

Bible Study # 26
November 8, 1988
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Old Testament Series—II Kings 3—25 and II
Chronicles 21—36
(Chart at end)

This evening we **are covering the final period of the history of Israel and Judah.** It is a time where there are a lot of parallels, a lot of things that certainly parallel to our time today. If you noted last Bible study, we basically came down to the end of the life of Jehoshaphat and Ahab—the time period of eighth century B.C., a time period that witnesses the emergence in Israel and Judah of a commercial civilization and of great material prosperity. The commercial civilization that began to take place in Israel and Judah reached a height as far as material prosperity. There are some interesting comments in the *Soncino Commentary*, which is a Jewish commentary on the Old Testament. In their commentary on the book of Micah, they bring out the fact that the eighth century did witness the emergence of a commercial civilization of great material prosperity in Israel and Judah. Its foundations were laid in the peace and security in the reign of Jeroboam II.

I am going to refer to these kings if you want to look at your chart and follow along on this; otherwise, you will get lost with the names of all these kings. On the far right hand side of your chart are the kings of Israel. You will notice Jeroboam II that is written towards the bottom. Contemporary with him was Uzziah of Judah.

“The lengthy reigns of Jeroboam II and Uzziah were for Israel and Judah, respectively, a time of peace and security. They won the extension of the borders of their kingdoms from Damascus to the Red Sea and from the desert to the Mediterranean. This gave the Hebrew states command of all of the major trade routes of ancient days, everything that came across from Mesopotamia across to Egypt. The Hebrew states were sitting astride the major trade routes.

It was, however, a civilization that displayed all of the evils of a society making haste to be rich. Extremes of wealth and poverty, which had been impossible in an agricultural society based on the biblical system of land tenure, became evident everywhere. The pursuit of commerce encouraged the development of cities and city life. With the exchange of goods and the exchange of ideas, new religious cults, standards

of luxury and splendor and materialistic aims of living, which heretofore had been foreign to Israel, were introduced from Syria and Egypt.”

I was reading a phrase from the *Soncino Commentary's* introduction of the book of Micah. Their description of the eighth century B.C. and what it saw, as far as the historic development of Israel and Judah, could have been said about the 20th-century United States. You see, in the 20th century, this country went from a primarily agricultural nation to an industrial commercialized nation. We went from an agricultural rural nation to an urban nation. We have seen, as a result of that, the change and the transformation in society. We have seen extremes of wealth and poverty, down to many of the things that confront us today that are characteristic of an urban commercialized society, in a way that those extremes do not characterize an agricultural society. I bring out that parallel because when you read the history of eighth-century B.C. Israel and Judah, you are reading what seems like the history of 20th-century America and Britain.

Now understand it's in the eighth century B.C. If you look on your chart, which prophets were during the eighth century? The eighth-century prophets were Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah and Isaiah towards the end of it. You are looking at some of the primary prophets who wrote books of prophecy. They were writing during that time. In other words, they had a message for their society that also had implications for our society today. That's why God preserved the message.

Now the reason why the message for that society has parallels and implications for our society today is because our society parallels. There are societies that had the same problems, and as a result, they are going to have the same conclusion.

Events began to develop rapidly about 60 years before the collapse of Israel. It was during this time that God's work of warning the people to repent reached a peak. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah and Isaiah all prophesied during this time period, the final 60 years of the history of Northern Israel.

Notice the time leading up to the time of God's intervention, God's punishment—the captivity that God allowed to come on the nation Israel. What led up to that was the greatest period of prophetic activity in the history of Old Testament Israel and Judah. The most concentrated dosage of prophetic activity took place at that time. God had a warning and a

witness go out. There is a parallel. What Israel went through at that time certainly parallels what is happening to the United States during the 20th century.

Now let's take note of the story. We will pick it up in II Kings 3. This is right after Elijah's ascension in a whirlwind.

II Kings 3:1, "Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years." We find that Jehoram, the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria. Ahaziah had succeeded Ahab; then Jehoram very quickly succeeded Ahaziah. God was not pleased with him. God was not pleased with anything that came from Ahab and Jezebel. Jehoram was not quite as bad as his father and his mother. He put away the image of Baal (v. 2), but he continued to follow the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat (v. 3). There were problems; there was strife; and so there were difficulties.

Right after Ahab's death, the Moabites rebelled (v. 5), and Jehoram was again going to "sucker" good old Jehoshaphat (v. 7). You remember Jehoshaphat was a nice guy always willing to do a favor for somebody. Well, Jehoram said, 'Hey, Jehoshaphat, since Dad died the Moabites have rebelled against me. Why don't you send an army and come help me out?'

In v. 7, Old Jehoshaphat said, "...I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses." 'Anything I have, you can have. I'll give you the shirt off my back.' Sometimes you meet people this way. They're nice people, but they're just a little bit gullible and easily taken advantage of. They are so obliging that it is very difficult for them to say, "No." They get themselves in some "jams." Jehoshaphat was somewhat that way.

Verse 11, "But Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there no prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of the Lord by him?' And one of the servants of the king of Israel answered and said, 'Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah.'" So again Jehoshaphat honored and respected God. Before they went out to battle he wanted to know if there was a prophet of God they could inquire of. He was told that Elisha was there and Elisha was told.

Verse 13, "Then Elisha said to the king of Israel, 'What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother.' And the king of Israel said to him, 'No, for the Lord has called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab.'" Elisha told Jehoram, 'What have I got to do with you?

Why don't you go to your mother's or father's prophets? I don't have anything to tell you; you might as well go to Jezebel's prophets. I don't have any use for you.'

Verse 14, "And Elisha said, 'As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you, nor see you.'" He said, 'I would not look toward you. I wouldn't so much as give you the time of day if it weren't that I have respect for Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. Out of respect for him, I will answer the question. But if it were just you asking, Jehoram, I wouldn't tell you the time of day.' So anyway, you go through the story.

II Kings 4 is an account of several miracles that took place, showing what Elisha did. We see in verses 1-7 where Elisha performed a miracle to allow an indebted widow to pay off her creditors. The oil multiplied and she was able to sell it and earn money.

II Kings 4:1, "...the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves." Elisha asked, 'What do you have?' She said, 'All I have is a little oil' (v. 2). And he told her to borrow pots and pans—borrow everything you can "rake and scrape" that will hold oil. Get everything that the neighbors have. Everything that you can borrow, get and then start pouring oil (v. 4). She started pouring oil and the oil kept pouring and pouring until she filled up every pot and pan that she had, and everything that any neighbor had—everything around. When she ran out of pots, she ran out of oil (vv. 5-6). She sold the oil and paid off the debts (v. 7). God has all kinds of ways of providing things.

