 1:2, in the Cyrus Cylinder he gives credit to Marduk, his own god; and in a text in Ur, he ascribes his victories to Sin, the moon god. According to his inscriptions, Cyrus was interested in restoring temples; and to him, the LORD was the local god of Jerusalem, whose Temple had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. Therefore it should be restored.

Gifts for the Temple (1:5-11)

Those who returned were the family heads of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and Levites, who were the religious personnel needed for the Temple services. The returning exiles were given gifts of money and goods by those who remained behind. As a royal gesture of goodwill, Cyrus returned the precious vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar when he destroyed the Temple. Mithredath, the treasurer, counted them out to Sheshbazzar. Sheshbazzar was probably Shenazzar, a younger son of Jehoiachin (Jeconiah), the King of Judah taken into exile by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C.E. (1 Chronicles 3:16-17; 2 Chronicles 36:9-10; and Jeremiah 24:1). The list of items taken back, are as follows: but one must remember that there is some uncertainty about numbers.

30	Gold Bowls for Offerings
1,000	Silver Bowls for Offerings
29	Other Bowls (Censers)
30	Small Gold Bowls
410	Small Silver Bowls
1,000	Other Utensils

A total of 5,400 or to be more precise 5,469 articles were returned. These articles were to be taken back, to Jerusalem.

Lists of Returning Jews (2:1-70)

Persons returning in the first group of exiles were divided up into five categories: leaders, laypersons, temple servants, those of dubious genealogies, and servants. The main leaders consisted of Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah. A total number of 42,360 is given, and although this is supported by Nehemiah 7:66 and 1 Esdras 5:41, the lists in this chapter do not add up

to this number. There are omissions. The trip from Babylon to Jerusalem would have taken about four months (Ezra 7:8-9).

REBUILDING THE TEMPLE UNDER ZERUBBABEL (3:1—6:22)

The Laying of the Foundation (3:1-13)

In the seventh month (Tishri) (September/October) of 520 B.C.E. Jeshua and Zerubbabel led the people in rebuilding the altar. This was during the second year of Darius I (Haggai 2:1-4). The altar was rebuilt first in order to assure the people that God was with them in this venture and that he would protect them from their enemies.

The next thing they did was to make offerings on the new altar and to celebrate the first of the three major Holy Days. The Feast of Tabernacles had originally reminded them of their wandering in the wilderness, but now, added to that, was the reminder of their days in exile.

In the second month of the second year, Zerubbabel and Jeshua led them in laying the foundation of the Temple. Work had begun under Sheshbazzar (5:14-16), but Zerubbabel and Jeshua, leaders of the second return, continued it.

Levites above the age of 20 were given the responsibility of oversight in this building project. As the builders laid the foundation, the older priests and Levites wept as they remembered the glory of the old Temple. The laying of the foundation was celebrated with music and praise, and so both weeping and praising were mixed together.

The Halting of the Work (4:1-24)

The Samaritans, who were from the Northern Kingdom, came to offer assistance in rebuilding the Temple; but their help was turned down. Esarhaddon had followed a policy of settling the land with foreigners, and some of the Jews intermarried with them. These persons became known as Samaritans because that was the region from which most of them came. Their offer was refused because they were not pure enough to work on the Temple.

The Samaritans did not take this sitting down, and their pressure brought about a halt to the work on the Temple and the city. At least one commentator says that the real bone of contention was the building of the city walls. They did not feel secure without the walls, but the walls also symbolized to their enemies their rebellious past.

Ezra 4:6-23 really belongs between Ezra 10 and Nehemiah 1, but it was inserted here because it deals with another kind of opposition. We know it belongs to another time because of the kings mentioned in these verses. The first was Xerxes (486-465 B.C.E.), whose Hebrew name was Ahasuerus. The second involves a letter written by Rehum and Shimshai to Artaxerxes (465-424 B.C.E.) concerning the building projects. Their point was that the completion of these projects would result in financial losses (4:13), a loss of

honor (4:14), and that the Persian Empire itself would be diminished (4:16). All of the royal revenue would be impaired because Jerusalem was a rebellious city. Artaxerxes responded to this letter by calling a halt to the work, and Rehum and Shimshai took the bad news to the Jews in Jerusalem.

The Completion of the Temple (5:1—6:22)

With the encouragement of the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, they began work on the Temple again. Tattenai and Shethar-bozenai discovered this and tried to stop them. They refused, and so Tattenai wrote a letter to Darius. In the letter he gave the Jewish answer as to why they refused to stop. The essence of it had to do with Cyrus' proclamation giving them permission to rebuild their Temple. After searching for this proclamation, Darius found it in Ecbtana, the summer residence for Persian Kings, and sent a letter granting them permission to complete the Temple. He also instructed the authorities to fund it from the royal revenue and to make available to the project whatever was needed. The Temple was completed in four years, on March 12, 515 B.C.E. to be exact; and following its completion, they celebrated Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

EZRA RETURNS WITH NEW EXILES (7:1—8:36)

Ezra's Commission (7:1-28)

A great deal of time passed from the completion of the Temple under Darius (521-485 B.C.E.) and the return of Ezra with new exiles under the reign of Artaxerxes (464-423 B.C.E.). Nearly a century of time had passed during which time Esther was able to avert a complete massacre of the Jewish people and, indirectly, save the lives of Ezra and Nehemiah. Artaxerxes was favorably disposed toward the Jews, and Ezra was given official sanction to teach the law, appoint magistrates in his homeland, offer sacrifices, and beautify the Temple. He led the new exiles—as many as desired to accompany him—home in the seventh year of Artaxerxes' reign, and the nine hundred mile trip took approximately four months. The traditional date of their departure was April 8, 458 B.C.E. and this would mean that they arrived in Jerusalem on August 4, 458 B.C.E. When they arrived in Jerusalem, everything was put at Ezra's disposal and nothing was to be taxed.

In 7:6 Ezra is described as a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses. In pre-exilic times, a scribe was more like a secretary, but now a scribe was one who preserved and interpreted the Law itself.

In 7:27-28, the author moves into the first person, and so we can assume that what he is now writing is autobiographical.

Ezra's Journey (8:1-36)

Heading this list of exiles are priests, followed by lay families. Many of the names listed also appear in 2:1-15. Gathered at Ahava on a tributary of the Euphrates, Ezra noticed

that they had no Levites among them. Few Levites joined Zerubbabel's group (2:40), and none volunteered to go with Ezra. Through the help of Iddo and Caspiphia, 38 Levites and 220 Temple servants were recruited. In all, the number of these exiles came to approximately 1,690. In 1 Esdras the number is 1,496. Ezra entrusted precious gifts of gold and silver to the priests for safekeeping during the trip. When they arrived, the gifts were handed to the priests and Levites in the Temple, sacrifices were offered in thanksgiving for bringing the group safely to Jerusalem, and the King's orders were delivered to the provincial authorities, which were called Satrans.

RELIGIOUS REFORM (9:1—10:44)

The Problem of Mixed Marriages (9:1-15)

No sooner did the exiles return than they began to intermarry with pagans. This was against the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 7:1-5), which was opposed for religious rather than racial reasons. Foreign wives had led Solomon astray and threatened to do the same to the exiles. Some had even divorced their Jewish wives to marry pagans (Malachi 2:10-16). The issue was not race, but idolatry, and even the priests, Levites, and chief officials were deeply involved in this sin. Ezra repented and pulled out his hair as he expressed his remorse over the sins of his people before God. The prayer had sermonic value to it, but that was probably intentional.

The Agreement to Divorce their Wives (10:1-44)

While Ezra was weeping and confessing "their" sins, a large group of Israelites gathered. Shecaniah proposed a way out of the situation by suggesting a renewal of the covenant and by casting out the foreign wives and their children. Ezra made the people promise to do this and then went into Jehohanan's quarters, where he spent the night. Jehohanan was the high priest. A message was sent out to all the people to gather in Jerusalem within three days. Anyone who failed to attend would forfeit his property and be banned from the congregation. They all gathered on the twentieth day of the ninth month (Chislev) (November/December), which was the beginning of the rainy season. Ezra addressed the crowd concerning their sins. The people agreed, but felt that what needed to be done could not be accomplished in one or two days. A plan was suggested that the officials stay in Jerusalem and meet one by one with those who had taken foreign wives. Jonathan and Jahzeiah opposed this plan, with Meshullam and Shabbethai joining with them; nevertheless, the plan went into effect on the first day of the tenth month (Tebet) (December/January), and the divorces were finalized by the first day of the first month (Nisan) (March/April).

The chapter ends with a list of those persons who had taken foreign wives. The list includes priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, and lay families of Israel. Both the foreign wives and their children were cast aside. The list adds up to 111 with the following breakdown:

- 17 Priests
- 10 Levites (6 Levites, 1 Singer, 3 Gatekeepers)
- 84 Lay

Sending the foreign wives and their children away may seem cruel to us, but we must recall why these people had gone into exile. It had to do with the Canaanization of Yahweh worship; and foreign wives, such as Jezebel, had much to do with that. Foreign women could be incorporated into Judaism, as was Ruth, but it meant accepting Yahweh. Early Christianity took the same position as can be seen in Paul's letter to the Christians in Corinth, who were dealing with the same issue. The specific verse is 2 Corinthians 6:14. Although nothing is said specifically about conversion, we must conclude that conversion to stay in the marriage would not have been sufficient. Only genuine conversion would insure loyalty of husband and wife to Yahweh. We have much to learn from Ezra.

REBUILDING THE FAMILY OF GOD

When the Exiles returned to Jerusalem, they rebuilt the altar, the Temple, and the city walls. They were attempting to restore the glory of Solomon's Temple as a way of rebuilding the family of God. They really believed that God wanted a Temple, and that a Temple would revive them as the people of God.

