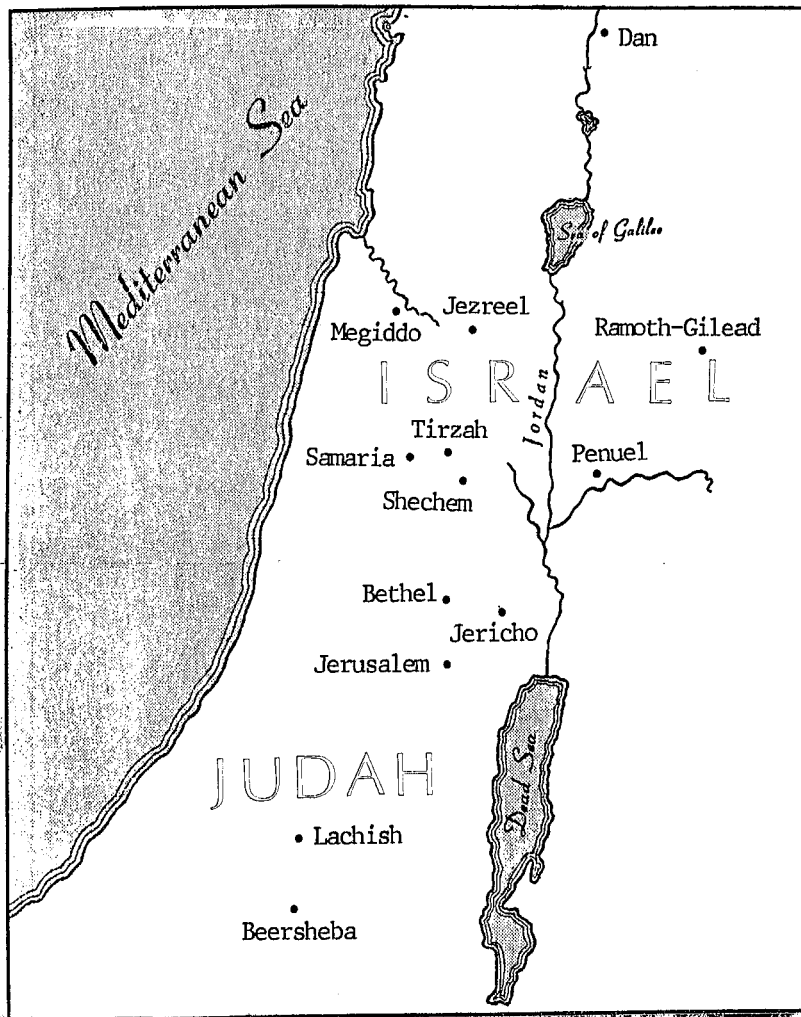


SIMPLE, STIMULATING STUDIES  
IN  
Divided Kingdom History



By  
Donald G. Hunt

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IN

# Divided Kingdom History

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--SEE PAGES 94-104 FOR ASSIGNMENTS--

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# Table of Contents

PART ONE	6
Solomon's Glorious Kingdom: His Beginning	7
Solomon's Glorious Kingdom: His Many Enterprises	7
Solomon's Glorious Kingdom: Testimonies to It	8
Solomon's Glorious Kingdom to be Divided	8
The Once-Glorious Kingdom is Divided	9
Tabular View of the Divided Kingdom	10
PART TWO	13
Jeroboam's Notorious Departures	14
A Young Prophet Appears on the Scene	14
The Young Prophet Meets a Tragic Death	15
The Arrogant Jeroboam Continues His Wrong Ways	16
God Delivers Bad News to Jeroboam	17
Rehoboam's First Three Years are Prosperous	17
Rehoboam Foolishly Forsakes Jehovah	18
Judah's Wealth is Removed to Egypt	18
Abijah's Reign Includes a Great Victory over Jeroboam	19
A Powerful New King Arises in Judah	20
Jeroboam's Son Reigns Only Two Years	20
The Wicked Baasha's House Will be Wiped out Also	21
Asa Gains a Great Victory over Ethiopia	21
Baasha Seeks to Stop His People's Leaving Israel	22
Zimri Touches off a Turbulent Time in Israel	23
Omri Leaves His Mark	24
Asa is Still Reigning when Ahab Succeeds Omri	24
Another Great King Arises in the South	26
Elijah Prays for and Proclaims a Drought upon the Land	26
Elijah Comes out of Hiding and Challenges the Whole Baal Set-up	27
Elijah Flees from Jezebel's Threat	29
Elisha—From Plowman to Prophet's Helper	29
God Gives Ahab Two Great Victories over Syria	30
Ahab Takes a Righteous Man's Vineyard	32
Jehoshaphat Makes Peace with Ahab	33
The Condemned Ahab Cannot Escape God's Judgment	33
Jehoshaphat is Rebuked for Helping Ahab	35
Ahaziah is Israel's New King	36
Jehoshaphat Reforms His Judicial System	36
God Gives Jehoshaphat Victory over a Powerful Coalition	37
The Royal Fleet is Destroyed before Leaving Harbor	37
King Ahaziah has a Run-in with Elijah	38
Another Son of Ahab Becomes King in the North	39
Elisha Sees Elijah Translated	39
The City of Jericho Asks Elisha's Help	41
A Bethel Kid-Gang Mocks Elisha	42
God Gives Victory through Elisha	42
Elisha Solves a Widow's Serious Problem	44
Elisha's Special Room at Shunem	44
Elisha also Performs a Resurrection	45
A Hard-Times Miracle	46
Elisha Multiplies Loaves	47
A Great Syrian General is Healed	47
The Borrowed Ax	49
Elisha Foils the Syrian King's Plans	49
Elisha Predicts Incredible Plenty	50
The Shunammite Woman and Her Land	51
The Syrian King Consults Elisha	52
Jehoram Becomes Co-Regent with Jehoshaphat	53

The Good King Jehoshaphat Dies	53
Judah Declines under Jehoram	54
Another Ahab–Related King in the South	54
Jehu is Anointed to Destroy Ahab's House and Baalism	55
Jehu Begins by Killing Israel's Jehoram	55
Ahaziah is Sought Out and Killed Also	56
<b>PART THREE</b>	<b>57</b>
Jezebel's Ignominious Death	58
All of Ahab's Sons are Killed	58
Ahab's Descendants in Judah are also Killed	59
Jehu also Wipes out Baal-Worshippers	59
Surprise: Jehu Continues Jeroboam's Calf-Worship	60
Athaliah Usurps the Throne of Judah	60
A Boy-King for Judah	61
The Continuing Power of Jehoiada	62
Joash Repairs the Temple	62
Jehu's Last Years are Troublous	63
Syria Gives Jehoahaz Trouble	63
Apostasy Sets in after Jehoiada's Death	64
Another Joash Becomes King in the North	64
Reverses Come on Judah's Joash to His End	64
Judah's New King Executes His Father's Assassins	65
Israel's King Joash Visits the Ailing Elisha	66
A Most Unusual Miracle	66
Israel Recovers Its Cities beyond the Jordan	66
Amaziah has a Great Victory over Edom	67
Amaziah Picks a Fight with Israel	67
A Second Jeroboam Becomes King in the North	68
Jeroboam again Regains Cities beyond Jordan	68
Amaziah Becomes Judah's Second Assassinated King	68
A Powerful King Takes over in the South	69
Uzziah's Reign is Prosperous for Judah	69
Israel's Last Powerful King Dies	69
Time Runs out on the Jehu Dynasty	70
Another Assassination within a Month Rocks Israel	70
Uzziah's Success Goes to His Head	70
Assyrian Invasion Begins Israel's Downfall	71
Death Ends Menahem's Ten-Year Rule	71
Pekahiah is Israel's New Ruler	71
Another Assassination in the North	71
Judah's Second Longest Reign Ends	72
The Godly Jotham Prospers in the South	72
Reverses in Jotham's Last Years	72
A Wicked King Takes over in Judah	72
Assyria Again Invades Israel	73
A Series of Military Struggles Involving Judah	73
The North's Last King Takes Over	74
Hezekiah Becomes King in Judah	74
Hoshea Pays Tribute to Assyria	74
Revival under Judah's New King	74
The Great Passover under Hezekiah	75
Further Revival under Hezekiah	75
God Blesses Hezekiah and Judah	76
The Northern Kingdom is Toppled by Assyria	76
A New Nation Replaces Israel in Its Land	77
The Conglomerate Religion of the New Nation	77
<b>PART FOUR</b>	<b>78</b>
Sennacherib Attacks Judah's Fortified Cities	79
Hezekiah Becomes Deathly Ill	79



Hezekiah Receives Visitors from Babylon	79
Jerusalem Prepares to Withstand Assyria	80
Hezekiah Offers Assyria a Pay-Off	80
Sennacherib Wants a Full Surrender	81
The Prophet's Comforting Message	81
Another Threatening Message to Jerusalem	81
Hezekiah's Fifteen Years of Prosperity	82
The Exceeding Wickedness of Manasseh	82
A Chastened Manasseh Repents	83
Manasseh's Prosperous Years in Jerusalem	83
Summarizing Words about Manasseh	84
The New King Reverts to Idolatry	84
Amon is Assassinated by His Servants	84
A Boy-King for Judah	84
Josiah Reacts against Idolatry in His Eighth Year	85
Josiah Orders the Temple Repaired	85
The Book of the Law is Found	85
Josiah Observes a Great Passover	86
Josiah Meets an Untimely End	86
Jehoahaz is King for Only Three Months	87
Jehoiakim's Wicked Reign	87
Another Deportation to Babylon	88
Jeremiah Sends a Letter to the Captives	88
Zedekiah Becomes Judah's Last King	89
Jeremiah and His Wooden Yoke	89
Nebuchadnezzar Lays Siege to Jerusalem	89
Another Message for Zedekiah	90
Egypt Sends Help	90
Jeremiah Rebukes the People's Action	90
Jeremiah is Arrested and Imprisoned	91
Jerusalem Falls to the Babylonians	91
FINAL ASSIGNMENTS	93
ASSIGNMENT I	94
THE KINGS OF JUDAH	94
THE KINGS OF ISRAEL	94
ASSIGNMENT II	96
INFORMATION ABOUT THE KINGS OF ISRAEL	96
QUIZ OVER "INFORMATION ABOUT THE KINGS OF ISRAEL"	99
INFORMATION ABOUT THE KINGS OF JUDAH	99
QUIZ OVER "INFORMATION ABOUT THE KINGS OF JUDAH"	104
<b>Index</b>	105

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## INTRODUCTION

The hearty reception and the wide use of the author's previous study books and booklets, beginning with his "Simple, Stimulating Studies in Christian Stewardship" written when he was 19 and followed by a lengthy list of other productions, have encouraged him to continue to his present age. At the time of this first printing he is 72, so his writing of study works has spanned a full half-century and then some!

This book is planned for a double use: for an individual's personal use and for class use. Where a class uses it, its usefulness is enhanced. But its use is also invaluable to the preacher, the teacher, or the individual Christian who wants to increase his/her knowledge of God's wonderful Word.

You will notice that each event has its special assignments, which are followed by the author's interesting and helpful comments, which in turn lead to the questions to test what has been learned about the event.

In approaching these studies let us realize they are found in the Old Testament, the sacred writings of Israel but which are also sacred to us who live today. Since there are several summaries of such history found both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, we can see that the Jews loved their background history. Kings were very careful to keep records of the happenings of their reigns, and these are referred to in such passages as I Kings 14:19 ("The rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred, and how he reigned, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel"), I Kings 14:29 ("Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?"), etc. Since both Israel and Judah had their national lives disrupted by the Assyrian destruction of Israel and by the Babylonian captivity of Judah, foreign invasions that not only destroyed their capital cities but removed the citizenry to their conquerors' lands, these national "chronicles" of both Israel and Judah have long ago perished. This fact made God's briefer record of their history greatly appreciated by the Jews of later times. No doubt God's account found in the Bible was shorter than the kings' accounts. An extreme example would be King Jeroboam II's forty-one year reign being covered in only seven verses (II Kings 14:23-29). God's account of the various kings' reigns told of their ancestries, ages when they began to rule, the lengths of their reigns, whether they were good or bad before

God, and some of the more significant events of their respective reigns.

For us who live today and who are not Jewish, there are several things that interest us about this history. First of all, it is an appreciated continuance coverage of God's Old Testament people without which we would have a great information-void following the death of King Solomon. This material of many chapters and many events contains many valuable lessons for us and yields many true-to-life illustrations for teaching these lessons. These lessons should not be overlooked nor forgotten. They, like other Old Testament narratives, have been written for our admonition (I Cor. 10:11).

Though Divided Kingdom History is history, this book takes you back as though you were reliving this history by presenting it in the present tense, making it flow, making it more interesting, and at times making it hard to lay the book down.

There are three ways this extended history could be presented: (1) The Bible arrangement is to announce a new king, tell what year of the king's reign in the other kingdom he began, and then follow his reign until he dies. Then if the other king is still reigning, the Biblical account takes up the reign of the new king and covers it until its end. And as long as the king in the other kingdom is reigning, the account will bring on new kings and follow their reigns to their ends. Then when finally the other king is dead, then the account will switch over and begin following the dead king's successor(s) in the other kingdom. If you want to make a particular study of this arrangement, carefully study the entire chapter of I Kings 15. (2) Another arrangement for studying the history is to study Judah's history king by king as a separate study and then do the same for Israel's history. (3) But the arrangement followed in this book is the chronological arrangement; that is, to list all the events in both kingdoms' histories and study them in the order of their occurrence. This demands more intensive study, but it is a satisfying arrangement—especially to us who use the English language.

May you who purchase and make use of this book be blessed with the divine knowledge that has blessed your author in its study, compilation, and writing.

KINGS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM ERA			
	Father	Reign	Prophecy Reference
Saul	Kish	40 years	Deut. 17:14-20
David	Jesse	40 years	
Solomon	David	40 years	

## **PART ONE**

### **The Kingdom that will be DIVIDED**

**The great kingdom Solomon inherited from his father David and which enjoyed many years of unprecedented prosperity under his own rule will be broken in two after his death because of his own mistakes and sins.**

## 1. Solomon's Glorious Kingdom: His Beginning

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study the following material for a quiz.
2. Memorize I Kings 3:9 and I Kings 4:30.

### COMMENTS

Everyone has heard of Solomon, reputedly the world's wisest man, but few know about or realize just how much the Bible says about and elaborates on his earthly greatness.

He was the third king of Israel. Saul, the farmer-king, had been the first. David, the shepherd-musician-warrior king of whose line the Messiah would come, has been the second. Solomon, though not the oldest of David's sons, was nevertheless his choice to succeed him and thereby become Israel's third king (I Kings 1:28-30). Like Saul and David before him, Solomon will rule forty years. Let us go back to those days and relive what happened.

The aged David is too feeble to attend Solomon's coronation, but he gives the instructions for it, and the instructions are carried out; namely, Solomon rides David's mule to Gihon Spring (Jerusalem's water supply in the Kidron Valley), where the priest Zadok anoints him king after which trumpets sound and those attending the coronation shout, "God save king Solomon" (I Kings 1:32-39).

It is a great kingdom young King Solomon inherits from his famous father. God has helped David subdue his enemies at home and Israel's enemy-nations abroad. This will leave Solomon's reign free from troubles to become a remarkable builder. His territory extends from "the river" (thought to be the Euphrates) to Egypt (I Kings 4:21). Since we read of no wars of expansion under Solomon, we conclude all his territory and subjects are inherited from his father's successful reign.

One of Solomon's first recorded acts is to call a great mass-meeting at Gibeon, which is a few miles north of Jerusalem

where the tabernacle is now located (II Chron. 1:1-3). In rightful veneration of God who has enabled him to become king he here makes a great sacrifice of one thousand burnt offerings (II Chron. 1:5,6). This very night God makes His first appearance to him (He will make two more during his reign) in which He offers him a blessing of Solomon's own choosing (II Chron. 1:7). The greatness of the kingdom he has received is recognized in his prayer for wisdom with which to rule it (II Chron. 1:8-10). He will later write that wisdom is what enables a king to rule (Prov. 8:16), and it surely proves true in Solomon's case, for from the time God grants him this special measure of wisdom his people respect him for his unprecedented wisdom (I Kings 3:16-28), and his name spreads abroad throughout the world of his day (I Kings 4:29-34).