As we continue here in chapter 4, we read of the woman who befriended Elisha (v. 8), an elderly couple and the child that they had as a result of God's special blessing (vv. 14-17). We read of his subsequent death (vv. 18-20) and then the miracle that Elisha performed of restoring the child to life (vv. 32-35).

In II Kings 5, we have an interesting story of Naaman who was the captain of the host of the king of Syria. Now the Syrians had raided Israel at various times and had taken away a number of various Israelites captive; there was a little servant girl that had been taken away who was a servant in the household of Naaman. The little girl was an Israelite (v. 2). Naaman was a great favorite of the king of Syria. He was the captain of the host. Naaman came down with a dreaded disease. He came down with leprosy for which there was no known cure (v. 1). This little girl told Naaman one day, 'I wish you were

down in Israel because there is a prophet in Israel that I know could cure you' (v. 3). Well, Naaman was willing to try anything, so he went to talk to the king of Syria, and the king of Syria gave him a letter that was addressed to the king of Israel.

II Kings 5:5-6, "So the king of Syria said, 'Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.' So he departed and took with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. Then he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which said, 'Now be advised, when this letter comes to you, that I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may heal him of his leprosy.'" He addressed this letter to the king of Israel and said, 'I am sending my favorite servant down there, and I understand that you have somebody that can cure him of leprosy. I want you to take care of him as a favor to me.' Well, needless to say, when the king of Israel got this letter, this scared him to death.

Verse 7, "And it happened, when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes and said, 'Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends a man to me to heal him of his leprosy? Therefore please consider, and see how he seeks a quarrel with me.'" He said, 'That guy is trying to pick a fight with me. Here he is sending this general down here; he's got leprosy and expects me to cure him. What am I going to do with him; I can't cure him. He's sending him down here expecting me to do something.'

Verse 8, "So it was, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, 'why have you torn your clothes? Please let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.'" When Elisha heard about it, he was somewhat irate. Elisha sent word to the king and said, 'Let him come to me. You may not have any faith, but evidently the Syrians have more faith than you do because they sent this guy here to get cured. You're standing over there wringing your hands and figuring that it's impossible. The Syrians haven't any knowledge of the true God; at least they had enough faith to give it a try.' They were told this little servant girl had far more faith and understanding than the king because she said, 'I know God can heal you, and He has a servant, a prophet, down in Israel.'

Verse 9, "Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, 'Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean.'" Naaman came near to Elisha's

house. Elisha didn't even come out. He sent his messenger out and he instructed Naaman to go and wash in the Jordan seven times.

Verses 11-12, "But Naaman became furious and went away and said, 'Indeed, I said to myself, he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy. Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?' So he turned and went away in a rage." Now Naaman immediately became very upset, very irate. Do you know why he was irate? Because God didn't do it the way he expected it to be done.

Naaman was wroth. Look what he says. He says, "...indeed I said to myself..." He had already figured it out. Have you ever jumped to conclusions in your mind; have you ever figured out how you thought God was going to do it? He thought this man was going to come out here and would call upon the name of his God with a "big hoopla," making a great sound and going on and on—something impressive—and his leprosy would disappear. But he sent his servant out and told him, 'Go wash in that old muddy Jordan River seven times.' Naaman thought, 'What good is that going to do? I have a whole lot of better rivers than that back where I come from. I don't need to wash in the Jordan. Boy, I am insulted.'

Verse 13, "And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, 'My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, "Wash, and be clean"?' His servant said to him, 'Look, if the prophet had given you some difficult terrible task to perform, some great arduous difficult task and said, "If you will perform this you will be healed," wouldn't you have gone and done it? Well, yeah. All he asked you to do was something simple. Why don't you try it? What can you lose?'

Verse 14, "So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." He went down and washed in the Jordan seven times, and, you guessed it, he was totally healed. Why? It was an act of faith, an act of obedience. What difference does it make whether you wash in the Jordan or whether you go back and wash in a river in Syria? Well, the difference it makes is that God said it made a difference to Him. God said to wash in the Jordan. He didn't say go back and wash in the Tigris or the Euphrates or

anything else. He said, 'Wash in the Jordan.' What difference does it make? The difference is whether you are doing what God said or not. That's the difference.

It's like what difference does it make whether you keep Sunday or Saturday, just as long as you keep a day. What difference does it make? Or any number of things, what difference does it make? The question, brethren, is whether it makes a difference to God. See, that's the question.

People look at it and say, 'I don't see what difference it makes.' Of course, they don't see what difference it makes. Naaman didn't see what difference it made whether he washed in the Jordan. But I'll guarantee no other river would have washed him clean. Not because of any magic quality inherent in the Jordan River, but because he did what God said.

There's an important lesson here. God answers, but He doesn't always do it the way expected. In fact, Naaman was so "tuned in" to looking for an answer coming from a particular direction, that he was all upset and almost didn't recognize the answer when it came because God didn't do it the way he had expected.

Do we put limitations on God sometimes? We get God all figured out, put Him in a box and get it all figured out how God has got to do this. If for some reason or another God doesn't do it the way we expect, we think, 'What is this? God "slipped up"; somehow He didn't get it right.' Oh, God got it right. He did it the way He chose to do it.

Naaman came back, and you know what he wanted to do? He wanted to pay Elisha for what he had done (v. 15). You know what Elisha did? He did the same thing God's servants down through the centuries have done. He said, 'No, we don't charge for what we do.' That's quite a contrast to certain churches some of you have come out of. They charge for everything. They charge you to pray for you; they charge you for all kinds of things. That's not God's way.

Matthew 10:8, Christ said, "...Freely you have received, freely give." Elisha would not accept payment, but then, of course, the servant of Elisha, his eyes got big when he saw all that money. He decided that maybe if Elisha didn't want it, he would take it (vv. 20-24). And that proved to be a very fatal mistake on his part.

Verse 27, "Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever. And he went out from his presence leprous, as white as snow." That was a very serious matter.

It was something that should not be looked at in a light way.

As we continue, we find in chapter 6 the story of another miracle.

II Kings 6:8, "Now the king of Syria was making war against Israel...."

Verses 14-15, "Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, 'Alas, my master! What shall we do?'" 'What shall we do, we are surrounded!'

Verse 16, "So he answered, 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.'" Elisha said, 'No problem. There are more with us than are with them.' His servant said, 'You haven't looked outside yet; you're sitting here in the house. You haven't looked out the door; what do you mean, 'more with us than are with them'? They have us surrounded.'