What God wants is not a beautiful Temple made of cedar and stone decorated with silver and gold, but people to be a living Temple in which he himself might dwell. As the Apostle Paul put it, we are to become Temples of the Holy Spirit, in whom God lives (1 Corinthians 3:16 and 2 Corinthians 6:16). This seems like a rather individualistic approach. Each individual is a Temple in him or herself, but that would be a misreading of Paul's writing and the intention of both the Old and New Testaments. Peter does away with the individualistic approach to the Temple when he calls individuals to be living stones in a spiritual Temple (1 Peter 2:4-5). This is not, as we shall see, inconsistent with Paul's teachings on the subject.

According to Ezra, who did not oppose the rebuilding of the Temple, the place to begin the rebuilding of the family of God is within the family unit itself. In Ezra's prayer and confession before God he refers to the heart of the problem by asking: "...shall we break your commandments again and intermarry with the peoples who practice these abominations?" (Ezra 9:14) The answer is clearly negative, for such would bring the people of God to ruin, without even a hope of a remnant. Although Ezra never objects to the rebuilding of the Temple and the city walls, he clearly sees the rebuilding of the family of God within the family unit itself. Husband and wife must make their covenant with God first, and then with one another. Any other solution undermines the family of God, and is to be rejected by the community of faith.

Paul teaches a consistent message. He is no individualist in these matters. Marriage and the family must be together in matters of faith. His most pointed teaching on the matter can be found in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, where he says:

Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Beliar? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Although Paul does not call for an outright rejection of spouses, husbands or wives, who are not Christian, he does not approve of intentional marriage between Christians and unbelievers. Christians have nothing in common with unbelievers, for unbelievers can only tempt their partners with idolatry.

Although Paul wished that everyone would remain single, as he was (1 Corinthians 7:7), he does permit marriage (1 Corinthians 7:9). His problem with marriage had to do with his expectation of the return of Jesus within his lifetime. Those who married prior to becoming Christians were to remain married. They were not to divorce their wives, or husbands, but they were not to give up their faith either. If their spouse died they were to try singleness in light of their expectation of the Lord's coming (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). While they were not to initiate a divorce, they were allowed to permit it. If unbelieving partners wanted to separate, they were to be given their freedom (1 Corinthians 7:15). Paul did not take the hard line approach of Ezra, but his thoughts on the importance and significance of marriage are similar.

The issue raised by Ezra and Paul, is not racial, but one of faith. Foreign wives would corrupt the faith. Jezebel's influence over Ahab was a prime example, and such temptations were to be avoided at all cost. The family of God cannot be built on such weak foundations, and every family either contributes to or detracts from the building of the corporate family of God. Ezra understood that and so did Paul. Why do we have so much trouble understanding it? They were not rejecting foreigners, but persons who threatened to corrupt the family of God. If Jezebel was the prime negative influence, Ruth was the prime positive influence. She committed herself to the Lord prior to her marriage to Boaz, and not simply to marry Boaz. What seems like such a cruel act in Ezra is only an attempt to save the family of God from corrupting influences. Nothing is said about rejecting wives who had made a covenant to the Lord. Ezra is dealing with pagan wives.

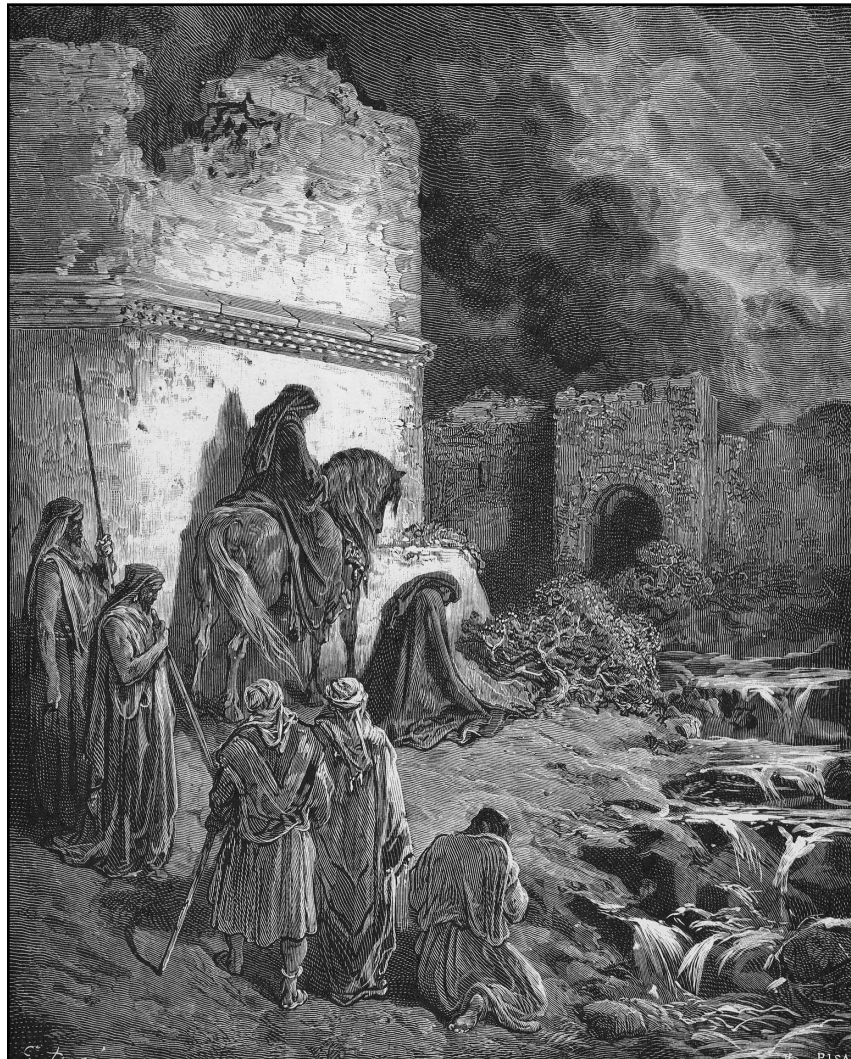
This brings us to the problems of contemporary marriages. Interdenominational marriage is certainly not a problem. The assumption is that both partners have committed themselves to the Lord. Even marriages to Jews and Muslims are not in the same league if one assumes that Jews and Muslims commit themselves to God. What is to be rejected is marriage with someone engaged in idolatry, and we must admit that even baptized Christians are sometimes idolaters. The same could be said of some institutional Jews and Muslims. The problem lies not in marrying believers, but unbelievers. For an unbeliever to be converted for the sake of the marriage is insufficient. This would not have been acceptable to Ezra and Paul, and it should not be a practice taught by contemporary Christians. Ruth did not follow the Lord in order to marry Boaz. She converted because

she thought it was the right thing to do for herself. Her mother-in-law even advised her to remain in Moab and worship her Moabite gods.

While love might be the reason why we marry a particular person, faith is the only foundation on which the family of God can be built. This is why the theologian Emil Brunner, said: “To build marriage on love is to build on the sand.” If he is right, then our society is building its house on sand, and great will be its fall. The only foundation on which the family of God can be built or rebuilt is on the solid rock of faith. What Jesus taught for individuals is also true for families, nations, and particularly the church itself (Matthew 7:24-27).

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of Nehemiah

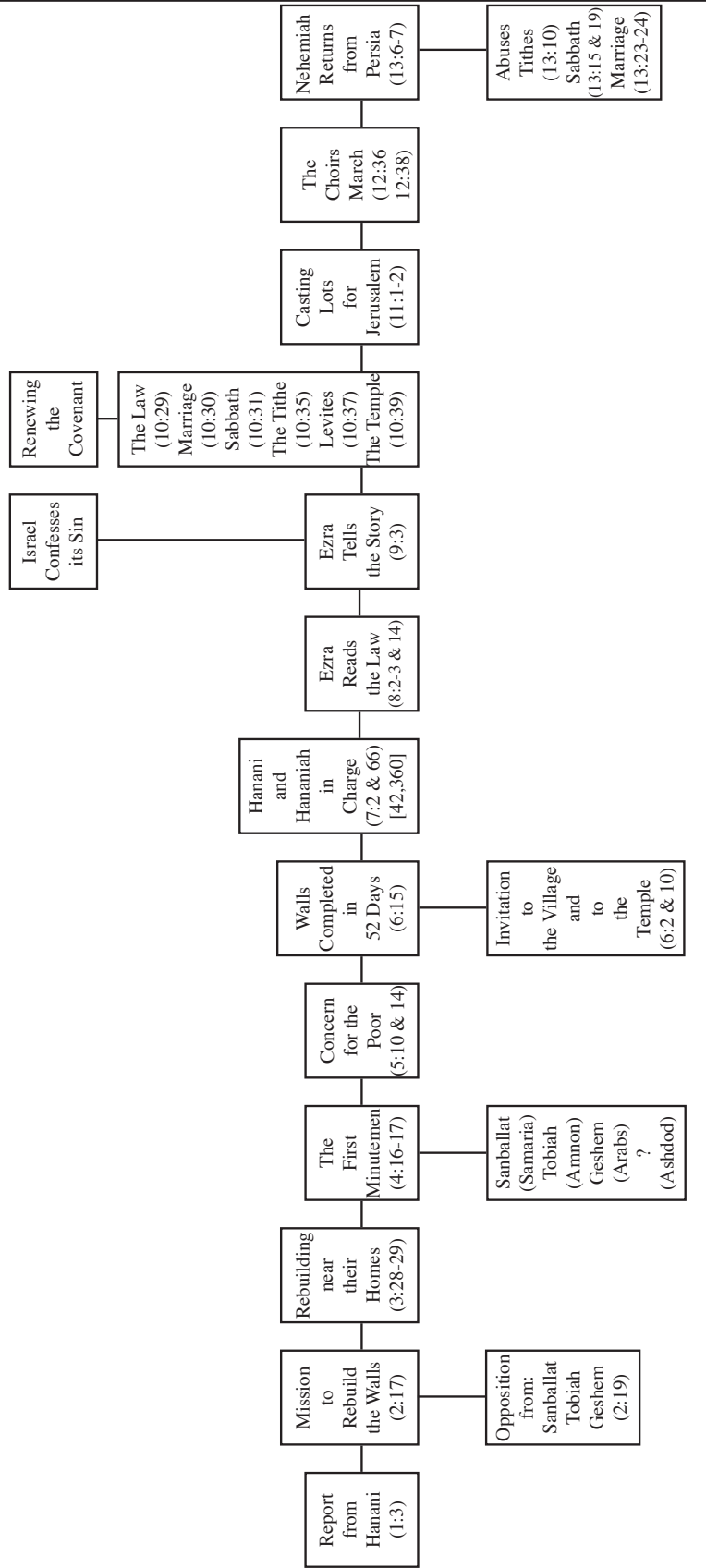


Nehemiah viewing the Walls of Jerusalem by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