### QUESTIONS

1. Solomon is especially known for his great \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Name Israel's first three kings.
3. Why does David not go to Solomon's coronation?
4. What instructions does David give for the coronation?
5. Why is Solomon's reign free from war?
6. What is the extent of his territory?
7. Why does Solomon call a great mass-meeting?
8. How great a sacrifice does he offer here?
9. What generous offer does God make him?
10. What does Solomon choose?
11. Quote from memory I Kings 3:9 and I Kings 4:30.

## 2. Solomon's Glorious Kingdom: His Many Enterprises

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study the following material for a quiz.
2. Memorize II Chron. 1:15 and I Kings 4:32.

### COMMENTS

Glancing at II Chron. 23:2--27:34 one can see David had his government well organized, and Solomon wisely continues the same orderly procedures (II Chron. 8:14; I Kings 4:6,7,22,23,27,28).

David had wanted to build God a temple in Jerusalem but had been forbidden to do so (II Sam. 7:1-7), but he

his son and successor will build it (II Sam. 7:12,13). This prohibition did not keep David from collecting materials for it throughout the rest of his reign (I Chron. 22:1-5,14-16). The building of this great temple becomes one of the special highlights of Solomon's illustrious career. Seven years are required for constructing this beautiful building (I Kings 6:37,38). Several chapters are devoted to its construction and dedication (I Kings 5:1--9:15). It replaces the tabernacle constructed by Moses and Israel at Mt. Sinai as the place where God records His name, where the priesthood functions, and to which the tribes come during their annual feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

Solomon also builds a house for himself, also the great House of the Forest of Lebanon, and various other prominent buildings (I Kings 7:1-12).

After this he builds and fortifies military cities throughout his kingdom (II Chron. 8:1-6; I Kings 9:15-19; II Chron. 9:25).

Next he adds another dimension to his operation when he makes sea-going ships at Ezion-geber, a port on one of the upper reaches of the Red Sea—look it up on a map (I Kings 9:26). This fleet of ships goes to Ophir for gold, precious stones, and algum trees which he plants in Jerusalem and from which he makes musical instruments (I Kings 10:12; II Chron. 9:10,11). And every third year his ships also bring gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks from Tarshish (II Chron. 9:21). Since his men are "dry-landers", he hires some of King Hiram's skilled seamen from Phoenicia to help on the sea trips (I Kings 9:27).

Since Solomon reigns over all the territory from Egypt to the Euphrates, he collects immense tribute year by year (II Chron. 9:13,24,28; I Kings 10:14,15).

Solomon has quarries and smelters for all the many utensils and fixtures he makes out of metal. Archaeologist Nelson Glueck and his workers have found evidences of such in the Jordan Valley (where I Kings 7:46 says Solomon did castings), also south of the Dead Sea, and

at Ezion-geber on the Red Sea where he had his ships.

Is it any wonder that Jesus' Sermon of the Mount refers to Solomon's great glory (Matt. 6:28,29) when we consider the above material and when I Kings 10:23 says he exceeded all the kings of the earth both in wisdom and riches? His lavish throne is unrivaled. It is made of ivory, is overlaid with the best gold, and has six wide steps approaching it with two lions standing on each step (I Kings 10:18-20). All his drinking vessels are of the best gold--none is of silver (I Kings 10:21). The weight of gold that comes to him each year is a whopping six hundred sixty-six talents (I Kings 10:14). Thus he is able to make silver and gold as plenteous in Jerusalem as stones (II Chron. 1:15).

Solomon wrote three Old Testament books: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. He is known for speaking proverbs: three thousand of them (I Kings 4:32). Thus it is not surprising that God directs him to preserve some of the best of them in his book of Proverbs. He is also a student of life: its values, its purpose, etc. His inspired conclusions are found in his book of Ecclesiastes. He is also very interested in music: he has one thousand and five songs (I Kings 4:32). Song of Solomon is but one of them, being to us more like an operetta than just a song.

#### QUESTIONS

1. How long is Solomon's temple under construction?
2. What does it replace?
3. Name some of the other buildings Solomon builds.
4. Where does he construct his ships?
5. What do his ships bring from Ophir?
6. What do they bring from Tarshish?
7. Who are hired to help on these sea trips?
8. Name two places where Archaeologists have found smelters of Solomon.
9. In what sermon does Jesus mention Solomon's glory?
10. In what two ways does Solomon excel all other contemporary kings?
11. Describe Solomon's throne.
12. Of what material are his drinking vessels made?
13. What three Old Testament books does Solomon write?
14. Quote from memory II Chron. 1:15 and I Kings 4:32.

### 3. Solomon's Glorious Kingdom: Testimonies to It

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study the following material for a quiz.
2. Memorize I Kings 4:25 and Eccl. 2:9.

#### COMMENTS

**B**ecause God has so blessed Solomon over such a long reign, it is no wonder we read that "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry" (I Kings 4:20), that "he had peace on all sides round about him" (I Kings 4:24), and that "Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon" (I Kings 4:25).

Eccl. 2:4-9 records, "I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem."

The queen of Sheba made a notable visit to hear the wisdom of Solomon and to behold the glory of his kingdom, a visit famous enough that Jesus made mention of it many centuries later (Matt. 12:42). II Chron. 9:3-8 gives us an account of her impressions from that visit: "When the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel; his cupbearers also, and their apparel; and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true

report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts, and of thy wisdom: howbeit I believed not their words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: for thou exceedest the fame that I heard. Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne, to be king for the LORD thy God: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do judgment and justice."

Many centuries later, even after the Babylonian Captivity, they will still be remembering Solomon's greatness (Ezra 5:11; 4:20).

#### QUESTIONS

1. What did Solomon say in Eccl. about his busy enterprising career?
2. What did the queen of Sheba see that caused her to be so impressed with Solomon's greatness?

### 4. Solomon's Glorious Kingdom to be Divided

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study the following material for a quiz.
2. Memorize I Kings 11:4 and I Kings 11:11.

#### COMMENTS

**I**t is always sad to see something decline that has taken years to build up, that has been strong and great, and that has been a blessing. Kingdoms are often like roses: their "budding" years can show much promise; their "flowering" years can be great and glorious; and then come "decay" and disintegration.

We have been studying about Solomon in all his glory, a glory that has been his because of his successful father and because of God's great blessing of wisdom. To such a monarch nothing is greater than the prosperous, uninterrupted reign of his descendants on

his throne from generation to generation. But such is not to be with Solomon's throne, for within a few weeks after his death most of his kingdom will be wrested from his family and given to another while his son will have but a fragment of Solomon's kingdom to rule. We shall see this will be a punishment on Solomon for his sins. What are his sins?

He has violated God's instructions concerning kings in Deut. 17:14-17. God said through Moses that when Israel had a king, he should not multiply three things: horses, wives, and riches (silver and gold). To multiply horses would be to trust in his own military build-up rather than God (Psa. 20:7,8; Isa. 31:1). There would arise problems and dangers out of multiplying wives even though God permitted polygamy under the Old Testament (Abraham, Jacob, David, etc.). Some riches were a sign of God's blessing (I Kings 3:13; Prov. 3:13,16), but to go overboard in the accumulation of great wealth and the luxurious living normally accompanying such wealth would make such to be unwise and dangerous to godliness. Solomon is the chief violator of the Deut. 17 instructions: he multiplies horses (I Kings 10:27,28,29), wives (I Kings 11:1-3), and silver and gold (II Chron. 1:15).

Solomon has also violated God's orders to Israel in Deut. 7:3-5. God said not to make marriages with foreigners, but Solomon has (I Kings 11:1,2). God foreknew such marriages would lead an Israelite into worshiping their god or gods, and that is exactly what has happened to Solomon (I Kings 11:3-8). Who would have thought a king so blessed, a person so wise, one to whom God has personally spoken, and a person who has written three Bible books would ever become idolatrous? This surprise will be recalled centuries later by Nehemiah when he will say, "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless EVEN HIM did

outlandish women cause to sin" (Neh. 13:26).

What had God said He would do if such happens? He told David He would punish his son if he sinned while still remembering His covenant with David (II Sam. 7:12-16). God tells Solomon He will cause Israel to be deported out of the land, his temple to be destroyed, and Israel's name to become a byword among the nations (I Kings 9:6-9).

God's final message to Solomon is one of great displeasure and bad news for the future of the kingdom. Nearly all of Solomon's glorious kingdom will be taken from his family and given to his servant. Out of God's respect for Solomon's father David, though, the actual division of the kingdom will await Solomon's death (I Kings 11:9-13). But even before Solomon's death God stirs up an old enemy of David, Hadad the Edomite (I Kings 11:14-22), and Rezon the Syrian (I Kings 11:23-25).

Solomon's chief adversary, though, will be his own servant Jeroboam, an industrious younger man, son of a widow, to whom Solomon has committed great responsibility (I Kings 11:26-28). One day after Jeroboam has gone out of Jerusalem, he is met by the prophet Ahijah, who catches him by his new garment, cuts it into twelve pieces, and gives him ten pieces, telling him God will give him ten tribes to rule (I Kings 11:29-33,37). At the same time God urges Jeroboam to be a good king like David, making special promises to him if he will (I Kings 11:38). Solomon's learning of this makes it necessary for Jeroboam to flee from Israel, and he settles in Egypt with Shishak, where he remains until Solomon dies (I Kings 11:40).

The division of the kingdom will be the beginning of the kingdom's weakness and many calamities in harmony with what Jesus later observed: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation" (Matt. 12:25); "That kingdom cannot stand" (Mark 3:24).

1. What three things did Solomon multiply contrary to God's instructions for kings in Deut.?
2. What law of God did Solomon violate in his marriages?
3. What does God tell Solomon He is going to do as a punishment?
4. Tell about Ahijah's prophecy to Jeroboam.
5. Where does Jeroboam find a refuge from Solomon?
6. Quote I Kings 11:4 and I Kings 11:11.

## 5. The Once-Glorious Kingdom is Divided

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 12:1-24 and II Chron. 10:1 --11:4.
2. Study the following material for a quiz.
3. Memorize I Kings 12:4 and I Kings 12:13.

### COMMENTS

While it is God's will to divide Solomon's kingdom, there is also a great unrest and dissatisfaction among the people themselves because of the oppressive taxes Solomon's extensive building program has placed on them. Years before when Israel was clamoring for a king, God foretold that a king would take their sons for his military, their daughters for his cooks, their fields and vineyards and oliveyards to support his program, a tenth of their seed for his fields, their servants and maids as well as their asses to work in his fields, and a tenth of their sheep (I Sam. 8:10-17). The prophet Samuel said the time would come when they would groan and sigh under their king's program and demands (I Sam. 10:18). All this comes home to them under Solomon.

As soon as Solomon dies, Jeroboam is immediately summoned from Egypt (II Chron. 10:2), and he returns to become the spokesman for the opposition party.

The time comes for the coronation of Solomon's son Rehoboam. He senses the rebellion that is in the air, for Israel has gathered at the ancient Shechem, a well known assembly place in the center of the land since the days of Joshua (Josh. 24:1) instead of at Jerusalem for what turns out to be more of a confrontation than a coronation. Led by Jeroboam, Israel

### QUESTIONS

demands Rehoboam to lighten the heavy load they have borne under Solomon as a condition of their accepting him as their king. He asks for three days to consider the matter and make his decision. During the three days he counsels with two different groups, each group giving him different advice. The older men advise him to listen to the people and lighten the load, but his younger advisers tell him to announce the rigid policies by which he will rule them. He agrees with the flattering advice of his age-group and answers Jeroboam and the people roughly and rashly, expecting them to submit to his bold declaration. His attitude becomes the occasion whereby God's decree against the kingdom will be carried out after Solomon's death. Immediately the people revolt and depart from Shechem to their homes without taking any further part in crowning or recognizing Rehoboam as their king. Only those of the Jerusalem area accept him as king.

But Rehoboam does not give up easily. He will proceed as if he were indeed king over all the land by dispatching the head of his tribute-gathering department (Adoram) to collect taxes from all the tribes of Israel. But he finds the revolting tribes will not be subdued by such pressure-methods. Instead of paying taxes they turn on Adoram and kill him with stones, and Rehoboam who has accompanied him on the mission hurries to get into his chariot and back to Jerusalem before he receives the same fate. This confirms the fact that the bulk of the people will have no part of Rehoboam's rulership.

If they will not have Rehoboam as their king, whom will they have? They turn to their spokesman Jeroboam. Since the kingdom's capital has been Jerusalem, and that is still in Rehoboam's possession, Jeroboam sets up his government at Shechem (on the west side of the Jordan where Rehoboam's coronation took place) and at Penuel (on the east side of the Jordan).

The appointment of Jeroboam as the rival king stirs Rehoboam to organize an army of one hundred eighty thousand

from his two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) in an attempt to bring the entire kingdom back under his rule. At this point God intervenes by the prophet Shemaiah, who personally informs Rehoboam that he is not to go to war against his brethren because the division of the kingdom is of God. When Rehoboam regards the message of the prophet and cancels his plans to subdue the revolting tribes, the division of Solomon's once-glorious kingdom is absolute and final!

#### QUESTIONS

1. How were the people feeling by the end of Solomon's reign?
2. Who becomes spokesman for the opposition to Rehoboam?
3. On what condition will the people submit to Rehoboam as the next king?
4. What advice do the older men give him?
5. What advice do the younger men give him?
6. Which two tribes stay with Rehoboam?
7. From what two places does Jeroboam rule his territories on both sides of the Jordan?
8. Tell of Rehoboam's attempt to collect taxes from all the tribes.
9. Tell of Rehoboam's organizing a large army to fight against the revolting tribes.

### 6. Tabular View of the Divided Kingdom

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study the following material for a quiz.
2. Memorize Amos 5:2.

#### COMMENTS

**B**efore beginning a study of the main events in the two kingdoms' history, let us acquaint ourselves with a summary—a birds eye view—of both kingdoms.

#### A. The Northern Kingdom.

It is composed of ten tribes (I Kings 11:31). Since they are geographically mostly in the north, this part of the kingdom is commonly referred to as the Northern Kingdom.

It retains the covenant name "Israel" (I Kings 14:7) since most of the kingdom is still intact in it.

Its advantages: more tribes, more people, more area, and more fertile land.

During its history it has several capitals. From I Kings 12:25 it appears that Jeroboam selects Shechem as Israel's first capital but later moves the capital to Penuel (the ancient Peniel east of the Jordan where Jacob wrestled with the angel--Gen. 32:24,30,31), or he may have both of them as capital cities, Shechem for west of the Jordan and Penuel for east of it. Later in his twenty-two year reign he moves his capital to Tirzah (I Kings 14:12,17) seven miles northeast of Shechem, a place known for its beauty (S. of Sol. 6:4). The first five kings of the North (Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, and Zimri) rule from Tirzah. The sixth king (Omri) builds a new capital city (Samaria--I Kings 16:23,24), which is about ten miles west of Tirzah. All succeeding kings of the North maintain this tremendous site as their capital. It is built on a hill completely surrounded by valley so attackers have the disadvantage of having to fight uphill regardless of the direction from which they attack.

It is ruled by nineteen different kings beginning with Jeroboam and ending with Hoshea with reigns ranging from Zimri's seven days to Jeroboam II's forty-one years. The Bible's coverage of each king's reign specifically mentions he does evil in the sight of Jehovah, departing not from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin (referring to his golden calves). Their names and lengths of reign in order are:

Jeroboam - 22 years

Nadab - 2 years

Baasha - 24 years

Elah - 2 years

Zimri - 7 days

Omri - 12 years

Ahab - 22 years

Ahaziah - 2 years

Jehoram - 12 years

Jehu - 28 years

Jehoahaz - 17 years

Joash - 16 years

Jeroboam II - 41 years

Zechariah - 6 months

Shallum - 1 month  
 Menahem - 10 years  
 Pekahiah - 2 years  
 Pekah - 20 years  
 Hoshea - 9 years

Its two hundred twelve year history runs from the division of the kingdom (933 B.C.) until it is destroyed in 721 B.C. during which time it is ruled by nine different dynasties or families of kings: (1) Jeroboam and his son; (2) Baasha and his son; (3) Zimri; (4) Omri and his descendants; (5) Jehu and his descendants; (6) Shallum; (7) Menahem and his son; (8) Pekah; and (9) Hoshea.

It falls to the Assyrians (capital at Nineveh) in three different invasions. The first invasion comes in Menahem's reign (II Kings 15:19,20) and is predicted by Amos's vision of grasshoppers (Amos 7:1-3). The second invasion comes during Pekah's reign (II Kings 15:29) and is predicted by Amos's vision of fire (Amos 7:4-6). The third invasion, the one that destroyed the Northern Kingdom, comes during Hoshea's reign (II Kings 17:4-6) and is predicted by Amos's vision of the plumbline (Amos 7:7-9). Amos predicts that the Northern Kingdom when destroyed will never be rebuilt (Amos 5:2 and Amos 8:14). And after they are deported from their land by the Assyrians, they are never permitted to return to their homeland. In time they become scattered, die off, and are absorbed into other nations so they are now often referred to as the "ten lost tribes of Israel".