Verse 17, "And Elisha prayed, and said, 'Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.' Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." Elisha prayed and asked God to perform a miracle—to open this servant's eyes to allow him to actually see the spirit realm. And you know what he saw? He saw all the mountains round about covered with horses and chariots of fire. Now that's a whole lot more impressive than anything the Syrians had. There are times that we would be absolutely shocked and amazed if our eyes could be opened in that way, and for a brief moment, have a glimpse of the spirit realm. Elisha had a reaction and a response of faith because he knew God; he walked with God. He knew God's power; he trusted God. So he was not overcome with fear and hand-wringing because he knew that he was the servant of the Most High God.

II Kings 6:24-25, "And it happened after this that Ben-Hadad king of Syria gathered all his army, and went up and besieged Samaria. And there was a great famine in Samaria...." There was a great famine right on down to the point that it came to literal cannibalism (vv. 28-29). The king was very quick to want to blame it on Elisha.

Verse 31, "Then he said, 'God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on him today.'" He said, 'Boy, I am going to chop off Elisha's head. He got us into all of this.'

Verse 32, “But Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. And the king sent a man ahead of him, but before the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, ‘Do you see how this son of a murderer has sent someone to take away my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door. Is not the sound of his master’s feet behind him?’” Elisha referred to this son of Ahab and Jezebel as “the son of a murderer.”

II Kings 7:6-7, “For the Lord had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses—the noise of a great army; so they said to one another, ‘Look, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us!’ Therefore they arose and fled at twilight, and left the camp intact...and they fled for their lives.”

Verse 10, “So they went and called to the gatekeepers of the city, and told them, saying, ‘We went to the Syrian camp, and surprisingly no one was there, not a human sound....’”

Verse 16, “Then the people went out and plundered the tents of the Syrians....” A miracle was performed; the Syrians fled and all of their provisions fell to Israel.

But notice the attitude: blame the problems on God’s prophet, God’s servant.

I would like to call your attention to something we had discussed last time—the matter of Elijah being carried away into heaven in a whirlwind. This is not the third heaven of God’s abode, nor the second heaven of outer space, but the first heaven of the earth’s atmosphere of the clouds and the birds. The first heaven of the earth’s atmosphere is where a whirlwind would normally go. He was taken up and removed, set down somewhere else and continued to live for a period of time. We are not told how long.

Notice additional proof that Elijah’s life was not ended at that time; he continued to live here on the earth.

II Kings 3:1, we noted, “Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years.” Jehoshaphat was still king of Judah after the time that Elijah was taken up and Elisha had succeeded as God’s chief prophet. We saw a little bit further in II Kings 3 that Jehoshaphat was still the king of Judah at the time when Elisha had taken over as God’s chief prophet (vv. 11-14). Now let’s take note of that and turn to II Chronicles.

II Chronicles 21:1, “And Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the

City of David. Then Jehoram his son reigned in his place.” Now this is one of the reasons you need the chart because you will find that at this particular time in history, the kings of Israel and Judah had basically the same name, which serves to confuse things more than they are already confused. In most people’s minds, they are already confused, and when you have all the kings with the same names, it gets even more confusing. So you can consult the chart here. If you want to make it even more confusing, they were all kin to one another. Would you like exact family relationships? You would get really confused here. Anyway, Jehosaphat died and his son Jehoram reigned in his stead.

Verses 5-6, “Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for he had the daughter of Ahab as a wife; and he did evil in the sight of the Lord.”

Notice what happened.

Verse 12, “And a letter came to him from Elijah the prophet, saying....” There was a letter to him from Elijah. Not Elisha, but Elijah! Elijah had been taken up in a whirlwind years before. Here comes a writing to Jehoram.

Verses 12-13, “...from Elijah the prophet, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord God of your father David: Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, or in the ways of Asa king of Judah, but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot like the harlotry of the house of Ahab....’”

He said, ‘You’ve done all these things, and here’s what is going to happen to you.’ If Elijah was where most people think he was, this was the original airmail. This letter had a long trip to get there—definitely the original airmail—which it was not. Elijah was simply somewhere else. He was taken up, removed. The work that God had for him to do there was completed. What did he do in the remainder of his life? Well, the only insight that is given was God used him to deal with at least this king. Perhaps God used him to go to other kings. We don’t know exactly what God had for him. But I would call your attention to that.

Now we come to the conclusion of the dynasty of Ahab. God doesn’t have a lot of good things to say about Ahab.

II Kings 9:5-8, “...‘I have a message for you, O commander.’ And Jehu said, ‘For which one of us?’ And he said, ‘For you, commander.’ Then he arose and went into the house, and he poured

the oil on his head, and said to him, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: “I have anointed you king over the people of the Lord, over Israel. You shall strike down the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish: and I will cut off from Ahab all the males in Israel....”’

We find a man by the name of Jehu; he has as his dynasty, to wipe out the dynasty of Ahab. Now if you look on the chart under the kings of Israel, you will find that Jehu took over. He ended the dynasty of Ahab. How did God cut off the dynasty? Well, we find here the story of how Jehu wiped out Ahab’s dynasty in Israel as well as all the priests of Baal and he made himself king (II Kings 9:24—10:28).

Let me call your attention to something about Jehu. Jehu was famous for something.

II Kings 9:20, “And the watchman reported, saying, ‘He went up to them and is not coming back; and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi for he drives furiously!’”

Jehu was famous for his style of driving. He drove furiously. The watchman was standing on the city wall and saw some dust. He said, ‘I can’t tell who it is, but it must be Jehu. Nobody around here drives like that, wheeling that chariot around the corner on one wheel with all of the dust turning up.’

Verse 21, “So Joram [Jehoram] said, ‘make ready.’” Better get out of the way; here comes Jehu. Jehoram was going to go out there to meet him.

Verse 22, “Now it happened, when Joram [Jehoram] saw Jehu, that he said, ‘Is it peace, Jehu?’ So he answered, ‘What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many.’”

Verse 24, “Now Jehu drew his bow with full strength and shot Joram [Jehoram] between his arms; and the arrow came out at his heart, and he sank down in his chariot.” He drew a bow and shot Joram (Jehoram); he killed him and came into town.

Verse 30, “And when Jehu had come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she put paint on her eyes and adorned her head, and looked through a window.”

Now Jezebel is one of these outstanding characters; we find a little bit about her in verse 22, “...as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many.”

God used Jezebel, Queen Jezebel, as literally the personification of everything God hates in a

woman. In fact, he uses her as a type of the great whore of Revelation 17. Remember the great whore is described as committing fornication with the kings of the earth, making all nations drunk with the wine of her fornication. That’s what Jezebel did literally. She wielded power by committing fornication with the kings of all of the surrounding areas. The whoredoms of Jezebel—she literally practiced whoredom. She committed whoredom with the kings of the earth. God used her as a type; in fact, if you go back to Revelation 2, you will find that God describes the false church under the person of Jezebel.