27. Rebuilding the Temple

Nehemiah 1:1 — 13:31

28. THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



28. BUILDING THE WALLS

Nehemiah 1:1—13:30

ASSIGNMENTS				
Nehemiah's Mission in Jerusalem 1:1—3:32	An Interruption of the Mission 4:1—6:19	A List of the Returning Exiles 7:1-73a	The Reforms of Nehemiah 7:73b—10:39	The Memoirs of Nehemiah 11:1—13:31

The Book of Nehemiah covers the period of time during the reign of Artaxerxes I (465-424 B.C.E.) and two periods of governorship in Judah.

NEHEMIAH'S RETURN TO JERUSALEM (1:1—7:73a)

The Report from Jerusalem (1:1-11)

In the month of Chislev (November/December) and in the twentieth year (446 B.C.E.) of the reign of Artaxerxes I (the Persian King), Hanani came to the winter capital, Susa (Elam), with news about Jerusalem and Judah. Hanani was either the brother of or a kinsman of Nehemiah. He reported that conditions were very bad. The walls were broken down and the gates had been destroyed by fire. When Nehemiah heard this report, he sat down and wept; and then he mourned, fasted, and prayed to God. He confessed the sins of the people and reminded God of the covenant.

The chapter ends with a statement about Nehemiah's vocation. He was the King's cupbearer, which was an honorable and privileged office. The job was like that of a butler, but the main duties had to do with sampling and pouring wine for the King.

Nehemiah's Mission in Jerusalem (2:1-20)

During the month of Nisan and in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes I, Nehemiah was very sad as he gave the king his wine. Artaxerxes noticed his sadness and inquired into the reason for it. Nehemiah told him that it was over the dreadful condition of Jerusalem. Its sepulchres and walls had been destroyed. The use of sepulchres instead of walls was a way of understating the condition of the city. When the King asked him what he wanted to do, he made a request to go home and rebuild the sepulchres. This was quite a bold request because Artaxerxes himself was responsible for sending out a decree, which

stopped the rebuilding effort (Ezra 4:7-23). The request, however, was granted. He only asked Nehemiah how long it would take.

Nehemiah asked for two letters to Asaph, one to gain passage beyond the river (Euphrates) and one to obtain timber from the King's Forest in Lebanon. These requests were granted, but not without opposition from Sanballat and Tobiah.

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah made an inspection on his own by night to evaluate the condition of the walls and the city gates. Having done this, he made known to the people his intention of rebuilding the walls and the gates. He told them that it was God's will and that he had permission from the King. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem opposed the rebuilding effort and interpreted it as an act of rebellion against the King. Nehemiah replied that they, as non-Jews, had no portion (property), right (authority), and memorial (remembrance) in the Jewish community.

The Builders and the Gates (3:1-32)

The High Priest Eliashib was mentioned, which helps us to date the rebuilding of the walls. Other vocations mentioned in addition to priests are perfumers, goldsmiths, merchants, and rulers. Women also helped in rebuilding the walls. Nehemiah set people to work on sections nearest to their homes. This way they had a personal concern in what they were doing. In the description of the builders and the rebuilding of the walls, Ezra's own home is never mentioned.

Work began at the sheep gate, the gate nearest the Temple, and proceeded counter-clockwise around the city. In addition to the sheep gate, other gates mentioned are the fish gate, the old gate, the valley gate, the dung gate, the fountain gate, the water gate, the horse gate, and the muster gate.

The Defense Against Sanballat and Tobiah (4:1-23)

Sanballat and Tobiah ridiculed the work they did on the walls. Even a fox, Tobiah said, could break down the walls. The Israelites prayed and set up a guard to protect themselves and the walls from Sanballat, Tobiah, and their supporters. Sanballat represented the Samaritans in the north, Tobiah the Ammonites on the east, and Geshem the Arabs from the south. Although no individual is named, there was also a threat from the Ashdodites in the west. Since ridicule was not working, these groups were considering violence, but it had to take the form of guerrilla tactics, since rebuilding the walls had the blessing of the King of Persia.

Nehemiah told them to depend upon God and not be afraid. Half of them worked on the walls while the other half stood guard with spears, shields, bows and coats of mail (armor). Those who worked did so with one hand on the job and the other hand on their weapons (4:17). These were the first minutemen. Since they worked far apart from each other, one man was appointed to sound the trumpet when they needed to gather together

to defend themselves and their work. They all slept in Jerusalem at night with their clothes on and their weapons in their hands.

Nehemiah's Concern for the Poor (5:1-19)

Most of the people lived in poverty and hunger, but a few Jews were prosperous and lent money to the others to pay the King's tax upon their fields and vineyards. It was against the law for Jews to charge interest to each other, although they could charge interest to non-Jews (Deuteronomy. 23:20).

The people went to Nehemiah with their problems and he expressed compassion for them. In his 12 years as governor (445-433), he did not use the food allowance provided for him. Even when he had 150 people at his table, he refused to accept the allowance (5:17). He worked with them on the wall and acquired no personal land for himself.

Nehemiah served two terms as governor. The first lasted 12 years, beginning with the twentieth year of Artaxerxes and lasting through his thirty-second year (5:14). At one point Nehemiah referred to "former" governors of Judah. Was he talking about Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel, or some other former governors? Prior to Nehemiah's arrival in Judah, the governor of Samaria might have been in charge in Judah, or some other subordinate official. This would explain the hostile reaction to Nehemiah on the part of men like Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem.

The Completion of the Walls (6:1-19)

The opposition, led by Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, realizes that the only way to stop the work is to get rid of Nehemiah. Sanballat and Geshem invited him to meet with them in one of the villages in the plain of Ono, but Nehemiah refused because of the importance of his work. Sanballat then accused Nehemiah of planning a rebellion against the King, but Nehemiah denied the accusation. Finally, Shemaiah, hired by Tobiah and Sanballat, invited Nehemiah to find shelter within the Temple; but Nehemiah refused because he would not put his own safety above that of his fellow Jews, and also because he was not a priest and to enter the Temple would be to violate its sanctity.

The wall was finally completed on the twenty-fifth day of Elul (August/September). It only took 52 days to complete the task. Even their enemies were amazed by this accomplishment and attributed it to God's presence with them. Fifty-two days seems like a rather short time to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. The Jewish historian, Josephus, wrote that it took two years and four months. This figure sounds more reasonable. The difference might be reconciled by the suggestion that the wall was up in 52 days, even if it took an additional year or two to finish it off. The initial concern did seem to be with security, and that would require making it functional as quickly as possible.

Tobiah remained a thorn in the flesh for Nehemiah. His marriage into an eminent Jewish family gave him contact with many important people in Judah, whom he used to serve his evil ends as spies.

The List of Exiles whom Returned (7:1-73a)

Nehemiah placed Hanani and Hananiah in charge of the people. Those who had come with Zerubbabel in 538 B.C.E., following Cyrus' decree, were the first to return home. A similar list was given in the Book of Ezra. The total number of exiles who returned was 42,360. In addition to that, the following had to be added:

Male and Female Servants	7,337
Male and Female Singers	245
Horses	736
Mules	245
Camels	435
Asses (Donkeys)	6,720

Many of the returning exiles made contributions to help pay the cost of restoring the Temple. These contributions consisted of silver and gold, but also included such things as ceremonial bowls and robes for the priests.

THE REFORMS OF EZRA (7:73b—10:39)

At this point the memoirs of Nehemiah seem to break off and Ezra appears as the main character. This may be a misplaced portion of the Ezra narrative.

Ezra Reads the Law (7:73b—8:18)

The people gathered before the Water Gate on the first day of the seventh month (Tishri) (September/October) to hear the law read. If this refers to Ezra's first year in Jerusalem, this was done only two months after his arrival. He probably did not read the whole Book of the Law (Pentateuch), but portions of it. He read it in Hebrew and had the Levites translate it aloud in Aramaic, the common speech of postexilic Palestine. From this procedure there developed the Targums, the Aramaic translation of the Old Testament. The Law was read from morning until midday from a wooden pulpit. Upon hearing it, the people wept, for they had not been following it. Ezra comforted them by telling them it was a holy day and that they need not grieve.