#### B. The Southern Kingdom

It is composed of two tribes (I Kings 12:21). Since those tribes are geographically in the south, this part of the kingdom is commonly referred to as the Southern Kingdom.

It is called "Judah" (I Kings 12:23) since its largest element is the large tribe of Judah.

Its advantages: Davidic line of kings, Jerusalem as its capital, the temple, the priesthood, and the tribe that will be preserved to bring the Messiah into the

world (Heb. 7:14).

It retains the historic capital at Jerusalem (I Kings 14:21).

It is ruled by nineteen kings and one usurper (Athaliah) beginning with Rehoboam and ending with Zedekiah with reigns ranging from Jehoahaz's and Jehoiachin's three-month reigns to Manasseh's fifty-five-year reign. Some are evil, some are good, and some are partly good and partly bad. The worst is Manasseh before he is punished and repents. The best are Hezekiah and Josiah. Their names and lengths of reigns in order are:

Rehoboam - 17 years  
 Abijah - 3 years  
 Asa - 41 years  
 Jehoshaphat - 25 years  
 Jehoram - 8 years  
 Ahaziah - 1 year  
 Athaliah - 6 years  
 Joash - 40 years  
 Amaziah - 29 years  
 Uzziah - 52 years  
 Jotham - 16 years  
 Ahaz - 16 years  
 Hezekiah - 29 years  
 Manasseh - 55 years  
 Amon - 2 years  
 Josiah - 31 years  
 Jehoahaz - 3 months  
 Jehoiakim - 11 years  
 Jehoiachin - 3 months  
 Zedekiah - 11 years

Its three hundred forty-seven year history (135 longer than Israel's) runs from the division of the kingdom (933 B.C.) until it is carried into Babylonian Captivity in 586 B.C. Because Judah's kings are all of David's line, there are not the number of assassinations and governmental shake-ups that plague Israel from time to time.

It falls to Babylon in three different invasions. The first invasion comes in Jehoiakim's reign (II Chron. 36:5-7) in 606 B.C. The second invasion comes in

Jehoiachin's reign (II Kings 24:10-16) in 597 B.C. The third invasion, the invasion that destroys the temple and Jerusalem and that deports most of Judah to Babylon, comes in Zedekiah's reign (II Kings 25:1-21) in 586 B.C. In punishment for its sins Judah's Babylonian captivity lasts seventy years (from 606 B.C. to 536 B.C.) after which it is returned to its land to repopulate and repossess their places, to rebuild Jerusalem, to rebuild the temple, to re-establish the priesthood and its religion, and to await the birth of the promised Messiah who will come through them.

Following is a chart-summary of the two kingdoms: *See Page 12*

After the seventy years of captivity end, Zerubbabel and the priest Joshua will lead fifty thousand Jews back to the land in 536 B. C., resulting in the temple being rebuilt, Mosaic religion being reinstated, and the land beginning to be resettled. In 457 B. C. the godly priest and scribe Ezra will return to Jerusalem to conduct much needed reforms, and in 444 B. C. Nehemiah will return to rebuild Jerusalem's wall.

#### QUESTIONS

1. What is the Northern Kingdom called?
2. What is the Southern Kingdom called?
3. How many tribes are in the Northern Kingdom?
4. How many tribes are in the Southern Kingdom?
5. What different cities are at one time or another capital cities in the North?
6. What is the capital of the Southern Kingdom?
7. List three advantages held by the Northern Kingdom?
8. List three advantages held by the Southern Kingdom?
9. How many different rulers does the North have?
10. What makes all of them bad rulers?
11. How many different rulers does the South have?
12. Comment on their character.
13. How many different dynasties of rulers does the North have?
14. How many different dynasties does the South have?
15. How many years does the Northern Kingdom last?
16. What nation conquers it?
17. In what year?
18. What do we call those tribes today?
19. How many years does the Southern Kingdom have before it goes into captivity?
20. What nation takes it captive?
21. When?
22. For how many years?
23. What do they do upon their return to their land?



	NORTHERN KINGDOM	SOUTHERN KINGDOM
<b>Tribes</b>	10: Reuben, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, Ephraim, Manasseh, Dan, Asher, Gad, Naphtali	2: Judah and Benjamin
<b>Name</b>	Israel	Judah
<b>Advantages</b>	More tribes More people More area More fertile land	Davidic kings Jerusalem The temple The priesthood The Messianic tribe (Judah)
<b>Capitals</b>	Shechem Penuel Tirzah Samaria	Jerusalem
<b>Kings</b>	9 different dynasties  19 kings all evil	1 dynasty (David's)  19 kings and 1 usurper  some evil, some good, some partly good and partly evil
<b>Duration</b>	212 years (933-721 B.C.)	347 years (933-586 B.C.)
<b>Conquered by</b>	Assyria in 3 attacks: Under Menahem Under Pekah Under Hoshea	Babylon in 3 attacks: Under Jehoiakim Under Jehoiachin Under Zedekiah
<b>Later History</b>	None--Captives become absorbed in other nations so they are now known as the "10 lost tribes of Israel"	Returned to its land after 70 years of Babylonian Captivity to rebuild and prepare for the coming of Christ

## PART TWO

### From the Division of the Kingdom to the Deaths of Both Kingdoms' Kings

From this point forward we will not be studying Solomon's glorious kingdom but the divided kingdom-- actually the two rival kingdoms now occupying the northern and southern areas of Solomon's kingdom.

## 7. Jeroboam's Notorious Departures

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 12:26-33.
2. Study the account until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. He sets up golden calves at Dan and Bethel.
  - b. He consecrates priests who are not Levites.
  - c. He ordains a feast in the eighth month.

### COMMENTS

Though Jeroboam is not of the royal line of kings (the house of David), God gives this "nobody" an opportunity to become "somebody" and to establish his house as the ruling line in the North.

What kind of king will he be, this first king of the newly-formed Northern Kingdom? Obviously his subjects are expecting him to be more civil about the tax-load and governmental policies than Rehoboam would be, for it has been on this platform the new kingdom has been established. We also expect Jeroboam to be a godly king, for God has spoken to him through the prophet Ahijah, promising him the major part of Solomon's kingdom (I Kings 11:29-31) and other special promises if he will be a good king (I Kings 11:37,38). But these expectations of his goodness are not to be realized as we shall see.

The most notorious of all his departures is his setting up golden calves at Dan and Bethel. People who lack principle often do anything to establish a point or to gain a personal objective. Such is the case with Jeroboam. Uppermost in his selfish mind is to keep his citizens from reuniting with their brethren in Judah. He particularly fears their going to the annual feasts at Jerusalem--the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deut. 16:16; Psa 122:2-4). He fears the sentimentality of their former ties will cause them to reunite politically under Rehoboam. His solution? Prayer? No. Trust in God? No. But something of

his own doing. He decides to establish two places of worship closer than Jerusalem and to sell his people on the thought it is too much trouble to go to Jerusalem. So at Dan (in the northern end of his territory) and at Bethel (in the southern end) he sets up golden calves as objects and places of worship. And his people who want a lighter political load are easily sold on a more convenient religion. And every succeeding king on his throne will continue these places of calf-worship. So "this thing became a sin" (see I Kings 13:33,34; 16:25,26; etc.). Thus the evil he introduces continues long after his death to curse the very kingdom he has started.

But there are yet other Jeroboam-departures. One departure from God's way or one false doctrine frequently leads to another, and that to another, etc., demonstrating the worst wrong is the first wrong, for without the first there would be no second, no third, etc.

What does he do next? He makes a "house of high places" (probably a temple at Bethel) and "priests of the lowest of the people, which were not sons of Levi". For "lowest of the people" the American Standard reads, "From among all the people," which corresponds with the statement they were not of the tribe of Levi. In fact, according to II Chron. 11:14 he actually rejects the Levites from being priests, resulting in their leaving their priestly cities in the North and going over to Rehoboam in the South.

And his perverting his people's religious life continues when he ordains a feast in the eighth month, a month which the Scripture specifically says "he devised of his own heart". When people reject divine ways, they can turn only to human ways instead. In Matt. 21:25 Jesus recognized John's baptism was either from heaven or of men, and every religious doctrine as well as every religious practice is either "of God" (taught in the Bible) or "of men" (made up by man). Jeroboam himself personally officiates at the altars of sacrifice and incense.

What a presumptuous innovator he has turned out to be! Golden calves to replace Jerusalem, calling these lifeless images the gods that had brought them out of Egypt, a new temple, priests who are not Scripturally qualified, and now a feast "which he devised of his own heart". We can but marvel at his fearless, anti-Jehovah procedures after he has been set up as king by Him. Will he get away with it? We shall see.

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why would we expect Jeroboam to be more civil than Rehoboam?
3. Why does he want to keep his people out of Jerusalem?
4. How does he sell his people on using his places of worship instead of going to Jerusalem?

## 8. A Young Prophet Appears on the Scene

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 13:1-10.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. A young prophet from Judah rebukes Jeroboam.
  - b. The withered hand of Jeroboam is healed.
  - c. The prophet refuses to accept the king's hospitality-offer.

### COMMENTS

When God is displeased, He delivers His message of disapproval by man. In the days of inspiration He dispatched inspired men. Today He depends on uninspired men to deliver His oral rebukes as His Word directs.

Our hero of this event is often called "the young prophet from Judah" because we do not know his name and because he was sent from Judah to Jeroboam in the Northern Kingdom. His case will combine the boldness, the sincerity, and the trusting nature of youth that sometimes lay youth open to deception. You will like this young man, and you will cry at what happens to him.

We can only admire his courage as he crosses the border between his nation and that of Israel where he is being sent with God's message to the sinning king. As he arrives at Bethel, he sees the king himself officiating at his altar of incense. He loses no time but breaks into the very solemnity of the ceremony as he addresses the altar in these stunning words: "O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee." Notice how minutely God predicts the future of Jeroboam's altar, and three hundred fifty-one years later the prediction will be fulfilled (II Kings 23:15,16). Since it will be centuries before Josiah will come and do this, the young prophet gives an on-the-spot sign to the king to prove his prediction will come true in its own time: "This is the sign which the Lord hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out."

The arrogant king is infuriated at such ruthless condemnation of his royal religious set-up, and he entertains no thought of changing his ways. Instead he orders, "Lay hold on him," and he points to the prophet. It is at this point that God who sent the prophet steps in. Two things immediately happen: the king's hand dries up so he cannot even pull it back, and the altar splits and pours out its ashes before the king's bewildered eyes. In one clear lesson Jeroboam learns what Nebuchadnezzar will learn later--that "those that walk in pride" God "is able to abase" (Dan 4:37).

In his humbled condition what is his first concern? As is so often the case, people are more disturbed over their own personal reverses than they are the condition of their religion. Characteristically Jeroboam is more concerned over his hand than he is the altar. He asks the prophet to pray that Jehovah will restore his hand. The prophet, like many a good-hearted preacher who is forgiving of those who have done things against his

ministry, holds no personal hatred for the king who had said, "Lay hold on him," but prays for the restoration of his hand, and God answers. It is customary for people to do good to those who have done good to them, so the king (happy about getting back the use of his hand and thankful for the prophet who has been instrumental in its restoration) now invites the prophet to his place where he plans to give him a reward. But obedience to God who has told the prophet not to tarry in the land even long enough to eat a meal or need a drink of water is more important to him than anything the king might do for him. Consequently the prophet begins his homeward journey back to Judah.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What long-range prediction is made concerning the altar?
3. What order does the king give?
4. What two happenings humble the proud king?
5. How does the king regain the use of his hand?
6. Why does the prophet refuse to go to the king's house?

### 9. The Young Prophet Meets a Tragic Death

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 13:11-32.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. An older prophet invites him to his home in Bethel.
  - b. The young prophet accepts when told that an angel is behind the invitation.
  - c. While the young prophet is eating, God reveals his fate.
  - d. The young prophet is killed by a lion.
  - e. The older prophet buries him in his own tomb.

#### COMMENTS

**E**nter, a bewildering, hard-to-figure-out man--an old prophet living at Bethel. Is this man customarily a true prophet, or is he a false prophet? If true, why has he not rebuked the king's calf-worship? If false, why does he have anything to do with the young prophet?

And why does he lie to the young prophet to begin with, and then why does God deliver a revelation to the young prophet through him?

Bible students have found his case puzzling. Consequently not all have come to the same conclusion concerning him. Our own studied view is he is a true prophet who respects the young man who has so courageously delivered God's message to the sinning king that he wishes to know him personally and to have him in his own home. When one is bold in his stand for the Word of God, there will be people who admire and respect him and who wish to be identified with him in a personal way. One of the most successful ways to do this is to invite him into their homes. The aged prophet is so desirous to have the young prophet in his home he momentarily gives in to the temptation that "the end justifies the means" and tells him an angel appeared to him and told him to bring the young man home.

The foregoing assumes the aged prophet to be a prophet of God also, causing one to inquire, "If he is a true prophet, why hasn't he said something to the king about his sinful Bethel set-up?" First of all, we don't know he hasn't. But if he hasn't, he may be like a local preacher who may not be as bold against congregational conditions as an outside preacher who speaks out more readily about what he sees. This is why outside preachers are needed in any congregation from time to time--revival-meeting preaching, if you please!

Let us follow the pair now to the prophet's house. As they sit at meat, everybody seems to be happy: the young prophet because God has seemingly given him consent to accept this hospitality and the old prophet because he is able to extend the hospitality. All the while, though, God has not forgotten what He told the young prophet, and this one who so pleased God with his faithful delivery of His message to the king is now displeasing Him by his own disobedience. The sad part is he thinks he is doing right--he is deceived by what the aged

prophet claims to be a revelation. His case warns us when we know what God has said in His Word, we should accept nothing contrary to it even if its proclaimer claims it to be given him by revelation of God. Prov. 14:12 says, "There is a way that seemeth right, but the end thereof are the ways of death," and this verse perfectly fits the young man's case both in his thinking he is doing the right thing and the sad results of it.

In God's bringing judgment on the young man, we see His principle set forth in Eze. 18:24 in application: "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness...all his righteousness... shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed...shall he die." God's verdict in the disobedience of the young prophet; he will die. God's method of communicating His judgment to him is through the aged prophet, thus forcing the deceiver to expose his own lie to the very one he has deceived. For some reason in this case God is not settling for a mere rebuke of the disobedient, for God says to the young man through the aged prophet, "Thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers." Let us realize in that time not to be buried among one's own people was nothing short of a tragedy.

We are not told whether the meal continues or abruptly ends (probably the latter). Sad and fearful, the young prophet trudges out to his beast. Full of grief because of what he has brought on the young man, the aged prophet goes with him to saddle the ass for him. Sadness prevails as the prophet from Judah slowly rides off, and the old prophet tearfully watches him go.

He does not ride very far out of Bethel until he is attacked by a lion, God's agent of punishment. (Yes, there were lions in Palestine then, particularly in the thickets along the Jordan but also elsewhere: David killed a lion, I Sam. 17:34; Samson also, Judg. 14:5,6; one of David's mighty men slew one in a pit on a snowy day, I Chron. 11:22; and others.)

News is brought into Bethel of a lion's standing beside a young man's corpse and his riderless ass. The place this lion plays in this event reminds one of the place the whale played as God's agent in Jonah's case. The whale was there to swallow him. But God did not allow the whale to digest him. At God's order the whale swam near the shore and spewed Jonah out. In our present event the lion kills the prophet but does not eat him. Nor does the lion keep the aged prophet from removing the corpse. Our conclusion? Since the lion is acting contrary to a lion's nature and since this event is being presided over by Providence, God is in complete control of the lion just as He was when preserving Daniel from the lions in the den but caused his enemies to be devoured by the same lions.

As soon as the old prophet hears of the lion and the corpse, he knows it is the young man. It is the young prophet who has died, but don't forget the "living death" the old prophet will experience from this day forth because of what he has brought on the unsuspecting victim. Nothing can bother an honest person more than living after he has been responsible for the death of another. We can, therefore, understand why he goes out, gets the body, prepares it for burial, and places it in his own tomb. He feels just as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus felt who were smitten for not standing up for Jesus among their fellow-rulers but took charge of Jesus' lifeless body, bought spices and linen, and buried it in Joseph's own newly-hewn rock tomb (Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38-42).