Revelation 2:20, He tells the Thyatira era, “‘I have somewhat against you because you permit that woman Jezebel [referring to the church in the Middle Ages], to seduce My servant.’” The reference, of course, is to the Catholic Church that is personified as Jezebel. Revelation uses the personification of a woman, a queen who commits fornication with the kings of the earth and who wields power by entering into illicit relationships with various kings. That’s the way she wielded her power. That’s the way Jezebel did it. Jezebel absolutely personified everything God hates in a woman, and He uses her as a type of that throughout the book of Revelation.

“Jezebel”—we have all heard the term, a term that we grew up with. You never took it as a compliment if somebody called you a “Jezebel,” did you? If you knew anything about the Bible, you knew that was not what you wanted to be called. You did not want to be called a “Jezebel.” Well, God does not have a lot of good to say about Jezebel.

In fact, Jezebel evidently considered herself a great beauty and must have been considered so by the various kings around because they all wanted to commit fornication with her. She was getting all decked out for Jehu (II Kings 9:30), but Jehu told the servants to throw her down. So they picked her up and heaved her out of the window. She fell down (v. 33) and, of course, it killed her. It was a very gruesome thing.

Verse 34, “And when he had gone in, he ate and drank. Then he said, ‘Go now, see to this accursed woman, and bury her, for she was a king’s daughter.’”

When they went to bury her, they found no more of her than the skull, the feet and the palms of her hands because the dogs had eaten the flesh of Jezebel. Jezebel came to a very gruesome, gory conclusion, a very ugly ending. I think that it serves to show that God singled her out for an especially gruesome conclusion.

Here is a woman who is concerned with outward beauty, and God's concern was with inward beauty. Jezebel may have looked good on the outside—evidently the kings of the earth thought so, but as far as God was concerned, she was a very ugly person in terms of character and everything that she represented. She came to a very gruesome and ugly end.

Again, we are given a little bit of insight as we go through these accounts of various ones that are focused on and the influence that different ones had. Now, Jezebel's influence continued because her daughter, Athaliah had married Jehoram, the king of Judah. So Jezebel's daughter, who was somewhat a "chip-off-the-old-block," was down in Judah as the queen, even though Jezebel was dead.

II Kings 10:1, "Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria...."

Verse 7, "So it was, when the letter came to them, that they took the king's sons and slaughtered seventy persons..." Jehu had Ahab's seventy sons killed, and it was a real bloodletting.

Verses 26-29, "And they brought the sacred pillars out of the temple of Baal and burned them. Then they broke down the sacred pillar of Baal, and tore down the temple of Baal and made it a refuse dump to this day. Thus Jehu destroyed Baal from Israel. However Jehu did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin, that is, from the golden calves that were at Bethel and Dan."

Verse 36, "And the period that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty-eight years."

In the meantime, in Judah, Jehoram the king of Judah had died and his son Ahaziah had become king. Ahaziah was the son of Jehoram and Athaliah.

Now in II Kings 11 Ahaziah died (v. 1). Ahaziah was the grandson of Jezebel and Ahab. Because of intermarriage, the family of Ahab and Jezebel was ruling in Judah, as well as in Israel. Well, they were wiped out in Israel; all of the 70 sons of Ahab were killed. Now, the grandson Ahaziah died. When he died, Athaliah decided that she would be king, and she was going to murder all of her grandchildren. —Nice woman, real "chip-off-the-old-block" of dear mother.

II Kings 11:1-3, "When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal heirs. But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons who were being murdered; and they hid him and his nurse

in the bedroom, from Athaliah, so that he was not killed. So he was hidden with her in the house of the Lord for six years, while Athaliah reigned over the land."

In the seventh year, the high priest called in the leaders (v. 4), and said, 'All right, enough is enough. The rightful heir to the throne of David is now seven years old; we are going to bring him out, coronate him and get rid of this wicked woman.' So he placed the guards in strategic places and Jehoiada the priest then brought in little Joash.

Verse 12, "And he brought out the king's son, put the crown on him, and gave him the Testimony, they made him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and said, 'Long live the king!'"

Verses 13-14, "Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the escorts and the people, she came to the people, into the temple of the Lord. When she looked, there was the king, standing by the pillar according to custom, and the leaders and the trumpeters were by the king. All the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets. And Athaliah tore her clothes and cried out, 'Treason! Treason!'"

If you will check it in some other translations, it is, "stood on the pillar, as the manner was." You know what this is describing? You will find this referred to in several occasions where coronations of kings are described. The kings and queens of the house of David are still crowned on the same pillar. Jacob's pillar stone, which was taken through the wilderness, was taken down into Egypt and brought back out by the Israelites at the time of the Exodus. It journeyed with them through the wilderness. It was set up as the pillar of testimony. The kings were crowned—coronated—on that pillar. When Athaliah came in and saw Joash standing on the pillar as the manner was, she knew what had happened. He had been coronated. When she saw this child standing on the pillar, she recognized the pillar; she knew he had been coronated. She rent her clothes and cried, "Treason! Treason!" Well, she was the one guilty of treason.

Verse 16, "So they seized her; and she went by the way of the horses; entrance to the king's house, and there she was killed." She was taken out of the temple and executed.

Of course, Jacob's ancient pillar stone is to this very day the symbol of the throne and upon which the kings are coronated. The present Queen, Queen Elizabeth, was coronated sitting on this pillar stone. If you have ever been to Westminster Abbey, you may have seen that

pillar stone there under the throne. There is a sign there identifying it as Jacob's pillar.

Verse 21, "Jehoash was seven years old when he became king."

Now as we come down, we find the story of Elisha's death.

II Kings 13:14, "Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die..." I just call to your attention—Elisha got sick and died. He was evidently an elderly man. It was not a matter that Elisha lacked faith. God used Elisha to perform some of the most tremendous miracles of the Bible, but God designed this physical life to be temporary. The time came when Elisha got sick and he died.

Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed for men to die once..."

In II Kings 14, we pick up the story of Azariah. Azariah is the name by which he is referred to in verse 21. He is also known as Uzziah (II Kings 15:13; II Chronicles 26:1).

II Kings 14:23, "...he reigned forty-one years."

Verse 25, "He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord God, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Atah Hopher."

He was contemporary with God's prophet Jonah. This was a time when Israel and Judah reached their height of power. They expanded; they reached their height of commercial prosperity during the time of Uzziah, the king of Judah and Jeroboam II, king of Israel. But economic, material and commercial heights and heights of morality, ethics and righteousness were two totally different things. The nation prospered materially, but the nation degenerated and deteriorated spiritually. We see that within a short time, problems began to come.