On the second day of the seventh month, as the Law was read, they discovered that they had not been keeping the Feast of the Seventh Month (Feast of Booths/Tabernacles) since the days of Jeshua (Joshua), and so they built booths as a reminder of the days of the desert wanderings. Things seemed to center around the squares of the Water Gate and the Gate of Ephraim (Old Gate).

Since the synagogue emerged out of the exilic days, we can see some of its traditions developing, such as the pulpit, standing for the reading of Scripture, and the position of prayer.

The Great Confession (9:1-37)

On the twenty-fourth day of the month, the people assembled with fasting and sackcloth and earth on their heads. They gathered together to read again from the Law and to make their confession to God. The fact that they separated from foreigners (9:2) has led some scholars to conclude that this chapter is out of place, and that it should follow Ezra 10. They suggest that separation from foreigners only makes sense in relation to Ezra's concern over mixed marriages and the subsequent divorce proceedings. Other scholars simply indicate that non-Jews or foreigners did not participate in such things as a confession of sin for the violation of the covenant.

One-fourth of a day (three hours) was spent reading the law and another one-fourth of a day (three hours) was spent in confession and worship. They recited their personal history from the creation to the conquest. This was followed with a recitation of their disobedience and subsequent demise.

The Renewal of the Covenant (9:37—10:39)

Both secular and religious authorities sealed the Covenant. The list of persons involved begins with Nehemiah and Zedekiah, the secular authorities, and includes the Levites and priests, the religious authorities. Ezra, however, is not mentioned.

The covenant was described in terms of an oath to walk in God's law. The oath was to keep the Sabbath (every week and every seven years), avoid mixed marriages, keep up the Temple, and support the Levites and priests. Tithes were to be given in terms of the first fruits of the land and the firstborn sons and animals from their flocks and herds. One-third of a shekel (one-eighth of an ounce of silver) was to be given to keep up the Temple. At first this was voluntary, but it later became an obligatory (one-half shekel) tax. (See Exodus 30:13; Matthew 17:24.)

THE MEMOIRS OF NEHEMIAH (11:1—13:31)

Lists of Residents (11:1—12:26)

The Census (11:1-36)

The reason for the census was the problem of repopulating Jerusalem. It was proposed that at least ten percent of the people live in Jerusalem, and those who did so willingly were to be blessed. The surrounding area must have been more attractive, for they had to cast lots to get enough people to move into the Holy City (11:9, 14 and 22).

An Appendix (12:1-26)

This is a list of priests and Levites who served under various high priests. The reference to Chronicles is not to the Book of Chronicles in the Bible, but to some other postexilic

source. An editor probably added, “Ezra the priest and scribe.” This is supported by a careful analysis of the Hebrew text.

The Dedication of the Walls (12:27-47)

Now that the walls were finished, they needed to be dedicated or purified. The dedication was achieved by sprinkling blood or holy water on the walls. Following the dedication, two processions made their way in opposite directions around the walls. An instrumental and singing choir led each procession. The instrumental choir was made up of cymbals, harps, and lyres. The choirs started at the Valley Gate (2:13 and 3:13) and marched along the broad top of the wall. Ezra led the first procession moving southward, and Nehemiah led the second procession moving northward. The two groups finally met in the Temple area where they offered thanksgiving and made sacrifices. Most scholars do not believe that Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries; therefore, an editor probably inserted Ezra’s name at this point. Because the people were so pleased with the work the priests and Levites rendered, they filled the Temple storehouse with their contributions.

Abuses and Reforms (13:1-30)

After an administration of 12 years (445-433 B.C.E.) Nehemiah returned to Persia; but before very long, he heard of irregularities back in Jerusalem. He asked Artaxerxes for permission to return to deal with the situation.

Eliashib, a priest having responsibilities over the Temple chambers, had given one of the larger chambers to Tobiah. The Law of Moses forbade entry to the Temple area to any foreigner (Deuteronomy 23:3-5), and so Nehemiah had him and his furniture thrown out.

There were three other abuses that needed attention. First, the people were no longer giving their tithes to support the Levitical singers, and so they had to work in the fields to support themselves. Nehemiah appointed as treasurers, Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah of the Levites. Hanan was appointed as an assistant. These men were chosen because they were faithful. The second abuse was that of Sabbath breaking. Nehemiah tried to stop this by closing the gates to the traders, but they resorted to trading outside the city walls. The final abuse that needed his attention was intermarriage. The abuse had nothing to do with race. The problem with intermarriage had to do with religious differences. Nehemiah gave the example of Solomon and his wives, who caused him to sin. If foreign wives brought the great Solomon down, how could they expect to avoid the same disaster? The people were made to take an oath that they would not indulge in this practice anymore. The Book of Nehemiah appropriately ends with a prayer.

THAT INEVITABLE OPPOSITION

Why does religious reform always have to face that inevitable opposition? Why can we not all see the problems developing and then work together in perfect unity to solve them? Why do people like Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem always have to appear

opposing what essentially needs to be done? Life would be so much easier if we could all just agree with one another.

It is difficult to name one single reformer who did not run into opposition. When one reads the lives of the great reformers, such as Martin Luther and John Wesley, one discovers that they encountered a great deal of opposition. At the same time, however, they also attracted a great many followers. It would be nice to know the statistics. How many opposed them verses the number that supported them. Did they feel like Elijah, that they were the only ones, or did they gain some kind of comfort and encouragement from all their supporters? Knowing these statistics might help us to understand their inner feelings. Jesus was a reformer too. Sometimes great crowds followed. At other times he had only the company of the twelve. Jesus once asked them, “Do you also wish to go away?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.” (John 6:67-69) Jesus seems so confident, as does Nehemiah. We can only point to the Word of Life and hope we are leading people in the right direction. It would be nice to be as confident as was Jesus; but of course, that does not stop the rise of opposition. Jesus’ opposition brought about his crucifixion. If he, who was the only one with the words of eternal life, has opposition, how can we not anticipate it? The only ones who are not opposed are those who never do anything.

We need to re-examine our question. Why are we so lucky? Why does opposition not rise up against us? Could it be that we are not taking our faith seriously enough? When we take our faith seriously it will bump into the self-interests of those who are not taking it seriously. That inevitable opposition will arise in self-defense of arrogance, greed, and indifference. Those who love as God loves have always been crucified by the world. Why should it be any different for us? Our love for God and desire for His Kingdom cannot save us from opposition. It provokes it.

This does not mean that we should intentionally seek opposition. Our goal is to work for reconciliation and to work with God in establishing his Kingdom, but in a world in which people are free to reject his ways, opposition is inevitable. No one, who is concerned about religious reform, needs to seek it. Most of us wish it would just go away. We are even tempted to overpower it or at least silence it so we can pretend that it is not there, but all such attempts are in vain. Opposition is inevitable.

All that is left is to learn how to live with it. That is easy when we have some company, but it gets difficult when we feel alone. Jesus understood the feeling perfectly, and promised in Matthew 28:20, “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” That is helpful, but we also need companions who share the same interest in following him, and reforming that imperfect institution we call the Church. What makes it so difficult is that much of our opposition comes from within the Church rather than from outside of it. There is nothing new about this. It would be easier if our opposition came *only* from outside. We could deal with that. When it comes from within, it is much more difficult; but that is precisely where most of it comes from.

Nehemiah's opposition may seem to be external, but it had a way of penetrating into the community of faith, disrupting and corrupting it at its core. That is precisely why he had to deal with such abuses like not taking care of the Temple and its priesthood, ignoring the Sabbath, becoming lax in the payment of tithes, and intermarriage with foreigners. He was not only dealing with external opposition, and neither are we. The opposition always threatens to undo us, and that is why it cannot be ignored. We cannot simply tolerate it, for it will destroy us.

We may not be able to eliminate the opposition, but we do not have to allow it to control us. What is most important in periods of religious decline is to identify the problem, catch the vision of reform, and go after it. Mistakes will be made. They always are, but we cannot allow ourselves to drift into inactivity because of them. We also need to be cautious of simple solutions to complex problems. The simple solution is almost always the wrong one. This is not to say that all the solutions are complex. Most of what needs to be done is simple enough, but because so many things need reforming, the trick is always to get it all working together. That is the part that is difficult. The idols are powerful, and they affect everything a person does. Focusing our attention on God affects everything we do too; and it is because of this that opposition is inevitable. It cannot be eliminated, but it must be taken seriously.

SACRED STORIES

Stories in the Book of Esther



Esther accusing Haman by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

29. For Such a Time as This **Esther 1:1 — 10:3**

29. SUCH A TIME AS THIS (1:1 – 10:3)

AHASUERUS (XERXES I) DETHRONES HIS QUEEN (1:1-22) [486-465] [484-483]

20 Satrapies 4 Capitals: Babylon Susa (Winter) Persepolis (Summer) Ecbatana	Seven Eunuchs Mehuman Biztha Harbona Bigtha Abagtha Zethar Carkas	Seven Princes Carshena Shethar Admatha Tarshish Meres Marsena Memucan
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Queen Vashti refuses to obey King Ahasuerus

AHASUERUS CHOOSES ESTHER AS QUEEN (2:1-23)

Hegai has custody over Harem in Susa	Mordecai gets Ester into the Harem	Ahasuerus chooses Esther as Queen	Mordecai informs on Bigthan and Teresh
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HAMAN’S PLOT TO KILL THE JEWS (3:1-15)

Haman becomes Prime Minister	As a Jew Mordecai refuses to Bow	Haman decides to kill all Jews	A Lot (Pur) is cast for the 13th of Adar
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ESTHER INTERCEDES FOR THE JEWS (4:1 – 7:10)

Mordecai asks Esther for Help (4:1-17)	Esther gives a Dinner Party (5:1-14)	Ahasuerus honors Mordecai (6:1-14)	Haman is put to Death (7:1-10)
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MORDECAI’S EDICT (8:1-17)

THE JEWS KILL THEIR ENEMIES (9:1-9)

13th Day of Adar 500 Killed in Susa 10 Sons of Haman Killed 75,000 killed in Provinces	14th Day of Adar 300 Killed in Susa No Killing in Provinces	15th Day of Adar Rest in Susa
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THE FESTIVAL OF PURIM (9:20-32)

Fast on the 13th	Festival on the 14th	Festival on the 15th
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THE EXALTATION OF MORDECAI (10:1-3)

29. FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

Esther: 1—10:3

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Choice of Esther as Queen 1:1—2:23	Haman's Plot and Mordecai's Request 3:1—4:17	Esther's Party and the Honoring of Mordecai 5:1—6:14	Haman's Death and Mordecai's New Edict 7:1—8:17	Revenge and the Festival of Purim 9:1—10:3

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER

The Name

The name is taken from the heroine of the book. Two names are given to her. There is first her Persian name “Esther” which means, “star” and, secondly, her Hebrew name which is “Hadassah” and means “Myrtle”.