The prophet of Bethel tells his sons, "When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones: for the saying which he cried by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass."

As he entombs the young man, he says, "Alas, my brother!" A preacher was preaching on why he had left the lodge. As he concluded his sermon, he remarked

on the lodge's use of these very words in its burial service and found a comparison between the old prophet's deceiving the young man and being partly responsible for his doom and the lodge's deceiving a candidate as to the unavailability of its secrets and "light" elsewhere and helping bring doom to him (see your author's work, "Lodges Considered from the Christian Viewpoint") and then saying at his burial, "Alas, my brother!"

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 5 memory-facts for this event.
2. Is the young prophet from Israel or Judah?
3. Does he address the king or the altar?
4. What does he predict?
5. What sign does he give Jeroboam that his prediction will come true?
6. Why does he refuse the king's hospitality?
7. Why does he go home with the aged prophet?
8. Tell of the young man's death.
9. Tell of his burial.

### 10. The Arrogant Jeroboam Continues His Wrong Ways

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 13:33,34.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. He appoints more non-Levitical priests.
  - b. God determines to wipe out his house.

#### COMMENTS

**K**ing Jeroboam was humbled when God smote his hand and split open his altar. Though king he realized he was powerless before the Power represented by the young prophet. But will his changed attitude be lasting or only temporary? With far too many people repentance is short-lived, based more on momentary feelings than on lasting conviction and is, as Hos. 6:4 records, goodness that soon passes as a morning cloud or the early dew.

Jeroboam likely learns of the young prophet's death, so he feels somewhat relieved of the pressure he felt when he was alive and in his presence. As time passes, there is a need for more priests. Jeroboam proceeds as before, selecting non-Levitical priests. It is obvious he is

going to continue his man-made religious set-up. And God, who set him up as king in the first place, decides to move against the house of Jeroboam and ultimately destroy it. The next event will tell us of His beginning to cut off Jeroboam's house.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. What factor(s) may have caused his repentance to be short-lived?

## 11. God Delivers Bad News to Jeroboam

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 14:1-18.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jeroboam's wife goes to the prophet Ahijah to see if their child will get well.
  - b. The aged prophet is not fooled by her disguise.
  - c. God will destroy both the house of Jeroboam and his kingdom.
  - d. Her sick son, who will die when she reaches home, will be the only son who will receive a burial.

## COMMENTS

Jeroboam may be through with the young prophet, but he is not through with God--or rather, God is not through with him! It is shallow thinking to suppose when a person has gotten some preacher off his back, he has also gotten rid of God.

Jeroboam's divinely-sent sorrows begin with the serious illness of his son Abijah. As he lingers between life and death, the suspense over whether he will live or die is more than the king and his wife can stand. To the south of them at Shiloh is the good prophet Ahijah. You will recall he was the one who predicted the rise of Jeroboam to power even when Solomon was still living. The king knows he is not doing Jehovah's will, but he hopes to get the prophet of Jehovah to say his son will live. Because he is not doing right, he sends his wife to the prophet instead of going himself, and as an extra precaution

she disguises herself so the prophet will not recognize her to be Jeroboam's wife. And to top it off the gift she bears is not a royal gift but a poor person's gift. All is set to obtain an answer from the aged prophet.

It was Lincoln who once said you can fool part of the people part of the time and some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time. And we might add from Jeroboam's wife's case and from Scripture that nobody can fool God any of the time! Jeroboam and his wife are to find this out (as did Cain, Ananias and Sapphira, and a host of others).

As the anxious mother hurries to Shiloh, God reveals their plot to the prophet. As she nears his house, he speaks, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? For I am sent to thee with heavy tidings." And her trip that grew out of concern for their son becomes the means of her being told his death will be the least of several calamities to come upon them. The son is to die, but because he is under the age of accountability, he will be buried. But the rest of Jeroboam's house will be brutally killed and have no burials. Those killed in the city will be eaten by dogs while those killed out in the fields will be eaten by vultures. And in time the whole kingdom itself will pass out of existence because of the idolatry Jeroboam has initiated. As we shall see Baasha will fulfill the first part (the destruction of Jeroboam's household) and Assyria the last part (the destruction of his kingdom). God's dealings with Jeroboam prove to be even more severe than His dealings with Saul and Solomon: Saul sinned, and his house lost the throne but was not blotted out; Solomon sinned, and God divided his kingdom, his family ruling only two of the original twelve tribes. In this we must see the enormity of Jeroboam's sin before God. Furthermore he has no David in his background to whom God would be good by continuing his house and family on the throne.

As the wife of Jeroboam hears tragedy after tragedy to befall her family, there is

nothing to do but return home with the sad news. And she knows she will never see her son alive again, for he will die the moment her feet enter the city. His death (like a divine sign) will prove the rest of the bad news predicted will also be fulfilled in its time. O Jeroboam, truly "the way of the transgressor is hard" (Prov. 13:15)!

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why do they choose to consult Ahijah about their son rather than somebody else?
3. Why do they not want him to know who is making the inquiry?
4. How does the prophet show she is not fooling him?
5. What does the prophet say about her son?
6. What does he say about the rest of Jeroboam's house?
7. What does he foretell about Jeroboam's kingdom?

## 12. Rehoboam's First Three Years are Prosperous

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 14:21 and II Chron. 11:5-23.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Rehoboam fortifies various cities and supplies them with military equipment and food supplies.
  - b. His kingdom is greatly strengthened by godly priests and people coming to him out of the Northern Kingdom.
  - c. He has eighteen wives, sixty concubines, twenty-eight sons, and sixty daughters.
  - d. He makes his sons rulers in the defenced cities and chooses Abijah as his successor.
  - e. During the first three years of his reign Rehoboam walks with God.

## COMMENTS

Please do not confuse the names "Jeroboam" and "Rehoboam". We have been studying about Jeroboam, the break-away ruler of the Northern Kingdom's ten tribes. Now we are studying about Rehoboam, Solomon's son ruling the Southern Kingdom's two tribes.

As we consider Rehoboam's beginning, let us recall that in his receiving only two tribes to rule, God was not angry with him but his father Solomon who had sinned grievously and had been told that nearly all of his great kingdom would be taken from his family. Rehoboam just happens to be the son who succeeds Solomon and has to be content with a two-tribe kingdom. Yes, he acted foolishly in accepting the young men's advice, but even if he had acted wisely, the full kingdom would not have been his, for God had said it would be divided, and his foolish handling of matters at his coronation but became the occasion of God's dividing the kingdom.

Our text says he and his kingdom did what was right in God's sight for three years. We have already noted when he was prepared to march against Jeroboam in an attempt to bring all the kingdom back under his rule, he listened to God's prophet Shemaiah who told him not to go to battle against his brethren (Israel) because the division was divinely caused (see I Kings 12:21-24). But he is also greatly helped by the voluntary coming of the priests and many godly people out of Jeroboam's kingdom who demonstrate it is really more important to serve God than stay in one's ancestral location. In this they remind us of the members of the Jerusalem church who fled from Jerusalem because of their faith in Christ rather than deny Him and maintain their homes (Acts 8:1). But let us not think Rehoboam to be "just a kid" when he takes over the reins of government. He is forty-one and like his father before him has many wives (forty-one) and concubines (sixty) by whom he fathers many children (twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters).

With God's blessing on him during the first three years he fortifies large, strategically located cities in his kingdom. Fifteen are mentioned: Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, Bethzur, Shoco, Adullam, Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron besides unnamed other ones in Benjamin. (Fortifying a city meant to build a wall

around it, station soldiers in it, equip it with military equipment, and lay up food-supplies in it in the event of a siege.) He utilizes his many sons in helping govern his kingdom by assigning them to his various fortified cities. The fact he selects Abijah as his successor indicates he was not the oldest of his many sons.

As you can see, these first years of righteousness are years of strength, for "the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it" (Prov. 10:22).

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 5 memory-facts for this event.
2. How old is Rehoboam as he begins to rule?
3. Why do the priests and many good people leave the Northern Kingdom?
4. What does his fortifying certain cities consist of?
5. Whom does Rehoboam appoint as rulers over his fortified cities?
6. How long does this state of righteousness-and-blessing continue?

### 13. Rehoboam Foolishly Forsakes Jehovah

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Chron. 12:1 and I Kings 14:22-24.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Rehoboam forsakes Jehovah (probably through pride).
  - b. He worships heathen gods.

#### COMMENTS

After three years of great prosperity, prosperity brought about by God's blessing, it is surprising to see King Rehoboam turn from Jehovah to heathen idolatry. It is surprising until we remember people often forsake God in prosperity but seek Him in adversity. Moses warned Israel, "When...God shall have brought thee into the land...to give thee great and goodly cities...and houses full of good things...and wells...vineyards and olive trees...; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; then beware lest thou forget the Lord" (Deut. 6:10-12). Just before our II Chron. text says Rehoboam forsook the law of the Lord, it expressly says it was after he

had established the kingdom and had strengthened himself.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. What do people often do in their prosperity?

### 14. Judah's Wealth is Removed to Egypt

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 14:25-31a and II Chron. 12:2-16a.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Shishak of Egypt plunders Jerusalem's wealth.
  - b. Rehoboam replaces his departed gold shields with brass ones.

#### COMMENTS

God's answer to Rehoboam's apostasy is Pharaoh Shishak of Egypt. Shishak is no friend of Solomon's house, having provided political asylum for Jeroboam when he fled from Solomon (I Kings 11:40). He knows of the great wealth amassed at Jerusalem under David and Solomon and is eager to obtain it--and because of Rehoboam's sins God is going to allow it. In fact Rehoboam's sins are so bad God is minded to put an end to the Jerusalem government.

To be sure he can overpower Jerusalem Shishak comes with one thousand two hundred chariots, three thousand men on horses, and an innumerable army made up of Egyptian soldiers plus hired-soldiers from other African countries. Judah cannot resist this formidable array. First Shishak takes the outlying fortified cities before coming against Jerusalem.

While Rehoboam's rulers are assembled with him from throughout his dominion, God sends the prophet Shemaiah to them. Rehoboam had hearkened to Shemaiah when God sent him to him before (I Kings 12:22-24). He is now sent to tell them God is bringing Shishak against Rehoboam because he

has forgotten Him. Again Rehoboam humbles himself before God and declares God is just in His judgment. As a result Shemaiah promises Shishak will not be permitted to destroy Jerusalem but to plunder the temple and the palace of their prized treasures. Consequently Judah surrenders peacefully to Shishak who helps himself to the vast treasure.

Upon his return to Egypt Shishak inscribes his victory in a great wall-inscription in the Temple of Karnak in which he claims to have taken one hundred fifty-six cities from the Jews of Palestine for his god Amon. The inscription contains one hundred fifty-six Jewish captives, each captive representing a captured city. Shishak's mummy has been found in a silver sarcophagus within an outer case of solid gold--probably some of the silver and gold he took in this very raid and which once graced the temple and palace. Edersheim points out the Israelite cities included in Shishak's raid were cities of the Levites and Canaanites. He says they were cities "in all parts of the territory of the ten tribes, and at considerable distances from one another, there being, however, no mention of the taking of the intervening cities. All these facts point to the conclusion...that the Levitical and ancient Canaanite cities within the territory of Jeroboam did not acknowledge his rule" ("Bible History" by Edersheim). Since Jeroboam and Shishak are cordial friends, we don't expect Shishak to take any of Jeroboam's cities while Jeroboam is glad for him to raid these cities not recognizing him.

After the Jerusalem raid particularly missed are "the famous shields used by Solomon's body-guard on state occasions" ("Edersheim") that were kept in the House of the Forest of Lebanon. There had been two hundred of the larger ones and three hundred of the smaller ones. II Chron. 9:15,16 tells the enormous amount of gold involved in these. Rehoboam replaces them with substitute shields of brass.

When it says, "In Judah things went well. So king Rehoboam strengthened

himself in Jerusalem, and reigned," we conclude things are better for a time. Then when we read a verse later that "he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord," we conclude his righteousness does not last very long.

Particulars of Rehoboam's middle and latter years are lacking. A state of hostilities exists as long as both he and Jeroboam live. After a seventeen-year reign he dies at the age of fifty-eight.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. What prophet is sent to Rehoboam?
3. What message does he deliver?
4. When Rehoboam humbles himself, what message does God send him?
5. Tell about the shields.
6. Does Rehoboam repent?
7. How long does he reign?

### 15. Abijah's Reign Includes a Great Victory over Jeroboam

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 14:31b--15:8 and II Chron. 12:16b--14:1.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Abijah goes against Jeroboam.
  - b. He delivers a great speech to Jeroboam and Israel.
  - c. Jeroboam surrounds Abijah and Judah.
  - d. Outnumbered and surrounded, Abijah and Judah call on God.
  - e. God gives Abijah and Judah a great victory.
  - f. Abijah has fourteen wives, twenty-two sons, and sixteen daughters.

#### COMMENTS

It seems strange to be having a new king over either portion of the once-united kingdom as Rehoboam has died and is now replaced by the pick of his sons—Abijah (II Chron. 11:22) or "Abijam" as he is also called. What kind of king will he be? And will Jeroboam, the veteran of eighteen years of ruling, try to intimidate this beginner in Judah?

The state of hostilities that has existed between Jeroboam and Rehoboam now breaks out into open warfare between Jeroboam and the house of Rehoboam represented by Abijah. Even though God forbade Rehoboam to go to battle against his brethren in Israel (I Kings 12:21-24), it appears that Abijah — not Jeroboam — is the one who instigates this present confrontation.

The two armies assemble at an insignificant place called Mt. Zemaraim, a mountain likely near the city of Zemaraim mentioned in Josh. 18:21,22 (near Bethel). From the top of the hill Abijah delivers an emotional speech to Jeroboam and his men. As he claims Jehovah as Judah's God and their fidelity to Him as the basis for God's being with them, and as he rebukes Jeroboam for forsaking Jehovah and setting up golden calves while rejecting God's priesthood for priests of his own making, Abijah sounds much like a preacher, and as he charges Jeroboam with conspiring against his father Rehoboam when he was "young" and "tender-hearted", he sounds like a prosecuting attorney. Though Abijah seems to have his information about his father wrong (Rehoboam was not so young--he was forty-one when he became king--nor did he appear to be tender-hearted when he roughly answered Jeroboam and the people), yet God is pleased with the rest of the speech. When his speech ends, "O children of Israel, fight ye not against the Lord of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper," is Abijah actually expecting (or at least hoping) to see Israel lay down its arms?

Well the warlike Jeroboam is not to be convinced by speeches but takes advantage of Judah's army's location to surround it. This is done when Judah is not aware--maybe even during Abijah's speech. When Judah becomes aware of its situation, they see Jeroboam has them in a desperate situation. (If it is while Abijah is delivering his speech that Jeroboam surrounds him, he thinks he is quite smart to let him preach but not listen. But the battle that follows demonstrates Jeroboam should have been listening.



God is able to humble the proud and the wicked.)

Trust in God often enables a minority to overcome a majority (Psa. 18:29). Abijah and Judah are faced with the gravity of the situation, realizing they have only four hundred thousand soldiers to Jeroboam's eight hundred thousand, and that Jeroboam occupies the strategic position. What is Judah going to do? They cry out to Jehovah, the priests blow the trumpets like the priests did at the battle of Jericho (Josh. 6:20), and the people shout. God turns Jeroboam's cleverness into defeat in answer to Judah's prayers, siding with Judah in administering a telling defeat to Jeroboam and the idolatrous North. In this battle Jeroboam loses five hundred thousand men plus several of his border cities--including Bethel!

Even though Jeroboam reigns several more years, he is not able to rebuild enough to become strong again. His case surely reminds us of the truth of that proverb, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).

In contrast the victorious Abijah becomes stronger. During his years he marries fourteen wives and has twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters. He is the last king of Judah whose number of wives and children is mentioned. Likely the practice of having an extreme number of wives and children came to be less and less significant until finally it lost all significance. A glance at the following tabulation shows it has been on the decline:

Solomon - seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (we are not told the number of his children).

Rehoboam - eighteen wives, sixty concubines, eighty-eight children.

Abijah - fourteen wives and thirty-eight children

Since Abijah has a short reign of only three years, we are left wondering just what brought about his early death.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 6 memory-facts for this event.