After the death of Jeroboam (v. 29), we find that it was really a matter of about 40 years that saw just complete collapse. Israel went from its height to captivity in a lifespan, a generation, which is not unique, and certainly, even parallels our time.

In II Kings 15, we find that there was a rapid succession of kings. There was a lot of political instability. The nation became virtually paralyzed. There was an absence of strong leadership. It was just a turnover, one after the other—a time of instability. Of course, the Assyrians came in and originally put the land under tribute, exacted taxes and eventually came in and laid waste to Samaria. They took Israel into captivity and ultimately put an end to the

nation of Northern Israel—the northern ten tribes.

We have the story of the conclusion of the history of the northern ten tribes.

II Kings 17:6-7, "In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods."

Verses 10-18, "They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree; And there they burned incense on all the high places, as the nations had done whom the Lord had carried away before them; and they did wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger, for they served idols, of which the Lord had said to them, 'You shall not do this thing.' Yet the Lord testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, namely every seer, saying, 'Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets.' Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God. And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; they followed idols, became idolaters, and went after the nations who were all around them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them that they should not do like them. So they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger. Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone."

Verses 21-23, "For He tore Israel from the house of David, and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Lord, and made them commit a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not

depart from them, until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day.” Right on down to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, when the Old Testament canon was completed, Northern Israel was still carried away. They were settled in the land of Assyria; specifically, they were settled in the cities of the Medes by the river Gosan.

If you want to check a map, you will find that is an area between the Black and the Caspian Sea. The southern shore of the Black Sea is way up at the top away from the Tigris/Euphrates valley. Babylon is down at the bottom right near the Persian Gulf. (The Jews, 150 years later, were taken to Babylon. They were not taken up to the cities of the Medes, which was a totally different empire.) The Israelites were taken, not to Babylon, but were taken by the Assyrians and settled in the cities of the Medes up by the river Gosan—in other words, up there on the southern shore of the Black Sea.

It should not come as a surprise that we read in history of the Celtic people who invaded Europe originated from the southern shore of the Black Sea. Basically, they invaded Europe in two waves, one around 700 B.C., which was the initial wave right after the captivity. The main wave was almost 400 years later. There was a specific prophecy of that. We will get into that at a little later time.

When Alexander the Great overthrew the empire of the Medes and the Persians in 331 B.C., the Israelites who had been taken captive were freed. That is when the main Celtic invasion of Europe took place. The time around 330 B.C. to 300 B.C. is when they swarmed across the Black Sea and into Europe. Now it was prophesied in the book of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 4:5) that Israel would be in captivity 390 years. Well, from the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C. until Alexander conquered the Medes and the Persians in 331 B.C. was exactly 390 years. Exactly 390 years when Alexander conquered the Medes and Persians, the Israelites were freed; they crossed the Black Sea and invaded Europe. If you read your history, that’s when the Celts came into Europe, and that’s where they came from. It’s very easy to trace historically.

Verse 23, “until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day.” Notice here that *God* removed them.

Verse 24, “Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities.” So he brought in these Babylonians and settled them in the areas where the Northern Israelites had been deported from.

Then these Babylonians decided they needed some instruction in the god of the land because in the intervening time that the land had lain unpopulated, wild animals had multiplied greatly. They came in being superstitious. They decided that what they needed was some instruction about the God of the land (vv. 25-26).

So the king of Assyria told them to bring back one of the priests whom they had brought from there and he would teach them the manner of the God of the land (v. 27). Now don’t you know that he was going to do a good job teaching them God’s truth! What was this priest? He was one of the ones who had been the priest of the high places, one of the lowest, the priest of the golden calf. He was one of the ones that Jeroboam had put into office (I Kings 12:31)—so what was he going to teach them? He was going to teach them the same kind of paganism that Israel had been having. The only difference was that they used God’s name. They used the name of the God of Israel when they built this golden calf and did all of these things. They paid lip service to the God of Israel, to YHWH, but they practiced all these pagan things.

Verse 28, “Then one of the priests whom they carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the Lord.” Notice what it says. We are told that one of these priests came back, and he taught them how they ought to fear the Lord. And don’t you know he did a good job.

Verse 29, “However every nation continued to make gods of its own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities where they dwelt.”

Verse 32, “So they feared the Lord, and from every class [KJV, “of the lowest of the people”] they appointed for themselves priests of the high places who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places.” Evidently, the priest showed them where they were supposed to get their priests.

Verses 33-34, “They feared the Lord, yet served their own gods—according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried

away. To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear the Lord, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the Lord had commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel.”

Verse 41, “So these nations feared the Lord, yet served their carved images; also their children and their children’s children have continued doing as their fathers did, even to this day.” At the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, that’s what they had to say about the Samaritans. This is the origin of the Samaritans. When the Northern Israelites were taken into captivity, the Assyrians moved in Babylonians and settled them in that area. Bringing back one of the Israelite priests, they now had a “hodge-podge” religion. They kept their old pagan Babylonian religion with all of their idols, but now they attached God’s name to it. That was what the Samaritans were doing. They paid lip service to God and the Bible, but they worshiped their same old idols—same old paganism.

Does that ring a familiar bell? Are you familiar with any particular religion that has made quite a practice of preserving whatever pagan tradition the people were already doing and just attaching a new name to it—attaching a good Bible name to it? Take for example, down in Mexico, the great shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which is the great shrine in Mexico. It is quite a famous Catholic shrine. If you study the history of Mexico, you’ll find that shrine has been around a long time; it antedates the coming of the Spaniards. It had been the shrine of the goddess worshipped by the Aztecs. When the Spaniards came into Mexico, the priests decided to sprinkle a little water, and everybody became Catholic. They decided they all liked this shrine; they were all used to coming here worshipping this goddess. That was fine—keep on doing exactly the same thing, at the same place, use the same old stuff, but now it’s not what it use to be—now it’s Our Lady of Guadalupe. We will sprinkle a little water, and all of a sudden, she’s got a new name. But it’s the same old thing.

When you come into the New Testament, you read of the animosity of the Jews and the Samaritans.

John 4:9, “...‘How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me a Samaritan woman?’ For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.” Here is where it came from. The reason why the Jews didn’t like the Samaritans was because they knew what the Samaritans were. Remember what Christ told the Samaritan woman?

Verse 22, “‘You worship what you do not know, we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.’” Christ settled the argument as to where you look for and who preserved the truth.

Romans 3:1-2, “What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.” The Samaritans didn’t preserve the truth; the Jews did. They preserved the Old Testament and they preserved the truth.