The Author

The author of Ester is unknown. It could be some Jew who lived in Persia before the empire fell to Greece.

The Date

The date cannot be narrowed down any closer than sometime between, 350 to 125 B.C.E. Although it may have been written in the Greek period, the setting is the time of Persia's dominance as a superpower.

The Setting

The story of Esther is not historical. There is no record outside of the Bible of the Persian Queen Vashti, nor of a Persian King taking a Jewish girl like Esther to be his Queen. Another problem can be raised from within the story itself. If Mordecai had been exiled during the time of Nebuchadnezzar (Esther 2:6), how could he still be alive during the time of Xerxes? He would be too old. Although some have tried to make Esther into a mythical story to explain the conflict between the gods of Babylon and the gods of Elam,

this is not the consensus of most scholars. Esther is a novel based on some history. As in our own time, such novels do not take into account all the details.

The story could rest on an historical account of a local deliverance of Jews in Persia. Although Esther is not dependable history, there is evidence of a man named Marduka holding an official post at Susa under Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) (486-465 B.C.E). The setting for Esther then is probably about 470 B.C.E. when the Persian Empire was supreme and Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) was King. The precise place is Susa, the King's winter residence and capital of Persia.

The Purpose

The main point of Esther can be summarized as follows: "Evil people get what they deserve." This is a story about vengeance, but it is also a story about deliverance from persecution. As such it stands as the background behind the Feast of Purim, which was first celebrated by the Diaspora Jews, but quickly assimilated by Jews in Palestine. It does not have its origin, as other Jewish religious holidays do, in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. The two primary themes then are:

Deliverance of Jews from Persian Persecution

The story tells how Esther gained deliverance for the Jews from the prejudice of the Persians. It can be seen as a protest against the persecution of any minority group.

Origin of Purim

Purim was a secular holiday, which became a symbol of heroic resistance to persecution. The only religious element in Purim is the reading of Esther in the Synagogue. It was accompanied with merrymaking, feasting, visiting, and gift-giving. The date became the 14-15th of Adar, which falls sometime in February and March.

The Canon

Nothing religious was included in the Book of Esther. The name of God is not mentioned, nor is prayer. While John Wesley admitted that God is not mentioned, he insisted that in this book the "finger of God directs events."¹ Christians and Jews through the second century debated its presence in Scripture; but it was finally accepted because of the masses. They loved it. Luther was against it and said that he wished that it did not exist.

Why then was it accepted as Scripture at the Council of Jamnia? The answer is due to its popularity. With the exception of the Torah, there are more ancient copies of Esther than any other Old Testament Book. There are also more commentaries written about it. It was and remains a popular book, because it recommends that Jews fight back. They recognize

¹ See John Wesley on Esther in ¶1.

that it is not historically accurate and, in their canon, it is placed not among *The Historical Books*, but among *The Writings*.

It should be noted that there have been two versions of *Esther*, a short version, which Protestants and Jews have accepted, and a longer version, which Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches have accepted. In the *Apocrypha* there is a book known as, *Additions to Esther*. This book does include prayers from Esther and Mordecai and it refers to how God works in their lives. It has more of a religious tone and that may explain why Roman Catholics have accepted it as part of Scripture.

1:1—2:23	3:1—5:14	6:1—7:10	8:1—10:3
Esther Becomes Queen	Haman's Plots	Haman is Put to Death	The Jews Defeat Their Enemies

The Outline

- A. Esther Becomes Queen (1:1—2:23)
- B. Haman's Plots (3:1—5:14)
- C. Haman is Put to Death (6:1—7:10)
- D. The Jews Defeat Their Enemies (8:1—10:3)

AHASUERUS DETHRONES HIS QUEEN (1:1-22)

In the longer Greek addition to Esther, the story begins with a dream in which God's plans are revealed to Mordecai. In the shorter Hebrew version, the story begins with a banquet in which the queen refuses to obey the king.

Ahasuerus was the King of Persia, whose empire stretched from India to Ethiopia. The Greek name for Ahasuerus is Xerxes I, who reigned from 486-465 B.C.E. Xerxes, is actually a transliteration of the Persian name Khshayarshan.

Within his empire there were 20 major administrative areas known as Satrapies. These areas were further divided into 127 provinces. Herodotus, the Greek historian, confirmed this.

Susa is described as the king's winter residence. It was a city in Elam located 150 miles east of Babylon. Since it was too hot to live there in the summer, there was another

capital for the summer months, which was Persepolis. Another capital was Ecbatana. There are four in all: Babylon, Susa, Persepolis, and Ecbatana.

Vashti was Ahasuerus' queen. He may have had other wives, but he would only have had one queen.

A huge feast, lasting for 180 days, was given. During this time Ahasuerus displayed all the splendor and pomp of his majesty as King. This huge feast took place around 484-483 B.C.E. It was followed with another seven-day feast during which time Queen Vashti gave her own banquet. Ahasuerus wanted to display the beauty of his queen to everyone; so he ordered seven eunuchs, who served him as chamberlains, to bring Vashti with her royal crown before the people and his princes. The seven eunuchs who went after her were Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carkas, but she refused to come. This made Ahasuerus very angry and embarrassed him before his seven princes. These seven princes of Persia and Media were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan. Memucan suggested that she be dethroned and that a letter go out to all the people in their own language. The King simply could not allow his queen to disobey him without it affecting everyone else in the empire.

AHASUERUS CHOOSES ESTHER AS QUEEN (2:1-23)

About four years pass in between chapters one and two. The banquets were held in the King's third year (1:3), and Esther was selected in his seventh year (2:16). Within this four-year period the Greek war took place, along with the battles of Thermopylae and Salamis. When the period of turmoil was over, Ahasuerus decided to choose his new queen. He appointed officers to seek beautiful young virgins for his harem in Susa. Hegai had custody over the harem and was responsible for their beautification. In essence the King was calling for a beauty contest, from which he would select Miss Persia as his Queen.

Mordecai and Hadassah (Esther) were cousins. Hadassah means "Myrtle." Some scholars make much of this and compare Esther and Mordecai to the Babylonian gods Ishtar and Marduk, who were also cousins. Scripture simply indicates that these names were given under conditions of the captivity. Esther had no mother and father, and so Mordecai brought her up. They are described as Benjaminites, which later explains the animosity of Haman. Mordecai actually adopted Esther. At this point, he got her into the harem, but told her to keep their Jewish background a secret. Mordecai's presence near the harem can be explained by his possible status as a minor official. He might even have been a gatekeeper for the eunuchs. As a part of the harem, Esther had to undergo a period of beautification for 12 months. Six months were used to beautify her with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and ointments. Finally, in the tenth month of Tebeth (December/January, 479-478 B.C.E.) she was chosen as the new queen. Each of the women, when they were ready, spent a night with the King. When this happened for Esther, Ahasuerus chose her to succeed Vashti. A wedding banquet was given for the princes and servants. Ahasuerus even lifted taxes and offered many lavish gifts to celebrate his choice of Esther.

Mordecai spent his time sitting at the king's gate. He noticed that Bigthan and Teresh, two of the King's eunuchs, sought to kill Ahasuerus. He immediately informed Esther who in turn told the King. An investigation revealed that this information was accurate. The two men were executed on the gallows. This does not mean hanging by rope as we might think today; rather, it was a Persian mode of execution from which the Romans derived the idea of crucifixion. It had to do with impalement on a stick, which caused the victim to die slowly by starvation.

HAMAN'S PLOT TO KILL THE JEWS (3:1-15)

Haman is described as the villain of this story. He is introduced as an Agagite to identify him as a descendant of the King of the Amalekites who were the occasion of Saul's losing the Kingdom (1 Samuel 15). When Haman was elevated to the position of Prime Minister, all his officials were to bow before him. Mordecai refused. The reason is not given. The *Septuagint* and the *Additions to Esther* state that Mordecai would not bow down before anyone but God, and the rabbinic interpreters in the *Targums* explained that Haman wore an idol on his robe. The Jewish and Protestant Scriptures cannot confirm this. At any rate, Mordecai confessed that he was a Jew. This would have been sufficient reason for hostility, without bringing in any religious reasons. Haman was so angered that he decided to kill all the Jews within the Kingdom of Ahasuerus. This happened in the twelfth year of Ahasuerus' reign and in the month of Nisan, the first month of the Jewish calendar.