2. What is Abijah's other name?
3. How long has Jeroboam ruled in the North when Abijah begins?
4. How many men does Abijah have? Jeroboam?
5. Give the gist of Abijah's speech?
6. What does Jeroboam do instead of regarding the speech?
7. What does Judah do before beginning the battle?
8. Who wins the battle?
9. How many men does Jeroboam lose?
10. How many wives does Abijah have? How many sons? How many daughters?
11. How long does Abijah reign?

## 16. A Powerful New King Arises in Judah

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 15:8b-12 and II Chron. 14:1b-8.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Asa begins a long rule of forty-one years.
  - b. He is the first Divided Kingdom king listed as "good".
  - c. In his peaceful prosperity he fortifies Judah's cities and builds a large army.

### COMMENTS

Jeroboam is still living and ruling in Israel as Judah's third king takes over. But he will not outlive Asa, the new king, for Asa will be on the throne for forty-one years!

Even though Rehoboam and Abijah had some good events in their reigns, they were still listed as evil (Rehoboam--II Chron. 12:14; Abijah--I Kings 15:3). Asa is going to improve on them (the way it should be). He becomes the first king of either South or North of whom it is recorded, "Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father." We will note throughout this study of Divided Kingdom History that any good king of the South will be said to be good like David while every evil king of the North will be said to walk in the way of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, reminding us of Prov. 10:7: "The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot." Each of us should want to be remembered for our good (like David) rather than for our bad (like Jeroboam). "A good name is

rather to be chosen than great riches" (Prov 22:1); "A good name is better than precious ointment" (Eccl 7:1).

Generally speaking a "good" king in Kings and Chronicles is one who worships Jehovah rather than idols while an "evil" king is an idolatrous king. In Asa's revolt against idolatry he qualifies as "good", and God blesses him with peace and prosperity in which he fortifies many of Judah's cities and develops an army of five hundred eighty thousand.

Asa is going to be around for awhile, and he will be a powerful king as well as a long-ruling one.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Who is still ruling in the North?
3. Any good king of the South is compared to what former great king?
4. Any bad king of the North is compared to what former bad king?
5. What is usually meant in Kings and Chronicles by a "good" king? An "evil" one?
6. What does Asa do during his peaceful years of prosperity?

## 17. Jeroboam's Son Reigns Only Two Years

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 14:19,20; 15:25-31; II Chron. 13:20.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jeroboam is divinely smitten with death.
  - b. Nadab continues the calf-worship.
  - c. After Nadab rules two years, Baasha assassinates him and kills all the house of Jeroboam.

### COMMENTS

It seems Jeroboam will continue reigning "forever", but his end finally comes after twenty-two years on the throne. We do not know the cause of his death, but when II Chron. 13:20 says he is smitten of God and dies, it suggests his death comes in some unusual way or at some unexpected time as a judgment from God.

This brings his son Nadab to the throne. This is a crucial time in Israel, and

Israel's future course is greatly dependent on whether the new king will continue the calf-worship at Dan and Bethel with which God is so displeased or whether he will repudiate it and allow his people to attend the Jerusalem feasts again as the law of Moses requires. Though neither he nor Israel realizes it, this man can make the difference between Israel's continuing as a nation or ultimately being blotted out once and for all time. Similarly most of us do not really realize the difference we can make either in the Lord's work, in our nation, in our community, in our family-line, or in the lives of others. In Nadab's case we are sorry to see his perpetuating the calf-worship.

Will he get to have a long rule like his father? No, it is cut short after only two years by the first assassination in the history of either Israel or Judah. It comes about while Israel is warring with the Philistines over the city of Gibbethon. Baasha, probably one of Nadab's influential military men, conspires against him while at Gibbethon and kills him. And since he aspires to the throne, he slays all the household of Jeroboam (remember Ahijah's predicting this in I Kings 14:10,11?). Baasha's bold act is just the beginning of assassinations that from time to time will rock the Northern Kingdom throughout its history as aspirants-to-power rise against the kings. Note that each assassin who takes over brings a new family or line of kings to power. All the rulers of a given family compose a "dynasty". Baasha begins the second dynasty in the Northern Kingdom.

Why such a traumatic time in Israel? From Baasha's standpoint it is to wipe out any rivals for the throne, but from God's standpoint it is to bring His promised judgment against the house of Jeroboam for setting up that calf-worship (I Kings 14:7-10).

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What difference can Nadab make in the whole future of Israel's history?
3. What is Baasha's motive in assassinating Nadab?
4. What is God's purpose in allowing him to do it?
5. What is meant by a "dynasty" of kings?

**18. The Wicked Baasha's House Will be Wiped out Also**

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 15:33-16:4.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Baasha continues calf-worship.
  - b. The prophet Jehu is sent to tell him his house will also be wiped out.

COMMENTS

God has enabled Baasha to overthrow the house of Jeroboam because of his instituting calf-worship. How foolish then it seems for Baasha to perpetuate it! It is sad when people do not learn from the mistakes of others. Baasha seems to fall for the illusion from the devil that "it will not happen to me" even though it has happened to others. Will God be more pleased when Baasha does this than when Jeroboam did it? No, for He is a God of principle. Right is right no matter who is doing it, and wrong is wrong no matter who is doing it. God respects principles, not persons (Rom. 2:11). Just because God has used Baasha to bring judgment on the house of Jeroboam does not mean Baasha is a privileged character to do whatever he wants to, and God will pay no attention to it.

God dispatches the prophet Jehu (don't confuse him with a later king by this same name) who tells Baasha that what befell Jeroboam's house will also befall his and for the same reason. The next time Baasha's house will be the recipient of God's wrath instead of being the administrator of it. Evidently Baasha pays no attention to the prophet, for we read of no repentance on his part and no changing of the decree on God's part. If he and Israel repent, the decree against them will be changed (Jer. 18:7,8).

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. What foolish mistake does Baasha make?
3. What message is sent to him from the Lord?
4. What evidence do we have that Baasha does not repent?

**19. Asa Gains a Great Victory over Ethiopia**

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Chron. 14:9—15:19.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. A great Ethiopian army invades Judah.
  - b. Asa prays for God's help.
  - c. God gives a great victory.
  - d. Asa plunders Philistia on his way back.
  - e. The prophet Azariah encourages Asa to serve Jehovah.
  - f. Asa is even stronger against idolatry.

COMMENTS

God loves to show Himself strong in behalf of those who put their trust in Him. King Asa might wonder why God is allowing an invasion of Judah by a million Ethiopians with three hundred chariots, for he has faithfully served God. God is not bringing them against Asa to break his years of peace because of any sin he has done. It appears the Ethiopians have come of their own will, but God has allowed it because it will result in a greater Asa and a greater Judah. Let us observe that even godly people do not always understand why God allows certain things to happen, but we can always be sure He is leading and "doeth all things well".

Asa knows he is no match for such a sizable military aggregation. But don't forget that "man's extremity" can be "God's opportunity". What is "big" to us is nothing to Almighty God. In the midst of danger Asa does what God wants all His people to do: pray and lean on Him and recognize that numbers mean nothing to Him. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psa. 46:1). He can give a believing minority victory over a vast majority. Israel of Moses' day did not think this way as they listened to the despairing thoughts of the ten spies (Num. 13:31-33). Gideon experienced this blessing from God (Judg. 7:7). So did Samson (Judg. 15:14-16). So did Jonathan (I Sam. 14:6-16). So

did David (II Sam. 22:30). This causes God to be glorified and keeps men from taking credit for such victories (Judg. 7:2). God enabled the lone prophet Elijah to bring a mighty victory over Ahab's four hundred fifty prophets of Baal (I Kings 18:38-40), and He still uses the lesser to overcome the greater (I Cor. 1:27-29).

And their faith is not misplaced. "Faith" and "Victory" go together (I John 5:4), and God gives them a mighty victory. This trial of their faith, like chastening, has not been joyous, but it has proven to be a blessing since their faith stood the test.

While Asa and the army are down in the Philistine Plain, they plunder some of the hostile Philistine cities before returning to Jerusalem. It is indeed a happy reception they are given as they reenter Jerusalem. Among those coming out to meet them is the prophet Azariah who urges Asa to continue seeking Jehovah. Azariah's assuring message on top of the victories just realized further encourages Asa and Judah in their fidelity to Jehovah. They destroy idols out of the land including some cities they have taken from Israel, and they rebuild the altar of Jehovah in the temple. The king also calls a great mass-meeting of his citizens, and they are joined by many out of the Northern Kingdom who see God is with Asa. They first offer a sacrifice of some of the spoils taken in their battles and then enter into a sacred covenant to serve Jehovah. They depose the queen-mother Maachah because of her idolatry, destroy her idol, and bring into the temple the treasures set aside for this purpose by both Asa and his father Abijah. (Asa's dealing with his idolatrous mother indicates God and righteousness are to come before our closest earthly ties--Matt. 10:37. Gideon had done similarly with his father's idol--Judg. 6:25-27.)

Judah is stronger now than it has ever been since the division of Solomon's kingdom. This is the high-point of Asa's rule.

How is Baasha of the North going to respond to some of his citizens' moving

into Judah because of the revival going on there? We shall see.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 6 memory-facts for this event.
2. How many soldiers and chariots does Ethiopia have?
3. Cite other Biblical cases where minorities overcame majorities because of God's help.
4. Who is Maachah, and what happens to her?

### 20. Baasha Seeks to Stop His People's Leaving Israel

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Chron. 16:1-10.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Baasha begins fortifying Ramah to keep more of his people from defecting to Judah.
  - b. Asa hires Syria to attack Baasha.
  - c. While Baasha goes to fight with Syria, Judah hauls the stones from Baasha's Ramah-project to Geba and Mizpeh and fortifies them.

#### COMMENTS

The number of godly people of Baasha's kingdom packing up their belongings and migrating to Judah because God is with King Asa of the South is a great number, and Baasha is determined to put a stop to it. To do so he selects the prophet Samuel's border town of Ramah and begins fortifying it (building a great wall around it and outfitting it with gates and bars and equipping it with soldiers, military equipment, and food-supplies). From this military outpost only five miles north of Jerusalem Baasha can control traffic along the north-south road between the two kingdoms.

While this fortifying goes on, Asa is trying to figure out just how to stop the project. He can go out and attack Baasha, but Baasha is strong. This is evident by his having killed Elah and all Jeroboam's male descendants to get the throne. Furthermore his "might" is specifically mentioned in I Kings 16:5.

Asa seems to be a different person now than when he relied on God against the army of the Ethiopians. Instead of attacking Baasha with the Lord's blessing he turns to the Syrians for help. If he has a strong faith now and gains another great victory, Asa will go down in history as a king of great faith, but his lack of it begins his ultimate undoing.

The silver and gold that he and his father have put into the temple and palace to replace what Shishak removed to Egypt during Rehoboam's reign are now sent to Ben-hadad of Syria as hire for his military help. The king of Syria is not only glad to receive this great hire but also to break his non-aggression pact with Israel (and succeeding events will include many wars between Syria and Israel).

As Ben-hadad attacks cities in Baasha's far-north territory, Baasha has to muster all his forces to resist the aggression there. As Asa sees Baasha stop his Ramah-project to protect his northern territory, he compliments his shrewdness and immediately issues a royal order for every man of his kingdom to come to Ramah, and they lose no time dismantling its walls and hauling its large stones to two border towns in Judah (Geba and Mizpeh) which they fortify. It turns out to be quite a victory for Asa as he sees Baasha forced to "dwell in Tirzah" (I Kings 15:21).

But his rejoicing is cut short by the coming of the prophet Hanani who is dispatched to tell him of God's displeasure with the way he has handled his problem. When Hanani's message includes these words, "Herein thou hast done foolishly" (in hiring the Syrians); "therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars," Asa is too proud to be reproved. Life teaches us it is not easy for successful people and prominent leaders to accept rebuke. Instead of humbling himself before God Asa imprisons the prophet and oppresses some of the people (probably those who agree with the prophet and disagree with him). This event proves to be the turning point in Asa's career. Up to this time everything we read about him is good, everything

afterward bad. (Note--Because the few things mentioned about Asa are not to his compliment, we must not conclude he is only evil, for he continues to rule for many years after this event.)

Before leaving this event it is interesting to note that hundreds of years later reference is made in Jer. 41:9 to a pit (maybe a cistern) that Asa makes at Mizpeh in this struggle with Baasha.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What is involved in fortifying a city?
3. What evidence do we have that Baasha is a strong king?
4. What mistake does Asa make early in this event?
5. What part of Baasha's kingdom does Ben-hadad attack?
6. What prophet rebukes Asa?
7. What is Asa's response to the prophet's rebuke?

## 21. Zimri Touches off a Turbulent Time in Israel

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 16:5-23.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Zimri assassinates Elah.
  - b. He burns the palace down over him in his defeat by Omri.
  - c. Omri finally wins the throne after a long struggle with Tibni.

#### COMMENTS

The warlike Baasha has given Israel twenty-four years of strong rule even though God has seen little in his reign to record for us. He took the sword in killing Jeroboam and his household, and in this event his house will perish by the sword as so often happens (Matt. 26:52). His death now brings his son Elah to the throne of Israel. But he is not the ruler his father has been. Instead of being with the army fighting the Philistines at Gibbethon, he is at home in Tirzah.

Zimri, captain of one-half of Elah's chariots, takes advantage of the army's absence from the capital to overthrow him. His chance is improved as the king drinks himself drunken in the house of the

royal steward Arza. (Most of the assassinations in Israel will be by high-ranking officers. Being king was not really safe. Kings found it difficult to have capable officers without their being ambitious for the throne. Sometimes people whom we aid and help advance come to be our adversaries and destroyers.) Drink has been the downfall of more than one ruler (Elah). It also brought an end to world-conqueror Alexander the Great. World War II in the Pacific was touched off by Japan's taking advantage of weekend drunkenness on the part of the U.S. military to bomb and destroy our naval power at Pearl Harbor.

Zimri gains admittance to the house of Arza and kills the king who has ruled only two years. He then goes to the palace, takes charge of it, and executes every descendant of Baasha who might lay claim to the throne. Thus the prophecy of Jehu against Baasha (I Kings 16:1-4) is fulfilled.

Zimri has misjudged either the willingness of the people to have him as king or his ability to hold the throne once he has usurped it. He has more ambition to be king than he does wisdom to become king permanently. When news of his doings reaches the army down at Gibbethon, the military is not for him but for its great captain Omri. Omri is eager to become king, but he must dispose of Zimri. Immediately he breaks off the war at Gibbethon, which is in the Maritime Plain north of Ekron and west of Gezer, and goes back up to Tirzah (a trip of fifty-sixty miles) to put down Zimri. Upon arrival they lay siege to the city. The battle is going against Zimri, and he sees his cause is hopeless. Fearing he will be killed by Omri, he decides to put an end to himself and also do as much damage for Omri as he can, so he sets fire to the palace and dies in its destruction. If he can't have the kingdom, Omri won't have the palace. Thus ends Zimri's short reign of only seven days, the shortest reign of any king of either Israel or Judah. (Seven days is about the time required for news of the assassination to reach the army down in the Maritime Plain, for the

army to break camp and return to Tirzah, and for the decisive battle that puts an end to Zimri--Zimri's seven-day reign.)

But wait. Omri finds the throne is not his yet--there is another contestant for it. The military may want him crowned king, but fully one-half of the people are wanting Tibni. Will the two forces engage in battle to see who will emerge as king, or will the kingdom exist for a time in a state of divided confusion? Evidently the latter, for our account says, "The people that followed Omri prevailed against the people that followed Tibni...So Tibni died, and Omri reigned." Evidently then Omri, backed by the army, could force the issue, but with half of the people for Tibni he has handled the case more judiciously, and his patience pays off with the death of Tibni (probably a natural death). Let us not forget how important patience is: "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain" (Jas. 5:7), and that statement is introduced with, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." On the other hand, if Omri had acted hastily, the end might have been different. Haste is not always right: "He that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly" (Prov. 14:29); "I said in my haste, All men are liars" (Psa 116:11).

Poor Tirzah is ready to settle down after going through Elah's assassination, the battle between Zimri and Omri and the attending burning of its palace, and the power-struggle between Omri and Tibni. At the end of this turbulent period the dead are Elah, Zimri, and Tibni. How long has all this consumed? looking at v. 15 it started in the twenty-seventh year of Asa and lasted until his thirty-first year (see v. 23). Jewish writings have it like this: "The division of the kingdom between Tibni and Omri began in the twenty-seventh year of Asa; this division lasted five years, during which Omri had but a share of the kingdom. Tibni dying, Omri came into possession of the whole kingdom which he held for seven years; this was the thirty-first year of Asa"

("Clarke's Commentary"). Just as Isa. 57:20 says, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," so the wicked Northern Kingdom has known very little peace. Our election-method of deciding who is going to rule is so much more peaceful than deciding it by the sword as those times often did.