In Acts 8, we read of one, Simon, known in history as Simon Magus, Simon the Magician, Simon the Sorcerer, who was the chief religious official of the Samaritans (v. 9), and to whom they all gave heed (v. 10). Maybe we will go into a Bible study on it, but in reality, what you find is that as the Jews were dispersed throughout the Mediterranean world; the Jewish community served as the nucleus around which the true Church of God was built. Even in the Gentile cities, it was converted Jews who knew the law, had access to the Scriptures and it served as the nucleus of the Church. The Gentiles were added in around it because this was where there was access to the knowledge of the truth—the Scriptures.

We find that even Paul, who was the apostle of the Gentiles, came to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles. By having a stable core of people who were familiar with the law as the first ones in the Church, it was much simpler when others who came out of other backgrounds were added in. There were already people, membership in the Church, who were culturally attuned to the Bible and to the principles of the law, and other new members coming in acclimated themselves to it. That was the logical way to do it and that is the way God is.

But there was another church that had its beginning a couple of years later, one that had its beginnings in Samaria, with one Simon the Sorcerer. Interestingly enough, there had been, as a result of some of the conquest of Alexander the Great, a limited dispersion of the Samaritans. There were major Samaritan colonies in two areas—Rome, Italy and Alexandria, Egypt. These colonies in Rome and Alexandria became the centers of the church that Simon the Magician, the Sorcerer, sought to build with himself as the head. That gets into another story, but the origin, II Kings 17, is a critical chapter. There is very important information that is preserved there.

II Kings 18:1-4, “Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of

Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden images and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan." Hezekiah was a very zealous man.

Now turn back to II Chronicles 29 and we'll get a little insight into something that occurred right at the time of the fall of Northern Israel after the Assyrians had come in and successfully invaded. II Chronicles 29:1, "Hezekiah became king when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem..." This was a time of great reforms, they repaired the temple, and they had the Scriptures being preached (vv. 3-36).

Now notice what he did.

II Chronicles 30:1-11, "And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the Lord God of Israel. For the king and his leaders, and all the congregation in Jerusalem had agreed to keep the Passover in the second month. For they could not keep it at that time, because a sufficient number of priests had not sanctified themselves, nor had the people gathered together at Jerusalem. And the matter pleased the king, and all the congregation. So they resolved to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover to the Lord God of Israel at Jerusalem, since they had not done it for a long time in the prescribed manner. Then the runners went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the king and his leaders, and spoke according to the commandment of the king: 'Children of Israel, return to the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; then He will return to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. And do not be like your fathers and your brethren, who trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, so that He gave them up to astonishment, as you see. Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the Lord; and enter His sanctuary, which He has sanctified forever, and serve the Lord our God, that the fierceness of His wrath

may turn away from you. For if you return to the Lord, your brethren and your children will be treated with compassion by those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him.' So the runners passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun; but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them. Nevertheless some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem."

There were a handful, a few from Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun that humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. There were a handful that came down there, but Hezekiah's messengers were basically laughed at and scorned. There was the final warning and witness to Israel—repent. It was in the context of coming to observe God's Festivals. They were told to come up to Jerusalem to observe God's Festivals, repent and God will be merciful. They did not respond, and the Assyrian army came in and took them all captive.

II Chronicles 31:1, "Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke the sacred pillars in pieces, cut down the wooden images, and threw down the high places and the altars—from all Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh—until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned to their own cities, every man to his possession."

Verses 4-7, "Moreover he commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to contribute support for the priests and the Levites, that they might devote themselves to the Law of the Lord. As soon as the commandment was circulated, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of grain and wine, oil and honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything. And the children of Israel and Judah, who dwelt in the cities of Judah; brought the tithe of oxen and sheep; also the tithe of holy things which were consecrated to the Lord their God they laid in heaps. In the third month they began laying them in heaps, and they finished in the seventh month."

In other words, at Pentecost they began bringing in their tithes and it was finished by the seventh month—the Feast of Tabernacles—when the final harvest was finished. There was a revival that took place. When real a revival took place, the people started obeying God. They started keeping the Festivals; they started tithing; and

they started doing the things that people do when they are repentant.

Verses 20-21, “Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the Lord his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered.” God was very pleased with Hezekiah.

We have already commented on where the tribes of Northern Israel were taken into captivity. They were taken to the cities of the Medes, primarily between the areas between the Black and the Caspian Sea. Babylonians were brought in to the former land of Israel. They were known as the Samaritans, taking their name from the capital city. We are told about the religion of the Samaritans. It was the same old Babylonian Mystery religion that they had been following all along, but now they added a new ingredient—they began to call it all by the name of the true God. One of the Northern Israel priests was brought back to Samaria to teach them the manner of the God of the land. We have seen that Jeroboam’s approach to religion was also preserved.

In terms of Hezekiah, let’s notice what we are told is God’s analysis of Hezekiah.

II Kings 18:5-6, “He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any who were before him. For he held fast to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses.” Hezekiah was a very faithful and righteous man. He obeyed God and did what God said, and he did with his whole heart. There isn’t any king of Judah that excelled him in that. What did he do when the Assyrians invaded? We get an example here of how he handled problems.

The Assyrians were going to come in to deport Judah. They had already deported Israel.

II Kings 18:31, “Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: “Make peace with me by a present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and every one form his own fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern.”” They were promising the Millennium German style. The Assyrians said, ‘Look, we’ll take you away to a land like your own. We’ll take you to a nice place. We are going to deport you to these concentration camps; but they’re going to be nice places, and you will like it. Just come on out of

the city, open the gate and come on out nicely. We will load you into cattle cars and transport you to these nice places that we have, and everybody will live happily ever after. Now, why don’t you nice Jews come on out.’ So this was the story. It doesn’t change a whole lot once you’ve read it. You just repeat the same thing. There is nothing new under the sun.

The solution was that Hezekiah came in to God and he prayed before God.

II Kings 19:14, “And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord.” He received a letter from the hand of the messengers that demanded his surrender. He took it to the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord. He just spread the letter out and said, ‘Look God, You can read; You can see what these Assyrians are saying.’

Verse 19, “Now therefore, O Lord our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord God, You alone.” So God said, ‘I am going to deliver you.’

Verse 20, “Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: that which you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.’”

Verses 34-35, “For I will defend this city, to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.” And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people in the morning, there were corpses—all dead.” Now the dead corpses didn’t rise up and find out they were dead, but whoever was left rose up and found out. One angel, one army—God said it wasn’t hard at all.

Hezekiah went to God with the problem. He went to God and he really spread out his problem before God.