The pur (lot) was cast to determine the "lucky day;" fortunately for Mordecai, that day did not come for 11 more months. Haman sought official sanction and tried to bribe the King with 10,000 talents (\$18,000,000). The bribe was refused, but sanction was given to destroy the Jews. The edict was made that the Jews should be destroyed on the thirteenth day of Adar, the twelfth month. Haman was given the King's signet ring to make it official. As the King and his Prime Minister sat down to have a drink together in celebration of the edict, the people of Susa were perplexed. The fact that the order went out 11 months in advance gave Mordecai and Esther sufficient time to go to the aid of their people.

MORDECAI ASKS ESTHER FOR HELP (4:1-17)

Mordecai tore his clothes and wore sackcloth as a sign of his mourning. All the Jews mourned with him when they heard the decree. Even Queen Esther was deeply distressed by the news. She sent garments to Mordecai, which he would not accept. Hathach, one of the eunuchs, was sent to Mordecai to find out why. Mordecai told Hathach the whole story and gave him a copy of the edict and then sent him back to ask Esther to intercede on behalf of her people.

Esther replied by telling him that she could not approach the King without first being called. If she tried, she might face the death penalty. Since she had not been called for 30 days, she did not think she had much of a chance to discuss it with him.

Mordecai's reply to her was that if she did not try, deliverance would come from another source and she and her family would also perish. Esther then asked Mordecai to organize a "fast" with all the Jews in Susa on her behalf. This is the closest that the *Book of Esther* comes to the concept of prayer or a request for divine help. In the *Additions to Esther* in the Apocrypha, prayers made by Mordecai and Esther are included, but this is left out of the Jewish and Protestant Scriptures. The fast was to last three days and three nights, during which time everyone was to abstain from both food and drink. With the fast in process, Esther promised to intercede on behalf of her people, even if it meant death for herself.

ESTHER GIVES A DINNER PARTY (5:1-14)

Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the King's Palace, opposite the King's Hall, hoping to attract his attention. When the King noticed her, he held out his golden scepter to receive her. She touched the tip of the scepter and found favor in his eyes. As a gesture of royal generosity, he asked her what her request was and promised to give her, up to half of his kingdom (Mark 6:23). At this time, all she asked from him was the acceptance of an invitation to him and Haman to dine with her. After dinner, as they were drinking wine, the King again asked Esther what her petition was and promised to grant it. Instead of taking this opportunity to present her petition, she again asked the two of them to accept another invitation to dinner, at which time she would present her petition. The delay in asking for what she wanted is an example of oriental strategy. One does not come right out with a request, but prepares the person prior to making the request. This is what Esther is doing and also what the King expects her to do.

Haman went away feeling especially good until he saw Mordecai at the king's gate. This made him very angry. When he went home, he gathered his friends and Zeresh, his wife, together to boast of his own high position. He told them that he alone was invited to a dinner with the King by the Queen and then expressed how bad he felt to see Mordecai sitting at the king's gate. His wife and friends suggested that he build a gallows 50 cubits (75 feet) high on which to hang Mordecai. Actually, he could only prepare the gallows. The king alone had the authority to condemn someone to die on it, but Haman went away hopeful that Mordecai would be executed.

AHASUERUS HONORS MORDECAI (6:1-14)

The King woke up in the middle of the night because he was unable to sleep. He had the book of memorable deeds read to him and heard the story of how Mordecai had informed on two rebels—Bigthana and Teresh—who had planned on overthrowing the King. The King asked if Mordecai had been appropriately honored. He was told that he had not.

Just then Haman entered the outer court. So the King asked him how he should honor a man whom the King delights to honor. Haman, thinking the King was talking about himself, told him to place the royal robes on him and allow him to be led through the city square riding on the King's own horse. The King ordered that it be done for Mordecai. Haman carried out the King's order and then went home to complain to his friends and

his wife, Zeresh. While still talking about it, the King's eunuchs arrived to take Haman to Esther's second dinner. Were these events a series of coincidences or was God acting in them? No interpretation is given. The events are simply stated.

HAMAN IS PUT TO DEATH (7:1-10)

On the second day of the dinner, as they were drinking wine, the King asked Esther to make her petition. She asked the King to spare her life and the lives of her people. Slavery, she continued, would be acceptable, but not destruction. The death of the Jews would be the King's own personal loss.

The King seemed completely unaware of his edict to kill the Jews and asked who was responsible for such an order. Esther named Haman. The King became angry and left the room to go into the garden. No reason is given for his anger, so we can only guess. Sensing that the King would turn against him, Haman stayed in the room and began to beg the Queen to spare his life.

As the King returned, Haman fell on the couch where Esther was reclining. Ahasuerus assumed that he was sexually assaulting her, and Esther does not attempt to correct him. She was more concerned with saving her people from destruction. Haman's apparent assault angered the King. Harbona, the eunuch in attendance, suggested the gallows for Haman, which Haman himself had built. The King agreed and his anger subsided only after Haman was hanged.

MORDECAI'S NEW EDICT (8:1-17)

The edict ordered under Haman was irrevocable, but a new edict could be issued. Mordecai was given Haman's old job as Prime Minister. He was also granted permission to issue a new edict giving the Jews the right to self-defense (8:11). The edict was drawn up two months and ten days after Haman had issued his edict. The precise date for the new edict was the twenty-third of Sivan (the third month). Mordecai had it sent out in the same manner to all 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia.

Mordecai was dressed in the King's royal blue and white robes and all the citizens of Susa rejoiced. Many declared themselves Jews. Some scholars say that they only pretended to be Jews, but others insist that they were indeed Jewish proselytes. Other scholars see in this a similarity to the forced conversions in the time of John Hyrcanus. Even if they were not forced, there were tremendous social pressures to convert. Conversion is, after all, preferable to death.

THE JEWS KILL THEIR ENEMIES (9:1-19)

The thirteenth of Adar (the twelfth month) was the date set by Haman to kill the Jews, but now the Jews use this date to begin the killing of their enemies. They killed 500 of their enemies in Susa on that day alone, including Haman's ten sons:

Parshandatha
Dalphon
Aspatha
Poratha
Adalia

Aridatha
Parmashta
Arisai
Aridai
Vaizatha

They only killed their enemies; no plunder was taken, even though they were given the right to take it (8:11). The number killed was reported to Esther, who called for more killing to take place on the next day. On the fourteenth of Adar another 300 were killed in Susa. In the other provinces 75,000 had been killed on the thirteenth of Adar. The killing did not continue, as it did in Susa, on the fourteenth; instead, they rested in the provinces. In Susa they rested on the fifteenth.

THE FESTIVAL OF PURIM (9:20-32)

The Festival of Purim takes its name from “pur” which was the lot cast by Haman to select the day on which to kill the Jews. “Purim” is plural for the word “pur.” The Feast is celebrated with a fast on the thirteenth, followed by the festival on the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar, which is accompanied with giving gifts, and the reading of the Book of Esther. The urban Jews celebrated the Feast on two days commemorating the killings in Susa on two separate days; but since the rural Jews only killed on the fourteenth, they only celebrated on the fourteenth. Two letters were sent out explaining the Festival of Purim, which gave it legal status. One letter was sent out by Mordecai, and the other letter was sent by Esther. Apparently, it was felt that this festival needed some kind of legal status, since it was not mentioned in the Torah (Law).

THE EXALTATION OF MORDECAI (10:1-3)

With the continued greatness of Ahasuerus came the exaltation of his Prime Minister, Mordecai. The best thing that can be said about Mordecai is found in the last verse, which states that “...he sought the good of his people and interceded for the welfare of all his descendants.” (10:3)

SELF-DEFENSE?

The Book of Esther must seem as alien to Christians as the Book of Ruth must seem to Jews. Let us look first at the Jewish problem. Ezra made clear the unacceptability of foreign wives. In Ezra 10:10-11, he says to his people: “You have trespassed and married foreign women, and so increased the guilt of Israel. Now make confession to the LORD the God of your ancestors, and do his will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives.” Ruth, a Moabite, was Boaz’s foreign wife. Now let us look at the Christian problem with Esther, which is “revenge.” Jesus made clear his rejection of revenge in Matthew 5:38-42:

You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” But I say to you, “Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right

cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.”

What can we make of these apparent contradictions? The Jewish problem is easy enough to rationalize. Ruth left her Moabite gods and professed faith in the Jewish God. She became a Jew.

The problem of revenge is not so easily dispensed with for Christians. Jesus seems to reject it altogether. Does this mean that, as Christians, we must allow our enemies to walk all over us? This has indeed been the conclusion of some Christians. A slight alteration of it has been made by others, such as Martin Luther King Jr.’s teaching on “nonviolent resistance;” but if one takes literally Jesus’ words, any kind of resistance, even “nonviolent resistance” would be rejected. For Jesus, faithfulness to this rejection of revenge led to his death on the cross, but is this what it should mean for us? In Mark 8:34, Jesus did call us to take up our own crosses and so this would seem to be the case.

We might be prone to suggest that while we might not be permitted to exercise revenge on our own behalf, at least it can be done by our police force or the military. The early Christians did not see it that way. Martin of Tours, a revered Christian of the fourth century, gave up his career as a soldier when he converted with the following statement: “I am Christ’s soldier; I cannot fight.”¹ This was not an exception, but the rule for Christians in the first couple of centuries. Only after Constantine’s conversion to Christianity and a general acceptance of the faith by the Roman Empire, did Christianity begin to change its mind. It found itself changing under the pressure of a State it hoped to Christianize.

But we are all too prone to say Esther is not about waging war, but about self-defense. If we have learned anything in the twentieth century, it is the need to defend ourselves. The Holocaust is a constant reminder of what happens when people do not defend themselves. One might wonder why the story of Esther did not motivate the Jews to resist. The reason is all too clear. The unbelievable was happening; although some tried to warn others of the danger, it was all too difficult to comprehend, much less believe. There was no one like Esther able to step in or Mordecai to get close enough to Hitler to proclaim a new edict, one in which the Jews would be armed and able to fight on equal terms.