Things will settle down under Omri, and though it will be a wicked time in Israel (Omri through Jehoram), it will be a politically strong period for the Northern Kingdom.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Who becomes king upon the death of Baasha?
3. Where is the army when this event opens?
4. What is the king doing when this event opens?
5. What terrible things does Zimri do in the absence of the army from the capital city?
6. How does this battle between him and Omri go?
7. With whom is Omri forced to share leadership until death removes him?

## 22. Omri Leaves His Mark

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 16:24-28a.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Omri establishes Samaria as a new capital.
  - b. Omri is more wicked than any king of Israel before him.
  - c. Archaeology reveals Omri's political greatness.

#### COMMENTS

**D**uring the several year Omri-Tibni struggle the Northern Kingdom somehow made out without a permanent palace after Zimri had burned it. Not until the kingship could be settled was there going to be any attempt to rebuild the palace. Now that Tibni is dead and Omri is sole ruler in full control, he decides on an altogether different location for the capital itself. He bargains with a man by the name of Shemer for an eminence (hill) he owns that is completely surrounded by valley. That it is an ideal location for the construction of a fortified city is verified by any observant person

who has stood on its height and noticed the valley area completely surrounding it. The price is agreed on, and it becomes a royal site where the new palace is built and from which all future kings of the Northern Kingdom will rule. This new city "Samaria" comes from the word "Shemer", the previous owner's name. Maybe naming the city after Shemer was a condition of his selling it to Omri. Take time to locate the city of Samaria on the map in the back of your Bible. It is interesting to note that an archaeological expedition sponsored by Harvard University unearthed the ruins of the palace here at Samaria. Nothing older than Omri was found, confirming the Biblical record that he began this city.

To make Shemer's hill the new center of government is a wise move on Omri's part. Oh, that he were as wise in spiritual matters! But he isn't. Omri is like many people: wise when it comes to material matters but foolish in spiritual matters. The Bible shows he is worse than Jeroboam, worse than Nadab, worse than Baasha, worse than Elah, and worse than Zimri, for "he did worse than all that were before him". In fact, he is the beginning of a new kind of evil in Israel. His dynasty of rulers (composed of himself, Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jehoram) will be by far the worst dynasty that either North or South will have on the throne. Through this family's intermarrying with and having alliances with the contemporary kings of Judah, the Omri-Ahab evil will also infest the life of Jerusalem and Judah, and two hundred years after the reign of Omri the prophet Micah will bemoan the sin of Judah, saying "For the statues of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing" (Mic. 6:16). We see that Omri well illustrates the statement in Eccl. 9:18, "One sinner destroyeth much good." He is wicked; he begets a wicked son Ahab who is even worse than Omri; Ahab marries Jezebel who measurably adds to the wickedness of Israel; their daughter Athaliah marries the king of Judah, and

the South also becomes contaminated with their evil.

The unfortunate thing about Omri's wickedness is he is such a powerful king. This is not as evident from the Biblical coverage, where but little is recorded about his reign, as it is from archaeology where several important references to him have been found. Evidently he has no religious virtues for God to record, but he does have political importance for his contemporaries to record. The Moabite Stone found at Dibon in Moab in 1868 shows he had been triumphant over Moab and had put it to tribute for several years (through the reigns of Omri and Ahab: II Kings' opening verse says, "Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab"). Also, the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III of Assyria speaks of his receiving tribute from King Jehu, and even though Jehu was four rulers later than Omri, the Obelisk identifies Jehu by referring to him as a "successor of Omri".

Yes, Omri leaves his mark: he brings a new family to power that will rule for forty-eight years (four kings); he introduces a wickedness that lasts for many years and that affects both Israel and Judah; he selects a new capital city, and thereafter Samaria becomes the political center of all future Northern Kingdom operations; and he is powerful enough for his name to find itself on the monuments of several nations of his time.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What makes Shemer's hill such a desirable place for a new capital city?
3. Why does Omri call the new city "Samaria"?
4. Who will be the four kings of his dynasty?
5. How will the wickedness of the Omri-dynasty get into Judah?
6. What Stone and what Obelisk testify to Omri's political greatness?

## 23. Asa is Still Reigning when Ahab Succeeds Omri

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 16:28-32; II Chron. 16:11-14; and I Kings 15:23,24.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:

- a. Asa, diseased in his feet in his last years, does not seek the Lord's help in the matter.
- b. Ahab marries the wicked Jezebel and becomes the worst of all Israel's kings.
- c. The curse of Joshua falls on Hiel of Bethel for rebuilding Jericho.

### COMMENTS

Now that Omri has died and has become the first king to be entombed at the new capital Samaria, his son Ahab succeeds him as ruler in the North. But would you believe the king ruling in the South (Asa) has been ruling ever since the last years of the North's first king Jeroboam? But let us not be too surprised, for the Bible shows that long life is often bequeathed to the righteous (Eph. 6:3; Prov. 3:1,2; Prov. 3:16). Exceptions to this evidently involve other considerations. Contrast Psa. 55:23.

Asa began in Jeroboam's twentieth year (I Kings 15:9), and his forty-one year reign (I Kings 15:10) has enabled him to be contemporary with the first seven kings of Israel (Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, and now Ahab). Altogether Israel's total history will know nineteen kings, and Asa has been contemporary with more than one-third of them! For all Asa lived to see, we might remark that "he could have written a book".

When Kings and Chronicles normally record deaths of kings, they state that the rest of their acts are "written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of" either Judah or Israel, depending on the particular king and kingdom he had ruled. But it is noteworthy that Asa's acts are recorded in both the books of the kings of Judah and Israel (II Chron. 16:11).

But Asa will not survive much longer --only two or three years into Ahab's long reign of twenty-two years. But his last years are sad ones. Two years before his death he is plagued with a disease of his feet. He should seek God's help but instead seeks physicians. Just why, we are not told. It is a sad farewell to this king

who has been good in so many ways. If we had only II Chron. 16:12, it would be easy to conclude that to utilize the help of a physician when one has a disease is to be guilty of not seeking the Lord. But Jesus said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" (Mat 9:12). Hezekiah was healed by medical means by divine approval (Isa 38:21). The wrong is in seeking physicians' help without seeking the Lord's help in prayer.

Asa is honored with a great funeral for the many years he has successfully ruled Judah. Others who were also thus honored in their times were David (I Chron. 29:28), Jehoshaphat (II Chron. 17:5), and Hezekiah. (II Chron. 32:27). "The memory of the just is blessed" (Prov. 10:7).

But what kind of king does the North now have in its new ruler Ahab? This son of Omri is a "chip off the old block" --only worse! He not only perpetuates the wickedness of his father but actually enlarges on it. Like Omri before him, he has masterful abilities, but they are regretfully dedicated to evil instead of good. How tragic!

As if he is not already bad enough, he sins greatly in violating God's law in Deut. 7:3,4 (an Israelite is not to marry a Gentile) when he marries Jezebel of Phoenicia--and in marrying the particular Phoenician woman he does. Mixed marriages between Christians and non-Christians are also divinely forbidden (I Cor. 7:39; II Cor. 6:14) and also unwise.

Ahab's marriage to this woman will prove to be the worst thing spiritually that will ever befall the Northern Kingdom. Things will not be the same for many years through her bringing her Baal-worship with her. And to make matters even worse this Baalism and the Ahab-Jezebel type of wickedness will get into the life of the Southern Kingdom through the marriage of their daughter Athaliah to Jehoram, king of Judah.

Baalism is one of the most offensive forms of idolatry to God. "Baal" means "master" or "owner", and he is looked to as the god of weather and agriculture. Inscriptions unearthed at Ras Shamra in

the late 1920's refer to Baal as "Lord of the Earth" and "Rider of the Clouds". Representations of Baal have been found with a club in one hand and a bolt of lightning in the other. Palestine's dry-weather months of April through September are taken as times when Baal is losing the battle to Mot, the god of Death and Aridity. In their mythology Baal is awakened to life by his sister Anath in October, and his return to his throne is followed by his mating with his wife Ashtoreth, and this insures rainfall and fertility for their agriculture. To stimulate Baal and Ashtoreth to mate, great sex-orgies take place in Baal temples, and the consequent return to the rain-season is also celebrated with more temple-sex. In both Megiddo and Gezer archaeologists have found cemeteries of infant-remains in stone jars adjacent to places of Baal-worship. It is easy to see why God is so opposed to Baalism!

Baalism virtually becomes the national religion of Israel under Ahab and Jezebel (to go along with Jeroboam's golden calves), and they persecute the Jehovah-religion that is its chief barrier (notice two references to Jezebel's killing God's prophets: I Kings 18:4 and I Kings 19:14).

Then in addition to her Baalism she is a continual bad influence on her husband, stirring him up to many wicked things he will not otherwise do (I Kings 21:25). And a bad mate like Jezebel can still be a person's downfall. This is demonstrated by instances in every community of our land!

You may recall Joshua's solemn statement when he and Israel destroyed the great Canaanite city Jericho with God's help: "Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it" (Josh 6:26). Joshua's destruction of the great fortress city was one of the many well known events in Israel's history, and likely the curse he pronounced was also well known and feared, for even though its ruins have occupied a prominent site



near the fords of the Jordan, has a great spring of fresh water, and its valley is a virtual paradise in the otherwise arid area, for over five hundred years nobody has dared rebuild it--not until Ahab's day. In Ahab's day, when the fear of Jehovah is at its lowest our text says, "In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho," and the curse fell on his household (his firstborn died when he began the project and his youngest when he completed it). The passing of several centuries did not nullify Joshua's curse pronounced by divine inspiration.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. With how many kings of Israel has Asa been contemporary?
3. Who is ruling in Israel as he begins? Who when he dies?
4. What divine law does Ahab violate in marrying Jezebel?
5. Why is God so against Baalism?
6. Tell of Joshua's curse falling on Hiel.

### 24. Another Great King Arises in the South

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 22:41-43; II Chron. 17:1-19; and II Chron. 20:32,33.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehoshaphat succeeds his father Asa as king of Judah.
  - b. He reacts against Baalism, fortifies several cities, and dispatches Levites and priests to teach God's law throughout his kingdom.
  - c. Because of God's blessing he has peace, riches, and honor.

#### COMMENTS

So many times after the passing of a powerful, long-term ruler, the next king or two will be looked on as weak in comparison and will have shorter, unsuccessful reigns. Not so after the death of the great Asa. His son Jehoshaphat is a worthy successor and is a great king in his own right. It is his trust in God that will enable him to have such a successful reign. God can still make

those who trust in him successful (Psa. 1:1-3).

Jehoshaphat is strong against Baalism, removing the idolatrous high places and groves. It is mentioned but not in any derogatory way that Jehovah-worship (such as burning incense) is done in various high places. "Clarke's Commentary" makes this observation concerning what might seem like a contradiction between the Kings' and the Chronicles' accounts of Jehoshaphat's taking away and not taking away the high places: "There were two kinds of high places in the land: (1) those used for idolatrous purposes; (2) those that were consecrated to God and were used before the temple was built. The former he did take away; the latter he did not."

In his early reign Jehoshaphat fortifies himself against the Northern Kingdom by stationing soldiers in Judah and also in some cities his father had taken from the Northern Kingdom. We are not told which cities these are, but they are also mentioned in II Chron. 15:8.

From the very beginning of his reign it is evident he is walking with God for which he is blessed (Heb. 11:6). Because his subjects bring him presents, he has riches and honor in abundance.

In his third year he embarks on something no previous ruler has done--dispatches chosen Levites and priests to go from city to city in Judah teaching the law of God. God's law cannot be kept unless it is first known. Jas. 1:22 says we are to be "doers" of the Word, but "doing" must be preceded by "learning". Thus Jas. 1:21 first says to receive the Word. As a result of this divinely-approved program God causes fear to come on all neighboring kingdoms so they make no war with Jehoshaphat but bring him presents instead. Such prosperity enables him to do much construction and to build a great army. He is truly one of Judah's greatest kings.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why does Jehoshaphat not fail even though following a powerful ruler?
3. What two kinds of "high places" are there?

4. What unusual program does Jehoshaphat inaugurate in Judah?
5. How does God bless him?

### 25. Elijah Prays for and Proclaims a Drought upon the Land

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read Jas. 5:19 and I Kings 17:1-24.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Elijah prays for God to send a drought as a punishment.
  - b. He foretells this drought to King Ahab.
  - c. God provides for Elijah during the 3 1/2 years of drought.
  - d. Elijah raises the widow's son.

#### COMMENTS

We have been studying about the two great kings of the South (Asa and Jehoshaphat) for sometime. What has been developing in the North in the meantime?

You will recall that wicked King Ahab is ruling here, and that his Phoenician-wife Jezebel has killed off all the prophets of Jehovah she can find. With such wickedness enthroned in Israel Jehovah-worship is at a practical standstill. It shows that when leadership is wrong, it has a great effect on the whole situation. Wickedness may be in the "driver's seat" and may kill many of God's prophets, but God is not dead nor blind to what is taking place. And He still has a remnant--people who are not fooled nor in agreement with what is taking place. I Kings 19:18 tells us there are seven thousand in Israel who are not bowing their knees before Baal. One of them is an "unknown" in Israel at this time, a man who lives at Tishbeh east of the Jordan River--Elijah. He will be well known before this is all over!

In Moses' day God had said to Israel, "Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; and then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit" (Deut. 11:16,17). In view of this

divine threat this man Elijah (whose name aptly means "Jehovah is my God") believes conditions are such that God should shut off all rain. So he prays that God will. As a result God begins the chastening of Israel.

God is highly pleased with the spiritual depth and concern of this godly man, and he calls him into prophetic service. And what a prophet he becomes during his lifetime and later as a representative of all the prophets when he is chosen to appear with Moses and Jesus at the Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-32)! John the Baptist, forerunner of Christ, would also come in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17). His prophetic assignments will not be of an insignificant nature--he will be sent to the ruling kings of Israel!

His first assignment is to go to King Ahab and say, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." He can thus speak because he knows he is a prophet of God. Even though he speaks as a representative of Jehovah and mentions "years" without moisture (no dew or rain), the king is not disturbed. To him the ill-clad Elijah is some deranged man who should never have been admitted by the guards into his presence. Elijah's words are taken as idle words with no reference to the nation's actual future. But when time passes, and there is no rain, the king recalls what Elijah has said, and now he will take him into custody if he can find him. While the prophet is safely secluded from the king's knowledge, he seeks for him even in neighboring countries, even making them take oaths that Elijah is not in their respective realms.

God is not through using the bold prophet, and just as He spares Elijah for future use, so will God spare us for the assignments He has for us yet to fulfill. Elijah's first hideout is in the desolate Brook-Cherith area, where food is brought to him by ravens, and where he drinks from the brook--until it dries up. Next God sends him clear out of the

country--to Zarephath in Phoenicia. He will be in Phoenicia until the end of the drought, ironically sustained in the very country from which Jezebel has come!

As he arrives at Zarephath, he sees a woman gathering sticks. He asks her for a drink. As she goes to get it for him, he calls after her with an additional request: "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand." It is then she shares her desperate plight with the visiting stranger. Phoenicia, the land from which Baalism has come into Israel, is also having the same drought, and it is a real test of her faith when the stranger from Israel says concerning her last bit of flour and oil, "Make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruise of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth." She too can look on Elijah as some "crackpot", but she takes his word seriously, and when God's promises are daily fulfilled to her, how happy she is she has believed God's prophet! (Oh, that Ahab had!) It is interesting to note Jesus mentioned this residence of Elijah in her home (Luke 4:25,26).

But her joy in having him in her home and the perpetuating of her food supply is suddenly and unexpectedly turned to grief when her son becomes deathly sick and dies. Conscience has a good memory--you will recall Joseph's brothers' conscience bothered them many years later concerning what they had done to him (Gen. 42:21). Now the widow's conscience bothers her concerning some unnamed sin in her past for which she now thinks she is being punished because of the prophetic insight of Elijah. The prophet takes the lad's lifeless form to his room in the loft and prays for his restoration to life. Again the prophet's prayer is heard, and the son is given back to his relieved mother.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. From where is Elijah?

3. How great a prophet is Elijah to become?
4. Why is the king probably not disturbed over Elijah's foretelling a drought?
5. Where is Elijah's first hideout, and how does God provide for him here?
6. Recall the conversation between Elijah and the Zarephath woman.
7. What does the woman think when her son dies?
8. How does Elijah restore her son to life?