Verse 36, “So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, and returned home, and remained at Nineveh.” KJV, “Sennacherib the king of Assyria departed and went and returned and dwelt at Nineveh.” You better believe he departed and went and returned. When he got up the next morning and found 185,000 people dead, he was the only one left alive in his whole army. You better believe he departed and went and returned. I bet he hopped on the first horse and took off as fast as he could go. He didn’t stay around to investigate the cause of death. All he did was load it up and move it out as fast as

he could get there. I suspect that anybody in a similar circumstance would have also departed and went and returned very quickly.

In II Kings 20, Hezekiah became very critically ill. Again, he went to God and God healed him. God intervened (vv. 1-5); Hezekiah died (v. 21).

II Kings 21:1-2, “Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king...he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord has cast out before the children of Israel.” Manasseh was the opposite of his father. He did everything evil that he could. In fact, he was the most wicked king that ever ruled Judah. Manasseh is described and all his sins (vv. 3-16). Because of the sins of Manasseh, all of Judah was ultimately to be taken into captivity.

Verses 12-13, “therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel: “Behold, I am bringing such calamity upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab; I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.”” That is pretty clean. God says, ‘I am going to clean house; I have put up with this until I am sick and tired of it.’ Well, Manasseh died (v. 18) and his son Amon ruled briefly (v. 19). Then Josiah who was eight years old, began to reign.

II Kings 22:1-2, “Josiah was eight years old when he became king...and he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.”

We find the parallel in II Chronicles 34.

II Chronicles 34:3-4, “For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images. They broke down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and the incense altars which were above them he cut down; and the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images he broke in pieces, and made dust of them and scattered it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them.”

Verse 7, “When he had broken down the altars and the wooden images, had beaten the carved images into powder, and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.” He went “all the way out.” Everything that he could find that smacked of idolatry, he burned it and ground it to powder.

Josiah was a young man and had all of the zeal of youth. He was very, very zealous and he was the only thing that stood between Judah and going into captivity. God had respect to Josiah and Josiah’s reforms. He said, ‘All right, I have said what I am going to do, but I am not going to do anything as long as Josiah is alive because he is obeying with his whole heart. His attitude and actions are such that I appreciate, and I will spare and protect the nation throughout his life.’ You better believe that everybody prayed, ‘Long live the king,’ and meant it because the only thing that stood between the nation and destruction was King Josiah. God said, ‘Josiah’s reign is the only thing good about the whole place, and as long as he is king, I will spare the nation. When he is gone, look out.’

II Chronicles 35:17-18, “And the children of Israel who were present kept the Passover at that time, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days. There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet; and none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”

Do you realize how long that had been? That had been over 500 years. There hadn’t been anything as “all out” as what Josiah did. Now the difference between Josiah’s Passover and the great Passover of Hezekiah (II Chronicles 30) was that Hezekiah’s Passover had to be celebrated at the time of the second Passover rather than the proper date of the first month because of ceremonial uncleanness. So Josiah’s Passover excelled Hezekiah’s in that sense; it was more totally kept exactly the way God said it ought to be done.

Then Josiah died.

Verse 24, “...So he died, and was buried in one of the tombs of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.”

Verse 25, “Jeremiah also lamented for Josiah, and to this day all the singing men and the singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a custom in Israel; and indeed they are written in the Laments.”

You read some of the commentators and some of the commentaries and they say, ‘You know, we wonder what this was.’ Well, if you go back in your Bible, the book that comes right after the book of Jeremiah—a little short book stuck in there between Jeremiah and Ezekiel (one that we don’t go to that often)—is a book called the “Lamentations of Jeremiah.” The book of

Lamentations! It's very obvious that's where it comes from.

The laments that Jeremiah wrote were added to the Bible and made an ordinance in Israel and continues to be used. It is the book that the Jews read every year on the ninth of Ob, which is the fifth month of the Hebrew calendar. It comes approximately July/August. The ninth day of Ob is a fast day that the Jews observe in commemoration of the destruction of the temple. Interestingly enough, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple on the ninth day of Ob; centuries later when Titus and the Romans burned the temple in 70 A.D., they did it on exactly the same day. So now they had two reasons to lament. On the ninth of Ob they read the book of Lamentations. Lamentations was a lament written at the death of Josiah, a lament that looked forward to the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah that was going to come. The destruction that came on Judah and Jerusalem was a type of the Great Tribulation that will be the worst time of tribulation that ever comes.

So the book of Lamentation that we will go through at a later time in Bible study is a prophecy of the Great Tribulation. It was written by Jeremiah at the occasion of Josiah's death, which signaled the onset of what really amounted to the Tribulation for Judah and Jerusalem—the destruction of the nation and captivity. The highlight of Josiah's reign was the great Passover recorded in II Chronicles 35.

Let's notice what happened after Josiah's death.

II Kings 23:29, "In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went to the aid of the king of Assyria, to the River Euphrates; and King Josiah went against him. And Pharaoh Necho killed him [Josiah] at Megiddo when he confronted him."

II Kings 24:1, "In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him."

II Kings 25:1-3, "Now it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and encamped against it; and they built a siege wall against it all around. So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. By the ninth day of the fourth month the famine had become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land."

Verses 6-7, "So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they pronounced judgment on him. Then they killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, put

out the eyes of Zedekiah, bound him with bronze fetters, and took him to Babylon."

Verse 9, "He burned the house of the Lord and the king's house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great men, he burned with fire." Nebuchadnezzar invaded and conquered Judah, burned Jerusalem and the temple and carried the Jews into captivity back to Babylon. We find the destruction that took place. By about 587 B.C., Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews were in captivity. We find the result of the nation having departed from God. Hopefully, this has given us somewhat of an overview.

Israel, of course, had been transported around 721 B.C. About 120 years later, 604 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar invaded and Judah was a vassal state. Finally they were destroyed and taken captive with Jerusalem in 587 B.C.

That brings us to the conclusion of Kings and Chronicles. We will pick up the story in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah in the next Bible study, which will give us the overview of what happened during the Babylonian captivity, the return of the Jews from Babylon back to Jerusalem under Zerubabel, the rebuilding of the temple, the time of restoration that took place and the conclusion of the Old Testament period. The Bible study following, we will have a study that will cover the time between the Testaments. We will go into the story of what happened between the end of the book of Nehemiah and the beginning of the book of Matthew. We will run through that historic sequence.

Hopefully, this series of Bible studies has enabled you to get a little more of an overview of the history of the Old Testament. But again, over and over, I would call your attention to the fact that these things are written down for our admonition. We need to study the history that is recorded in the Bible in order to get a God's-eye-view of life and of everything. The Bible gives us a story of what man did and didn't do from God's perspective.