Although it sounds as if Jesus is saying that his followers have no right to self-defense that is not at all what he is saying. The Salvation Army understood the implications of his message and so did Martin of Tours as he responded to his call to become Christ’s soldier. There is nothing wrong with the Church adopting military language. We ought to use more such language, for we are indeed engaged in battle. We are not simply to defend

¹Western Civilizations, p. 334.

ourselves; rather, we are to be on the offensive. Jesus told Peter in Matthew 16:18, "...on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."

Is this strategy just for Christians or are Jews included in it too? Abraham J. Heschel had the right idea when he said: "We have failed to fight for right, for justice, for goodness; as a result we must fight against wrong, against injustice, against evil. We have failed to offer sacrifices on the altar of peace; thus we offered sacrifices on the altar of war."² When we talk only about our right to defend ourselves, we miss the point. We are called to take the offensive.

In commenting on Esther's opportunity to rise to the occasion in "such a time as this," Wesley wrote, "We should every one of us consider, for what end God has put us in the place where we are? And what an opportunity offers of serving God and our generation, we must take care not to let it slip."¹

²Abraham J. Heschel, *Between God and Man* (New York, The Free Press, 1959), p. 256.

¹ John Wesley, *Wesley's Notes on the Bible*, Edited by Roger G. Schoenhals, 4:14.

THE APPENDIX

1. SUMMARY OF THE JUDGES

JUDGE	TRIBE	ENEMY	ENEMY RULE	COUNTRY	WEAPONS	TRIBE
Othniel (3:7-11)	Judge (Kenizite/Edomite)	Cushan- rishathaim	8 Years	Mesopotamia (Aram-Naharaim)		40 Years
Ehud (3:12-30)	Benjamin	Eglon	18 Years	Moab Ammonites/Amalekites	Double-Edged Sword (3:16)	80 Years
Shamgar (3:31)	Hurrian			Philistines	Oxgoad (3:31)	
Deborah/Barak (4:1—5:31)	Ephraim Naphtali	Jabin & Sisera	20 Years	Coalition of Canaanite Kings	Tent Peg (4:22)	40 Years
Gideon (6:1—9:57)	Manasseh	Oreb & Zeeb Sebah & Salmunna	7 Years	Midianites Amalekites	Trumpets (Jar & Torches)	40 Years
Tola (10:1-2)	Issachar (Shamir)					23 Years
Jair (10:3-5)	Manasseh (Gilead)					22 Years
Jephthah (10:6—12:7)	Manasseh (Gilead)		18 Years	Philistines Ammonites Ephraimites		6 Years
Ibzan (12:8-10)	Bethlehem					7 Years
Elon (12:11-12)	Zebulun					10 Years
Abdon (12:13-15)	Ephraim (Pirathon)					8 Years
Samson (13:1—16:31)	Dan (Zorah)		40 Years	Philistines	Jawbone of Ass (15:15)	20 Years

2. SAUL'S FAMILY

SAUL'S FAMILY		
Saul's Wives	Saul's Sons	Saul's Daughters
1. Ahinoam	1. Jonathan 2. Isvi (Ishbosheth/Esh-baal) 3. Malchishua 4. Abinadab	1. Merab 2. Michal
2. Rizpah	5. Armoni 6. Mephibosheth	

1 Samuel 14:49-50; 31:2; 2 Samuel 21:8; 1 Chronicles 8:33; 9:39

3. DAVID'S FAMILY

DAVID'S FAMILY				
Brothers	Sisters	Nephews	Wives	Sons
1. Eliab 2. Abinadab 3. Shammah/Shimeah <i>Jonathan</i> 4. Nethanel 5. Raddai 6. Ozem 7. ?	1. Zuriyah 2. Abigail	1. Abishai 2. Joab 3. Asahel	1. Michal 2. Ahinoam 3. Abigail 4. Maacha <i>Tamar: Daughter</i> 5. Haggith 6. Abital 7. Eglah 8. Bathsheba Bathshua	No Children 1. Amnon <i>killed by Absalom</i> 2. Chileab/Daniel <i>Died Young</i> 3. Absalom <i>Killed in Battle</i> 4. Adonijah 5. Shephatiah 6. Ithream 7. Jedidah (Solomon)*
<p style="text-align: center;">*All of Bathsheba's Children: Shammua/Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon Children from Unnamed Wives: Ibhar, Elishama (Elishua), Eliphelet (Elpelet), Nogah (Nogath), Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada (Beeliada), Eliphelet, Jerimoth (1 Chronicles 3 and 14:4-7; 2 Chronicles 11:18)</p>				

4. DATES OF THE KINGS

THE UNITED KINGDOM

Saul (1020-1000 B.C.)
David (1000-961 B.C.) or [1000-965 B.C.]
Solomon (961-922 B.C.) or [965-931 B.C.]

THE KINGS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL

JUDAH	YEARS SERVED	ISRAEL
Rehoboam (922 B.C.) [931]	17	Jeroboam (922 B.C.) [931]
Abijam (915) [913]	3	
Asa (913) [911]	41	
	2	Nadab (901) [910]
	24	Naasha (900) [909]
	2	Elah (877) [886] (Assassinated)
	7 Days	Zimri (876) [885] (Suicide)
	12	Omri, Tibni (876) [885]
Jehosaphat (873) [870]	25	
	22	Ahab (869) [874]
	2	Ahaziah (850) [853]
	12	Jehoram (849) [852]
Jehoram (849) [848]	8	
Ahaziah (842) [841]	1	
Athaliah (842) [841]	6	
Jehoash (837) [835]	40	
	17	Jehoahaz (815) [814]
	16	Jehoash (801) [798]
Amaziah (800) [796]	29	
	41	Jeroboam II (786) [782]
Uzziah/Azariah (783) [767]	52	
	6 Months	Zechariah (746) [753]
	1 Month	Shallum (745) [752]
	10	Menahem (745) [752]
Jotham (742) [740]	16	
	2	Pekahiah (738) [742]
	20	Pekah (737) [740]
Ahaz (735) [735]	16	
	9	Hoshea (732) [732] THE FALL (721) [723/722]
Hezekiah (715) [715]	29	
Manasseh (687) [686]	55 (45)	
Amon (642) [640]	2	
Josiah (640) [640]	31	
Jehoahaz (609) [609]	3 Months	
Jehoiakim (609) [609]	11	
Jehoiachin (597) [597]	3 Months	
Zedekiah (597) [597]	11	
THE FALL (587) [586]		

Beginning of the Siege: January 15, 588

Burning of the City/Temple: July 19 (August 14), 587/586

5. THE KINGS OF ISRAEL ACCORDING TO 1 AND 2 KINGS

THE KINGS OF ISRAEL (1 and 2 Kings)						
NAME OF KING	MOTHER OF KING	CAPITAL CITY	LENGTH OF RULE	YEARS OF RULE	ACTIVE PROPHETS	EVALUATION DEATH
Jeroboam	Zeruah	Shechem Tirzah	22 Years	931-910	Ahijah	Evil
Nadab		Tirzah	2 Years	910-909		Evil
Baasha		Tirzah	24 Years	909-886	Jehu	Evil
Elah		Tirzah	2 Years	886-885		Evil Assassinated
Zimri		Tirzah	1 Week	885		Evil Suicide
Omri		Tirzah (6) Samaria (6)	12 Years	885-874		Evil
Ahab and Jezebel		Samaria	22 Years	874-853	Elijah Obadiah Micaiah	Evil Killed in Battle
Ahaziah	Jezebel?	Samaria	2 Years	853-852	Elijah	Evil Killed in Battle
Jehoram		Samaria	12 Years	852-841	Elisha	Evil Assassinated
Jehu		Samaria	28 Years	841-814	Elisha	Evil
Jehoahaz		Samaria	17 Years	814-798	Elisha	Evil
Jehoash		Samaria	16 Years	798-782	Elisha	Evil
Jeroboam II		Samaria	41 Years	782-753	Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah	Evil
Zechariah		Samaria	6 Months	753		Evil Assassinated
Shallum		Samaria	1 Month	752		Evil Assassinated
Menahem		Samaria	10 Years	752-742		Evil
Pekahiah		Samaria	2 Years	742-740		Evil Assassinated
Pekah		Samaria	20 Years	740-732		Evil Assassinated
Hoshea		Samaria	9 Years	732-722		Evil
Fall of Samaria				722		