## 26. Elijah Comes out of Hiding and Challenges the Whole Baal Set-up

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 18:1-46 and Jas. 5:18.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Elijah is sent back into Israel.
  - b. He tells Obadiah to report his presence to the king.
  - c. Elijah tells the king to gather Israel and his prophets upon Mt. Carmel.
  - d. The contest between Jehovah and Baal by Elijah and the Baal prophets.
  - e. The people exclaim, "Jehovah, he is God," twice.
  - f. Elijah orders the false prophets slain.
  - g. Elijah sends the king home because of coming rain.
  - h. The prophet outruns the king on his way to Jezreel.

#### COMMENTS

It has been sometime since God has communicated any special instructions to Elijah. Sometime during the third year of this silence, God orders him to go show himself to King Ahab, promising to send rain on the earth. The three and one-half years of no rain and no dew have been sufficient to prove to the people of Israel that the king and queen's god Baal is not the real God who controls the weather. He has given them no rain even though they have kept worshipping him.

As Elijah bids a thankful farewell to the widow and her son to return to his own land, the king himself is taking half of the land and his high official Obadiah the other half, seeking out any possible remaining water holes or grass for their horses and mules. (This is not the Obadiah who wrote the Bible book.)



Obadiah is shocked as he meets Elijah, who bids him tell the king he is back in the land. Obadiah is fearful to report this lest Ahab kill him for letting Elijah get away. In begging not to be sent to the king, Obadiah asks the prophet if he has not heard of his having hidden and fed one hundred prophets of Jehovah when Jezebel was trying to kill them all. Realizing the predicament Obadiah could be in, Elijah assures him if he will report to Ahab, he will appear to Ahab personally. So Obadiah goes to tell the king.

What will be the wicked king's first words when he sees the man who over three years ago said, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word"? Here are the king's accusing words upon Elijah's entrance: "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" They are so different from Obadiah's first words: "Art thou that my lord Elijah?" The man from Tishbeh is not intimidated by the king nor by his words but replies, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim."

Now that the prophet whom the king has been seeking is in his presence, why doesn't he take him into custody? You can tell that the drought plus the bold reply of Elijah have subdued any wrathful intentions Ahab may have had. In fact when Elijah orders him to call Israel together upon Mt. Carmel along with four hundred and fifty Baal prophets and Jezebel's four hundred prophets of the grove, he obeys even though Jezebel refuses to send her prophets.

What a sight as thousands upon thousands of Israel gather on Carmel's heights near the Mediterranean Sea to see just what is going to take place! Elijah speaks to the people: "How long halt ye between two opinions?" What two opinions? Which is God--Baal or Jehovah? Elijah's proposition is fair: "If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." But the people are hesitant to reply but remain silent.

The Baal prophets feel confident they can outdo the lone prophet of Jehovah and proceed with preparing their sacrifice to Baal. Just visualize the whole group of them--and only one Elijah! But in spite of their number, in spite of their fanatical extremes to get Baal's attention to ignite their sacrifice, Baal does not control things. He cannot send fire. He is no god. Nothing happens. This failure registers in the minds of onlooking Israel.

Elijah now invites the people to come in as close as they can as he repairs a one-time altar to Jehovah, using twelve stones after the number of the tribes of Israel. First on the altar goes the wood and then the bullock, and then to everybody's surprise he has twelve barrels of water poured over the sacrifice until water stands in the trench around the altar. Then he prays, "Jehovah God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that thou art Jehovah God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again." Without any stretching out of time and without any fanatical carrying-on by Elijah, God immediately answers this lone man's prayer and sends fire that ignites and consumes the sacrifice, the wood, the stones of the altar, the dust, and even the water in the trench!

Yes, God knew when He called Elijah out of obscurity back into the lifestream of Israel, the people could now be convinced to declare themselves for Jehovah and against the king and queen's god Baal. As they see the fire come down and ignite the sacrifice and the rest that follows, in spite of the king's presence they fall on their faces and declare, "Jehovah, he is the God; Jehovah, he is the God." Was there ever a meeting when more people were changed for good than this meeting on Mt. Carmel?

Elijah issues an order, and the powerless king offers no opposition: "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." And these four hundred fifty men who have been a part of the

nation's religious apostasy are taken down to the brook at the base of the mountain (Brook Kishon) and are slain.

Elijah knows the drought is over and bids the king eat and drink, "for there is a sound of abundance of rain."

Mt. Carmel is not a mountain peak but a short mountain range running northwest-southeast, jutting out into the Mediterranean Sea and putting an end to the wide Maritime Plain to its south. To its north is the great Bay of Acre with its sweeping shoreline. Inland on Carmel's north side and far below is the rich Esdraelon Plain, the gateway to the interior from the Mediterranean port. Tour guides take you several miles inland on the Carmel range to show the traditional place of Elijah's contest with the false prophets. The particular place is a slight depression so that from it you cannot look west and see the Mediterranean. A close study of I Kings 18:41-44 indicates the place they show you is probably accurate. Let's see. After killing the prophets down at the base of the mountain, Elijah tells Ahab, "Get thee UP, eat and drink." "So Ahab went UP to eat and drink--that would be back up where they had been. But from there it says, Elijah went UP to the top of Carmel," and he told his servant to go UP now, look toward the sea." All this adds up to the fact that the place of the contest is lower than the summit and from which the crowd could not look west and see the Sea.

What is Elijah doing as he casts himself down to the ground and puts his face between his knees? Praying, according to Jas. 5:17,18. His servant sees no cloud over the Sea until his seventh trip, and it is only "a little cloud" said to be "like a man's hand". But it is enough for Elijah to tell the king to get into his chariot and speed for home before the rain keeps him from getting there. After the king leaves on his hasty trip to Jezreel, the Lord strengthens Elijah so he runs and passes the king in his chariot on their way to the royal city Jezreel.

1. Recite the 8 memory-facts for this event.
2. What are Ahab and Obadiah doing when Elijah returns to Israel?
3. Why is Obadiah hesitant to tell the king that Elijah is back?
4. What are Ahab's first words when he sees Elijah?
5. What proposition does Elijah make to the people?
6. Tell of Baal's prophets' attempt to get Baal to answer by fire.
7. Tell of Elijah's procedure in getting God to answer by fire.
8. On which trip to look toward the sea does Elijah's servant see a cloud?
9. Who arrives at Jezreel first--Ahab or Elijah?

## 27. Elijah Flees from Jezebel's Threat

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 19:1-18.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jezebel threatens to kill Elijah for killing the Baal prophets.
  - b. Elijah and his servant flee to the south.
  - c. Elijah leaves his servant at Beersheba while he goes farther south.
  - d. He is awakened and fed by an angel.
  - e. Finally settling in a cave at Mt. Sinai he is asked by the Lord, "What doest thou here?"

### COMMENTS

Upon Ahab's return to Jezreel he reports the Mt. Carmel happenings, especially Elijah's slaying of the Baal prophets. At this point let us notice the difference between Ahab and Jezebel. Because the prophet can call a drought on his land, Ahab did not kill him when he showed himself to him three and a half years later. In fact the king took orders from the prophet to assemble the people and the prophets on Mt. Carmel. (But Jezebel did not send her prophets of the grove.) Because his own prophets could not call down fire on their sacrifice while Elijah could, though he was king he offered no resistance when Elijah ordered his prophets killed. We note too that Ahab ate at the prophet's direction and also left for Jezreel at his order. He realizes it was the prophet's call for rain that brought rain again. (But the headstrong Jezebel brushes all these aside, does not fear Jehovah, and vows

she will put an end to Elijah's life.)

It appears the fears of the prophet are the lone reason for his fleeing. The text contains nothing of God's telling him to flee to Mt. Horeb to escape her wrath. (You will recall God's directing his going to the Brook Cherith and later to Zarephath--I Kings 17:2-4 and 7-9.) The question in Elijah's mind: "Where shall I flee from her?" He decides on the south. He and his servant make haste to get out. They cross the border into Judah and continue clear to Judah's southern border (Beersheba). Here he leaves his servant and plunges another day's journey into the wilderness (desert) beyond Beersheba. Physically and emotionally drained he is at his lowest when he sits in a juniper tree's shade and requests to die. It is obvious he is running on emotions when he requests to die at the very time he is fleeing from the wicked queen to keep from dying. In this exhausted frame of mind he drops off to sleep until he is awakened by an angel who has food and water ready for him. After eating and feeling safe in the uninhabited desert and with his body crying out for more sleep, he is again overcome with drowsiness and is soon asleep once more. When the angel again awakens him and bids him eat in view of the many days' journey before him, he does so and then continues his journey to far-away Mt. Horeb. Mt. Horeb is Mt. Sinai so sacred to the mind of every Israelite. No doubt he thinks of Moses' escaping here from Pharaoh's wrath. As he arrives, he likely feels an ancestral kinship to this locale because it was here that God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, here that Moses brought Israel after their escape from Egypt, here that God spoke to the people and then called Moses up into the mountain to receive the Law, here that the tabernacle was made and first set up, and here that the priesthood was begun.

As he takes up his abode in a cave in the mountainous region, he finally feels completely safe from the enraged Jezebel. In much the same way that Jesus asked Peter, "Wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matt. 14:31) when his faith failed him on

the water, so does God question Elijah, "What doest thou here?" Elijah's answer concerning the danger involved in staying in Israel shows he is unduly fearing men (in this case Jezebel) instead of trusting God (note Matt. 10:28).

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 5 memory-facts for this event.
2. What causes us to think God does not tell Elijah to flee from Jezebel?
3. Tell of the angel and the sleeping Elijah.
4. What is Elijah's answer to God's question as to why he is clear down here?

## 28. Elisha--From Plowman to Prophet's Helper

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 19:19-21.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Elijah casts his mantle on Elisha while he is plowing, calling him to become a prophet.
  - b. Elisha asks permission to bid goodbye to those at home.
  - c. When Elijah does not approve his going home, Elisha makes a going-away feast out of his oxen.

### COMMENTS

Elisha, one of the seven thousand who has not bowed his knee to Baal and the one personally selected by the Lord to succeed Elijah as his special prophet in Israel, at this time is plowing in a field near his town Abel-meholah in the Jordan Valley. As Elijah is returning from the deep south to the wilderness of Damascus at God's bidding (I Kings 19:15,16), he approaches him who is evidently a responsible son of a wealthy farmer. "Barnes" suggests he is "the son of a wealthy yeoman superintending the field-laborers himself and taking a share in their toils". As such he is plowing with the twelfth yoke of oxen, the other plows preceding his. To indicate Elisha is being called to go with him and be a prophet, Elijah casts his own mantle on him. Later we will find at the moment of Elijah's translation his

mantle will fall from him to Elisha (II Kings 2:13). We note this future prophet is thus called to divine service while busy in his own pursuits. God calls busy--not idle people: Jesus thus called the working fishermen (Mark 1:16-20) and the working Matthew (Matt. 9:9). Even the mistaken Saul of Tarsus was aggressively pushing his persecution of Christians when Christ appeared to him (Acts 26:9-18).

Elisha just has to have a few moments to decide his future action, and while he tarries in consideration, Elijah leaves to continue his journey. Even though there are many things to ponder about the matter, Elisha is able to decide rather hurriedly in favor of accepting the call, so runs after Elijah to accept. Students are divided as to whether Elijah is giving him permission to go back and tell his parents goodbye when he says, "Go back again," or whether he is telling him to go back to his plowing since Elisha stipulates when he will go with Elijah. As unreasonable as it may sound on Elijah's part, his words, "What have I done to thee?" seem to fit the latter thought better than the former. Don't you perceive some connection between Elisha's case here and that of the man in Luke 9:61,62 who said, "Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house," to whom Jesus replied, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God"? To put your hand to the plow and then look back evidently implied quitting the job. When the agricultural plowman Elisha said, "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee," it suggests his willingness to go with the prophet Elijah. He is putting his hand to a new kind of "plow" just as the four fishermen were soon to be a different kind of "fishermen". For some reason Jesus didn't approve the man's going home to his family before responding to the opportunity of going with Jesus, and evidently Elijah is not approving Elisha's going back to his family either.

With Elijah's remonstrance letting him know it is "now or never", Elisha immediately returns to his plow and oxen, builds a fire with the wood of the plow, makes a departure-feast of roast oxen, and the other workers share in the occasion prior to his departure to become a prophet. Matthew also gave a farewell-feast to which his former fellow-laborers were invited (Luke 5:27-29). When Elisha does this, he is making a complete break with farming, "burning his bridges behind him" when he burns his plow! In leaving everything to follow Elijah, he exemplifies what others have done since who have left houses and lands and loved ones to preach the gospel (Mark 10:29,30) just as did the fishermen and Matthew already mentioned.

He goes to minister to Elijah just as Joshua did to Moses. This man is now a servant of Elijah before he later becomes his successor with Gehazi as his servant (II Kings 4:12). We must all learn to follow before we are entrusted with leadership!

#### QUESTIONS

1. What is Elisha doing when Elijah comes along?
2. Is he from a wealthy or a poor family?
3. What does he tell Elijah he wants to do before going with him?
4. Under what condition will Elijah consent to his going with him?
5. What does Elisha do to show he is through with farming and will be a prophet?
6. What is his relationship to Elijah?

### 29. God Gives Ahab Two Great Victories over Syria

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 20:1-43.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Ben-hadad's demands stir Ahab and Israel to resist.
  - b. God assures Ahab of victory.
  - c. Syria is defeated, thinking Jehovah is God of the hills.
  - d. Syria rebuilds and returns to attack Israel in the valley.
  - e. Syria is defeated again.
  - f. God is displeased with Ahab for sparing Ben-hadad.

#### COMMENTS

Syria, Israel's neighbor to its north and east, is in the heyday of its power, so it is indeed an alarming situation when Syria's powerful king Ben-hadad decides to come against Ahab and Samaria. He has with him thirty-two kings and well over one hundred thousand soldiers (a comparison of vs. 25 and 29 shows). The warring mentioned in v. 1 has been so conclusive for Syria that Ben-hadad proudly demands Ahab's silver, gold, wives, and children. It is evident from Ahab's answer (v. 4) he realizes his helplessness before the mighty army. Ben-hadad is pleased with Ahab's capitulation, so he decides to add to his military demands. Not only is Ahab to deliver him his silver, gold, wives, and children, but Ben-hadad will send men to search Ahab's palace and his servants' houses to see that he has not held anything back and to take whatever else he desires.

There is something about this later demand that changes Ahab from a submissive vassal into a fighting mad-dog. He calls a meeting of the nation's elders, and they all agree: "Let's fight!" They send a message to Ben-hadad they will not give in to his demands. Enraged, Ben-hadad blows up and is ready to wipe out Samaria. Ahab returns a saucy response (probably a proverb of the time): "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." At this time the Syrian king and the leaders with him are in a drunken state. They order the army to resume its fighting lineups and to lay siege to Samaria.

Ahab has the same small army he had when he first said he would surrender. Jehovah knows Ahab is greatly outnumbered and yet has committed himself to resist. God is going to use this situation to make a personal bid to become Ahab's God by giving him a victory over the sizable Syrian army. So He sends a prophet to Ahab telling him He is going to give him such a victory that he will know that He is Jehovah.

Ahab asks by whom Jehovah will deliver such a great multitude into his hand. The answer: by your own young men! And when Ahab asks who is to order or lead the battle, God says Ahab himself is!

No doubt Ahab is surprised Jehovah is having anything to do with him, but he is pleased (this is Elijah's God!), and he cooperates with what God's prophet has said. It is a small number that Ahab has (two hundred fifty young princes and seven thousand soldiers) compared with the number in the opposing army. Ben-hadad and the fifty-two leaders are even more drunk by the time the Israelite army comes for the battle. Ben-hadad orders his men to take the Israelites alive whether they are coming out to surrender or to fight. But not realizing God is with Israel, Ben-hadad is totally surprised when Israel's small force completely routs his vast army. He is not so drunk he can't get on a horse and make a hurried escape into nearby fortified Aphek. God's giving Israel's small army a great victory over such odds reminds us of His reducing Gideon's army to a mere three hundred before giving it the victory over the countless Midianites so the victors would know it was God who gave them the victory (Judg. 7:2). Remember too the words of Jonathan to his armor-bearer when the two were about to attack the whole Philistine garrison: "There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few" (I Sam. 14:6).