Any author writes a book from his own vantage point. We are all familiar with that. If you read the history of anything—any event, any war—depending on where you read it, you are going to get the story differently. The story that we study on World War II is a little different than what they study in Japan or Germany. For years the story of the events surrounding the war between the states was taught differently in Louisiana than it was taught in Massachusetts. That's just the way it is. It's just simply a matter that people tell a story from their own perspective. Now

every author has his “ax to grind.” Sometimes we read a book and know it is not entirely accurate—it’s kind of from that author’s viewpoint.

The Bible is a book that is entirely accurate because it is written from the only accurate viewpoint there is—God’s point of view. We need to study the Bible in order to understand God’s point of view. We grow up in a society and are affected by that society’s point of view on any number of subjects.

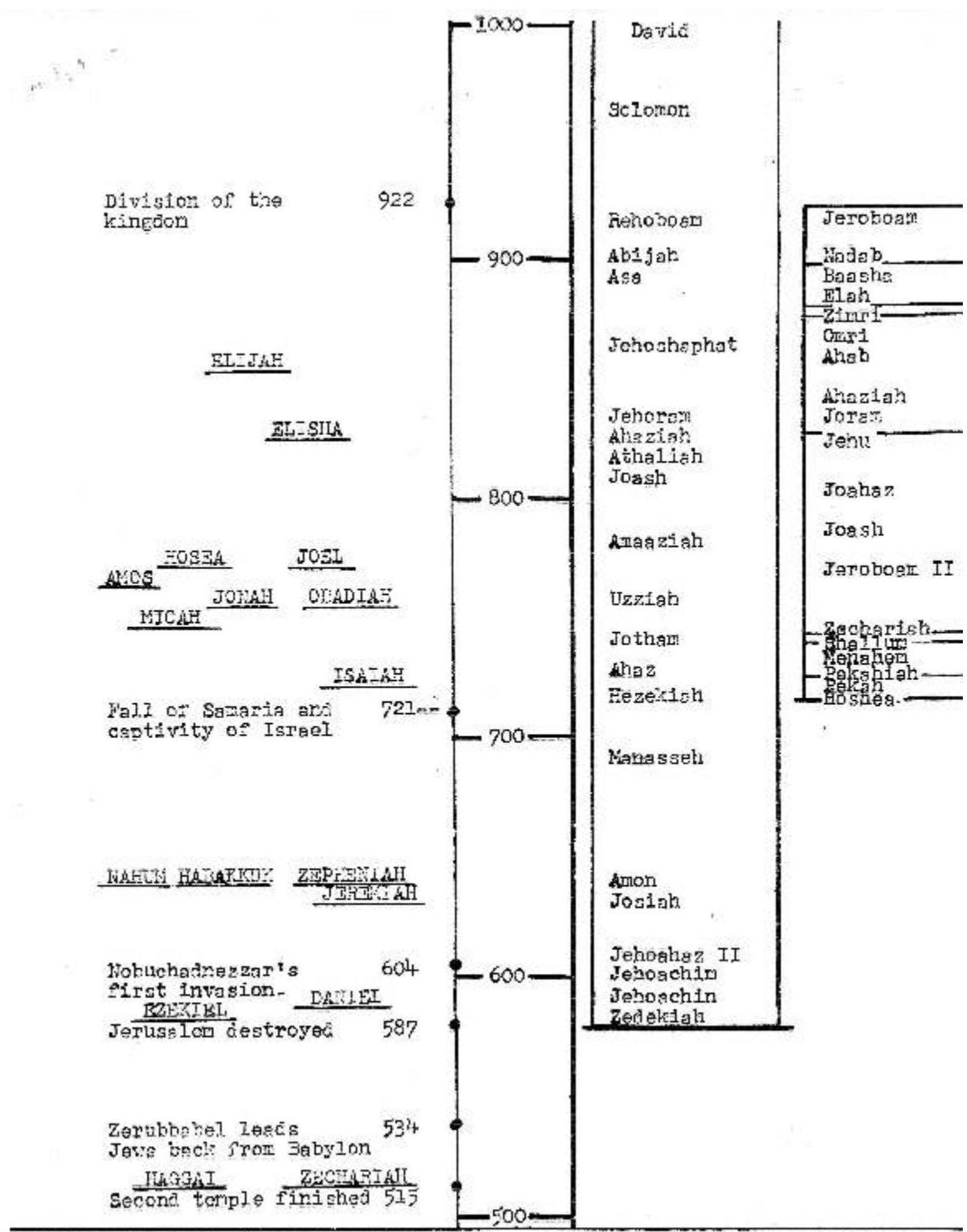
In some ways, God teaches us by direct commands, “thou shalt/thou shalt not,” but most of the teachings of the Bible are not direct commands. Most of the teachings are by example, by illustration, by principle that is illustrated throughout the story. We need to study from that standpoint. That’s what Paul told us in the New Testament. These things are written down for our admonition, and they’re examples for us, written down for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages have come (I Corinthians 10:11).

Throughout this study of the Old Testament, the historical characters we study—the story of these individuals, what they did, what they didn’t do—we try to study it from a standpoint of finding out what God is pleased with, what God is displeased with, what certain attributes, what certain actions, what certain attitudes cause, what were the good results, what were the bad results, what were the strengths and weaknesses of all these individuals. As we study it from that standpoint, it’s not a matter of simply dead history. It is a matter of reading of real people who went through real things, and one of the real, crucial reasons it’s recorded for us.

We find as we go through that God’s people, time after time, century after century, have confronted many of the same problems, same troubles and same temptations. Satan has sought to undermine and thwart things the same way over and over again. We are going to find that next time when we go through Ezra and Nehemiah.

If we study the Bible from that perspective, there is nothing new that will ever happen. Any problem, anything that comes up, there is precedence for it. You can find it, and you look to see how God wanted it handled. How should the people have handled it? How did those who were righteous and faithful to God handle it? We study it from that perspective so that if or when we ever find ourselves in a similar situation, we will already know how to react and respond. It is an important way to study the Bible.

Too many times we study it, and it is just kind of a story that people go through and get bogged down with all the “begats” and all of the kings and all of this—and they miss the overview. It is there so that we can learn from the examples of others and not have to make all the same mistakes. The lesson of history is that very few ever learn anything from history. But we have the opportunity. God has given it to us, provided it for us. There are parallels all through the Scriptures of what we are going through and will go through between now and the end of the age. We have to study the Scriptures to find those parallels and apply them in a right way. Hopefully we have found some information of value as we have gone through this survey of the Old Testament. We will conclude the Old Testament with the next couple of studies.



Chronology of Kings and Chronicles