6. THE KINGS OF JUDAH ACCORDING TO 1 AND 2 KINGS

THE KINGS OF JUDAH (1 and 2 Kings)						
NAME OF KING	MOTHER OF KING	AGE	LENGTH OF RULE	YEARS OF RULE	ACTIVE PROPHETS	EVALUATION DEATH
Rehoboam	Naama	41	17 Years	931-913	Shemaiah	Evil
Abijam/Abijah	Maacah		3 Years	913-911		Evil
Asa	Maacah		41 Years	911-870		Righteous Diseased Feet
Jehosaphat	Azubah	35	25 Years	870-848	Micaiah Elijah Elisha	Good
Jehoram <small>Married Athaliah</small>		32	8 Years	848-841		Evil
Ahaziah <small>Related to Ahab</small>	Athaliah	22	1 Years	841	Elisha	Evil Assassinated
Athaliah <small>Daughter of Ahab</small>			6 Years	841-835		Evil Assassinated
Jehoash	Zibiah	7 (Jehoiada)	40 Years	835-796		Mixed Assassinated
Amaziah	Jehoaddin	25	29 Years	796-767		Good Assassinated
Uzziah (Azariah)	Jecoliah	16	52 Years	767-740	Isaiah	Good
Jotham	Jerusha	25	16 Years	740-735	Isaiah	Good
Ahaz		20	16 Years	735-715	Isaiah	Evil
Hezekiah	Abijah	25	29 Years	715-686	Isaiah	Good
Manasseh	Hepzibah	12	55 Years	686-640		Evil
Amon	Meshullemeth	22	2 Years	640		Evil Assassinated
Josiah	Jedidah	8	31 Years	640-609	Huldah Jeremiah Zepheniah	Good Killed in Battle
Jehoahaz	Hamutal	23	3 Months	609	Jeremiah	Taken to Egypt
Jehoiakim	Zebidah	25	11 Years	609-597	Jeremiah	Evil
Jehoiachin	Nehushta	18	3 Months	597	Jeremiah	Evil Taken to Babylon
Zedekiah (Mattaniah)	Hamutal	21	11 Years	597-586	Jeremiah Ezekiel	
THE FALL OF JUDAH	First Exile: March 19, 597 10,000 Exiles 2 Kings 24:14 8,000 Exiles 2 Kings 24:16 3,023 Exiles Jeremiah 52:28 Siege Begun: January 15, 588 Second Exile: July 19, 586 832 Exiles Jeremiah 52:29					

7. ELIJAH AND ELISHA

ELIJAH

The Widow of Zarephath
(17:8-24)

1. Oil and Bread
2. Healing of the Son

The Prophets of Baal
(18:1-40)

The Still Small Voice
(18:1—19:21))

1. Anoint Hazael
2. Anoint Jehu
3. Choose Elisha

Naboth's Vineyard
(21:1-29)

Elijah parts the Waters
(2:1-18)

Elijah's Departure
(2:1-18)

ELISHA

Elisha parts the waters
(2:1-18)

Elisha heals the waters
(2:19-22)

Elisha and the 42 Boys
(2:23-25)

The Widow's Oil
(4:1-7)

The Shunammite Woman
(4:8-37)

Restoring her Property
(8:1-6)

The Poisoned Food
(4:38-41)

Multiplication of the Loaves
(4:42-44)

Healing of Naaman
(5:1-27)

The Floating Axe-Head
(6:1-7)

TWO WARS

MOAB (3:1-27)
[Moabite Stone 1868]

The Alliance against Moab

1. Israel: Jehoram
2. Judah: Jehoshaphat
3. Edom

The King of Moab: Mesha

Elisha's prophecy of Victory

Mesha sacrifices his son

SYRIA (6:8--7:20)

Elisha suspected of informing

Syria: Benhadad

The Horses and Chariots of Fire

The Siege on Samaria

1. Inflation
2. Cannibalism

The 4 lepers seek food
Elisha predicts the end in 24 hours
The Syrians leave

HAZAEL (8:7-15)
"To punish Israel"

8. THE KINGS OF JUDAH ACCORDING TO 1 AND 2 CHRONICLES

THE KINGS OF JUDAH (1 and 2 Chronicles)						
NAME OF KING	MOTHER OF KING	AGE	LENGTH OF RULE	YEARS OF RULE	ACTIVE PROPHETS	EVALUATION DEATH
Rehoboam	Naamah	41	17 Years	931-913	Shemaiah	Mixed
Abijam (Abijah)	Maacah		3 Years	913-911	Iddo	Good
Asa	Maacah		41 Years	911-870	Azariah Hanani	Mixed Diseased Feet
Jehosaphat	Azubah	35	25 Years	870-848	Micaiah, Jahaziel, Zedekiah, Jehu, Eliezer	Good
Jehoram (Joram) <small>Married Athaliah</small>		32	8 Years	848-841	Elijah	Evil Died of Disease
Ahaziah	Athaliah	22 (42)	1 Years	841		Evil Killed by Jehu
Athaliah <small>Daughter of Ahab</small>	Jezebel (?)		6 Years	841-835		Evil Assassinated
Jehoash Joash	Zibiah	7 (Jehoiada)	40 Years	835-796	Zechariah	Mixed Assassinated
Amaziah	Jehoaddin	25	29 Years	796-767		Mixed
Uzziah (Azariah)	Jecoliah	16	52 Years	767-740	Zechariah Amos	Mixed
Jotham	Jerusha	25	11 for Uzziah 16 Years	740-735		Good
Ahaz		20	16 Years	735-715	Obed	Evil Among the Worst
Hezekiah	Abijah	25	29 Years	715-686	Isaiah	Good Among the Best
Manasseh		12	55 Years	686-640	(Jeremiah)	Mixed
Amon		22	2 Years	640		Evil Assassinated
Josiah		8	31 Years	640-609	Huldah Jeremiah	Good (Best) Killed in Battle
Jehoahaz		23	5 Months	609		Weak
Jehoiakim (Eliakim)		25	11 Years	609-597		Evil
Jehoiachin (Jeconiah)		18	3 Months 10 Days	597		Evil
Zedekiah <small>(Jehoiachin's Uncle)</small>		21	11 Years	597-586	Jeremiah	Evil
THE FALL OF JUDAH	The Siege began on January 15, 588		First Exile: 597 Second Exile: July 19, 586		2 Chronicles 24:14/16 Jeremiah 52:28 Jeremiah 25:29	10,000/8,000 3,023 832

9. THE RETURN FROM EXILE AND THE KINGS

KINGS OF BABYLONIA

605 - 562 Nebuchadnezzar
555 - 539 Nabonidus
Belshazzar (son of Nabonidus rules most of the time)

KINGS OF PERSIA

559 - 530 Cyrus
530 - 522 Cambyses
522 - 486 Darius I (Hystaspes)
486 - 465 Xerxes I (Ahasuerus)
465 - 424 Artaxerxes I (Longimanus)
424 - 423 Xerxes II
423 - 404 Darius II (Nothus)
404 - 358 Artaxerxes II (Mnemon)

RETURN:	Traditional	Cokesbury	Scripture
Ezra	458	397	Ezra 7:1, 6-7
Nehemiah	445	445	Nehemiah 1:1; 2:1
Together:	Undetermined amount of time.		Nehemiah 8:1, 9

Opponents of Nehemiah: Sanballat and Tobiah, with Geshem the Arab.

Sanballat (Samaritains)
Ashdodites
Jerusalem
Tobiah (Ammonites)
Geshem (Arabs)

ORDER IN WHICH THE GATES ARE REPAIRED:

1. Sheep Gate
2. Fish Gate
3. Jeshanah Gate
4. Valley Gate
5. Dung Gate
6. Fountain Gate
7. Water Gate
8. Horse Gate
9. East Gate

FORMER GOVERNORS

1. Sheshbazzar (Ezra 5:14)
2. Zerubbabel (Haggai 1:1, 14; 2:2, 21)
3. Former Governors (Sanballat?) (Nehemiah 5:15)
4. Nehemiah (Nehemiah 5:14) (12 years) (1st term)
5. Nehemiah (2nd Term) (Length unknown)

AFTERWORD

I have enjoyed working through these sacred stories which make up the historical books of the Bible. These are not simple stories and they are difficult to date in history. Some of them may not even be historical, but they are still significant from a theological perspective. I understand the Bible to be sacred theology, and these stories have important theological points to make. We may not always agree with those theological conclusions, but we should at least give them some consideration. We should be in dialogue with them.

I know that I have made some mistakes as I have worked through these sacred stories. Putting historical dates on them was very difficult, and all I can say is that most of the dates are approximate. Others may disagree with my conclusions, and I invite dialogue on historical dates and theological conclusions. For this reason I share with you my email and web site. Please feel comfortable correcting my material and challenging my theological conclusions.

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OTHER BIBLE STUDY GUIDES AND BOOKS

I have written the following **Bible Study Guides**, and as a result of working through the Bible, I have put my theological conclusions into a number of **Books**. For the latest list, go to my web site at: www.jim.reuteler.org. You have my permission to examine the content of my work and download any book on the list.

BIBLE STUDY GUIDES WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR

1. **The Bible as Sacred History:** A Survey of the Old and New Testaments
2. **The Struggle with God:** Genesis through Deuteronomy
3. **Sacred Stories:** Joshua through Esther
4. **Time is Running Out:** The Major and Minor Prophets
5. **Between the Testaments:** The Books of the Apocrypha
6. **The Messengers:** The Four Gospels
7. **An Explosion of Faith:** The Books of Acts and Revelation
8. **The First E-Letters:** The Letters to Churches and Individuals
9. **The Second Creation:** The Book of Revelation (Formatted in 5x8)
10. **A Vision of Hope:** The Book of Revelation (Formatted in 8.5x11)
11. **Photos of New Testament Sites 1**
12. **Photos of New Testament Sites 2**

BOOKS WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR

1. **Ignited for Mission:** An Analysis of a Damascus Road Religious Experience
2. **Reformulating the Mission of the Church:** A Theology of Missions
3. **Our Spiritual Senses:** Looking at Five Spiritual Senses
4. **Our Spiritual Disciplines:** Looking at Six Spiritual Disciplines
5. **The Ordinary Christian Experience:** Religious Experiences for the Rest of Us
6. **Faith is a Choice:** Making Decisions about Faith and Morality
7. **A Brief Story of the Christian Church:** A Survey of the Christian Church

BOOKS EDITED BY THE AUTHOR

1. **Foundational Documents:** Basic Documents of Methodism
2. **Instructions for Children:** An Edited Book written by John Wesley
3. **Speaking Iban:** An Edited Iban Grammar by Burr Baughman