It has been a long time since Jehovah has had any harmonious contact with any king of the Northern Kingdom until this battle. Now that He has given Ahab this victory, He follows up with sending the prophet back to him to tell him to expect Ben-hadad to remobilize and return against him at the turn of the year. And right the prophet's message is, for up in Damascus Ben-hadad's advisors are telling him Israel's gods are gods of the hills, and that if he will take an equal size army, replace the kings with captains, and fight against Israel in some valley, the outcome will be a victory for Syria. It is obvious his advisors subscribe to the heathen idea of localized gods whereas

we know (and Ben-hadad will find out) there is but one God, and He is everywhere. Of course Ben-hadad likes the message of his advisors, and he lays plans for the next attack. But simply because a person likes what he hears does not necessarily make it true.

It is obvious to the Bible student Ben-hadad will also lose the next battle since it will be fought on such a fallacious thought concerning Israel's God. When Goliath defied the armies of the living God and cursed God's servant David in the name of his gods (I Sam. 17:26,43), the loss went to Goliath and the win to David (I Sam. 17:45-53). When Sennacherib's messenger compared Jehovah to the idolatrous gods of other nations which Assyria had already defeated (II Kings 18:31-35), God immediately took hold and wiped out his army (II Kings 19:15-23,35-37). We have a right to look for the same in the coming battle.

Now back to the rematch of Syria and Israel. The scene is near Aphek. There are several Apheks in Ahab's territory. Some take this to be the Aphek just east of the Sea of Galilee, but it seems more likely to be the Aphek in the Valley of Jezreel, which would be nearer the location of the first battle and in a famous battle valley.

If they are walking by "sight" rather than by "faith", Israel will not enter the battle, for Israel is like "two little flocks of kids" while the Syrians fill the country. God is watching and again sends a prophet to Ahab with this message: "Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord." This brings joy to the heart of Ahab, and he has never had a victory like the one coming up: (1) one hundred thousand Syrians are killed in one day; (2) the rest of the Syrians (twenty-seven thousand) flee into Aphek only to have a big wall collapse on them and kill them; and (3) Ben-hadad hides in an inner-chamber in Aphek.

What is Ben-hadad's next move to be? His servants tell him the kings of Israel have a reputation for being merciful to those they have conquered, so he sends his servants clothed with sackcloth and with ropes on their heads (signs of sorrow and submission) to Ahab with a plea for his life. Ahab is surprised Ben-hadad is still alive, supposing he has been killed either in the battle or by the falling wall. When he refers to Ben-hadad as "my brother", they hurry back to him with the assurance everything is going to be all right. This time Ben-hadad comes in person, and Ahab invites him up into his royal chariot. Vanquished but spared, Ben-hadad offers to restore the cities his father took from Israel and to give Ahab permission to make streets (probably streets with Jewish merchants selling Jewish merchandise) in Damascus (Syria's capital city). Ahab feels good over the two victories and because Syria has come to terms with him. But has he handled the Ben-hadad matter correctly? Is God pleased? We shall see.

God intended Ahab to have finished off Ben-hadad. Ahab is like the neighbor ("his fellow" ASV) of the sons of the prophets who is commanded by the Lord to smite him, who refuses and is killed by a lion for his disobedience. Ahab should be like the next man who strikes and wounds the son of the prophets at God's command and who lives as a result. The wounded young man departs in a disguised way with God's message for the king.

Parabolically the messenger of God is represented as a soldier who confesses to the passing king he has allowed a prisoner committed to his care to escape. At this point the young prophet removes his disguise, and Ahab recognizes he is face to face with a messenger of Jehovah who says, "Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people." When Ahab shows mercy to Ben-hadad to God's displeasure, it is just as wrong to disobey this command as it is to hate when God

says to forgive. Some people's natures make it easier for them to execute God's judgment than to practice His mercy while the natures of other individuals make it easier for them to show mercy than to execute divine judgment. As obedient servants of the Lord we should strive to fit into God's plans whether it be to bring offenders face to face with their disobedience or whether to forgive transgressions done against us.

What will the king's response be to such a parabolic approach (so similar to the prophet Nathan's approach to King David over the Bathsheba-Uriah matter--II Sam.12:1-12)? Like David (II Sam. 12:13) Ahab is submissive and heavy-hearted.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 6 memory-facts for this lesson.
2. What is Ben-hadad's first demand of Ahab?
3. What is his second demand?
4. What message does God send to Ahab?
5. What do Ben-hadad's advisors tell him about Israel's God?
6. What message does God send to Ahab before the second battle?
7. What two things befall the men of Ben-hadad's army?
8. What terms of surrender does Ahab accept from Ben-hadad?
9. What has God planned for Ahab to do with Ben-hadad?

### 30. Ahab Takes a Righteous Man's Vineyard

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 21:1-29.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Ahab offers to buy Naboth's vineyard next to his palace.
  - b. He is saddened by Naboth's refusal to sell.
  - c. Jezebel arranges for Naboth to be falsely charged, condemned, and killed, permitting Naboth's vineyard to become Ahab's.
  - d. Elijah meets Ahab in the vineyard and pronounces doom on both him and Jezebel.

#### COMMENTS

We are again back at the beautiful city of Jezreel built on an eminence overlooking the fertile Jezreel Valley. The city is twenty-five miles north of the capital Samaria. Ahab has a palace here too (likely a vacation-capital, making it a royal resort-city). The last time we were here was immediately following Elijah's contest on Mt. Carmel. It was from here that he fled from the murderous intentions of an inflamed Jezebel.

A good man Naboth lives here, and his vineyard is immediately adjacent to Ahab's palace. The king wants to obtain it so he can make it into an herb garden. He offers either to buy it or give Naboth a vineyard in exchange. We should note it is not customary for an Israelite to sell his land unless debts and unfortunate circumstances force him to do so. This keeps one's patrimony within his family. The background of this is in Lev. 25:23-28. Normally a plot of land that is sold will still revert to the original Israelite family at the year of jubilee (every fiftieth year). However since Jezreel is a royal city and has walls, the teaching in Lev. 25:29,30 implies if Naboth sells his vineyard to Ahab, it will be lost to his family forever. So principle causes Naboth to reply to the king's proposal, "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee."

It is not customary for a king not to have what he wants, but Ahab has to respect Naboth's right of possession. The extent of his disappointment is apparent as we see him go into the palace, flop himself across his bed with his face to the wall, and refuse to eat. When the unprincipled Jezebel comes in, she says to her sobbing husband, "Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel?" suggesting that a king can do whatever he wishes and have whatever he wants. To her, "might is right" instead of "right is might". In essence she is saying, "I will get the vineyard for you!" And she goes out and devises the scheme that will get rid of Naboth and embolden Ahab to take over the vineyard. In the king's name and sealed with his seal Jezebel orders the

elders and nobles to proclaim a fast (as though some calamity were facing the city the responsibility for which would evidently be laid on the innocent and harmless Naboth). Reminiscent of the rigged trial of Jesus Jezebel has her false witnesses present (described by the inspired writer of I Kings as "sons of Belial"--no-goods). And what is the charge brought against the bewildered vineyard owner who is the victim of this greed and intrigue? "Thou didst blaspheme God and the king!" Not one word of Naboth's at his trial is recorded, but we can well imagine his asking, "What? When? Where? What did I say?" But any personal appeal he makes is swept aside by the court that has been called together to get rid of him. And it is made to look honorable by having the minimum of two witnesses testify against him (Deut. 17:6). Poor Naboth is condemned to death by stoning outside the city. Jezebel has kept her word--she has gotten rid of Naboth whose property now passes to the king whom Naboth allegedly wronged (compare II Sam. 16:4).

Ahab loses no time taking possession of the prized vineyard. What a sinner he is before God! He has killed a righteous man, has allowed his wife to overthrow justice, and has been heartless toward the family of Naboth, robbing them of their family head and "bread winner" and now taking away even their vineyard. Unprincipled people such as Ahab and Jezebel will get what they want no matter how they get it. If they cannot obtain it honestly and honorably, they will get it dishonestly and dishonorably. And they won't worry over the grief and sorrow they bring to their victims, for in their selfishness they have no heart for those they hurt.

When we see the way Naboth's case goes, we can see that a day of divine judgment is necessary to repay the wicked and reward the righteous.

Will Ahab get away with this? Num. 32:23 says people's sins will find them out. While King Ahab is walking around through his newly acquired vineyard, no

doubt making plans for its use now that it is his, he is stunned to look up and see the stern prophet Elijah coming toward him. God's servants often show up at the most embarrassing moments (when one is lighting a cigarette, when people are having an argument, etc.). Ahab cries out, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" indicating immediate admission of his guilt. His elation over obtaining the vineyard is now suddenly turned to fear as he knows Jehovah's prophet has come because of what he has done. Why does Ahab consider Elijah his "enemy"? Because Elijah is always against the evil he does--for the same reason Ahab hates the prophet Micaiah (I Kings 22:8). Compare John 7:7 and Gal. 4:16. There is nothing wrong with the prophet, the full responsibility belonging to the sinning king. Rebuking preaching has not made Elijah popular with the king. "Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way" (Prov. 15:10). While the thoughtful and the honest will accept correction, others won't, and when they don't, they usually employ vengeful tactics against the one who is correcting them. This is why few preachers bring rebuking messages.

Twice in our lesson text is Ahab's selling himself to do evil mentioned (vs. 20,25). God has been long-suffering long enough with him and with the hateful woman who has stirred him up to his wickedness. Elijah tells him of the doom that will come on him and his house (which Ahab understands to be the end of his family on the throne when Elijah refers to the annihilation of the previous houses of Jeroboam and Baasha). And how gruesome punishment the king hears concerning his wife Jezebel and his offspring: "The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat."

Again the king is docile before the withering words of the prophet. He rends his clothes, puts on sackcloth, fasts, lies in sackcloth, and goes softly. He has every reason to believe that what the

prophet has said will be fulfilled exactly.

Psa 51:17 says God will not despise a broken and contrite heart. Because Ahab humbles himself before God and His Word, God tells Elijah the doom of Ahab's house will take place after his death and not during his lifetime.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. In what city does this event take place?
3. What does Naboth have that Ahab wants?
4. What use does Ahab have for it?
5. What brings sorrow to Ahab in the matter?
6. What does Jezebel find Ahab doing?
7. What does she promise him?
8. Tell how she goes about fulfilling her promise?
9. Where is Ahab when Elijah comes to him?
10. What does Ahab say the moment he sees Elijah?
11. What does Elijah foretell concerning Ahab's house?
12. What will happen to Jezebel?
13. How does Ahab respond to the prediction?
14. When will the doom fall?

### 31. Jehoshaphat Makes Peace with Ahab

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 22:44 and II Chron. 18:1.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehoshaphat makes peace with Ahab that lasts for a long time and that is bad for Judah.
  - b. It is probably done to combine their strength against the rising power of Syria.

#### COMMENTS

For so many studies now we have been following the events in the Northern Kingdom involving King Ahab and events involving the prophet Elijah that we need to check in and see what is taking place with King Jehoshaphat and his Southern Kingdom. Let us remember he is the son of Asa who ruled over Judah for so long. He is a good king and is enjoying a prosperous reign also.

We are not told just when Jehoshaphat makes peace with Ahab nor why. It is probably to combine their strength against the rising power of Syria (Damascus the capital) in the event of an attack. For whatever the reason we are

surprised Jehoshaphat yokes up with such a wicked king, for Jehoshaphat is one of the good kings while Ahab is the worst. This alliance is the one glaring weakness Jehoshaphat has amid many great strengths he possesses. Sometimes even good people have a besetting sin.

One of the results of this alliance is Jehoshaphat takes Ahab's daughter Athaliah as a wife for his son Jehoram who will succeed him. Other results coming up will be Jehoshaphat going to war with Ahab in the battle for Ramoth-gilead. Then after Ahab's death Jehoshaphat will build a fleet of ships with Ahab's son Ahaziah at the port of Ezion-geber. Still later he will go to war against Moab in company with Ahab's grandson Jehoram. And then Jehoshaphat's grandson Ahaziah and Ahab's grandson Jehoram will be the best of friends, will go to war together against Ramoth-gilead, and will die together at the hand of Jehu. So the peace Jehoshaphat and Ahab make is real and will be lasting. But God is not pleased with it as we shall see in coming events. We will also see that much evil will get into the life of Judah through this affinity between the two ruling houses. Just as God said back in Deut. 7:3,4 that when the righteous marry the wicked, it has its sad effects.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. When does Jehoshaphat make peace with Ahab?
3. Probably why does he make this peace?
4. Why are we surprised that this peace is made?

### 32. The Condemned Ahab Cannot Escape God's Judgment

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 22:1-40 and II Chron. 18:1-34.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Ahab invites Jehoshaphat to join him in recovering Ramoth-gilead from Syria.
  - b. Ahab's prophets promise him victory.
  - c. Micalah prophesies his defeat and death.



- d. The circumstances of Ahab's fatal wound indicate God's role in it.
- e. Dogs lick up Ahab's blood just as dogs did Naboth's.

### COMMENTS

Following his second and decisive defeat by Ahab and Israel, Ben-hadad of Syria had agreed to restore to Israel the cities his father had taken from them (I Kings 20:34). We are not told just which cities they were, but those cities of Israel east of the Jordan were from time to time held by Israel, then by Syria, and then by Israel again, etc. Likely those were the cities involved in Ben-hadad's promise. One of the chief of these cities is Ramoth-gilead. It is near the center of the land occupied by Israel's two and one-half tribes east of the Jordan (look it up on a map). It is one of the forty-eight cities allotted to the Levites (Num. 35:7; Josh. 21:38), and its prominence among Israel's many cities is seen in its being the central refuge city east of the Jordan (Josh. 20:2,7,8). Even though it has now been three years since Ben-hadad promised to restore these cities, the important Ramoth-gilead is still in his hands. After the pressure of the time passed, he is like Pharaoh who would promise to let Israel go if Moses would but remove the plague, but after the plague was lifted he hardened his heart and did not keep his word (Exo. 8:28-32). So human nature will make promises to God in days of calamity that are not always carried out in days of prosperity.

It is while Jehoshaphat of Jerusalem is paying Ahab of Samaria a friendly visit (with much dining--II Chron. 18:2) that Ahab solicits his help in going to war against Syria in order to recover Ramoth-gilead. The II Chron. account indicates Ahab has to persuade Jehoshaphat to assist him in the battle. Jehoshaphat commits his men and horses to the project but asks that they inquire of Jehovah before proceeding. His request is supposedly honored when around four hundred court-prophets come before the

two kings as they sit on thrones just inside Samaria's entrance gate. Are you surprised Ahab has this many prophets when so recently Elijah slew so many of his prophets near Mt. Carmel (I Kings 18:40)? The slain prophets were prophets of Baal while these are possibly general prophets. "Barnes" observes that among the ancients their prophets were not so much mouthpieces for their gods as persons thought to have power with their gods to induce them to do what they pronounce. Naturally, then, they will say what the king wants, so they unite in saying, "Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." This is music to the ears of the king, but Jehoshaphat discounts what they say because, as "Smith" notes, they do not say as true prophets of Jehovah, "Thus saith Jehovah." He, therefore, asks, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord ("Jehovah" ASV) besides, that we might enquire of him?"

The only Jehovah-prophets Ahab knows about are Elijah (and he would have to know Elijah's whereabouts in order to consult him "today"--Jehoshaphat's request in v. 5) and Micaiah (whom he hates). His words concerning Micaiah ("I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me") remind us of Jesus' words in John 7:7 ("The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil") and of Paul's words in Gal. 4:16 ("Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?").

While Micaiah is being sent for, and the two kings are in their royal robes on thrones just inside the entrance gate of Samaria, one of Ahab's prophets (Zedekiah) is leading the other prophets in quite a "pep rally" before the two kings. He acts as if he is a strong animal with horns, assuring Ahab he will "push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them." And all the prophets come in, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the king's hand."

As the messenger calls Micaiah, he urges him to join the other prophets in prophesying success. But the faithful

messenger of God is concerned with one responsibility as a prophet, replying, "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak." Such faithfulness has always characterized God's true messengers. John 3:34 says, "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God." One is not a true messenger of God if he preaches something besides God's Word so as to please his listeners (Gal. 1:9,10).

As Micaiah arrives on the scene, it could be an overwhelming situation for one not so firmly committed to being a true prophet, for there are the two kings on their thrones, and there is a crowd of prophets (around four hundred) led by Zedekiah's assuring antics, all prophesying victory. But truth and righteousness are not always demonstrated by numbers. Micaiah is outnumbered about four hundred to one, yet he is right and they wrong. Noah and his family were likewise outnumbered in their day, and so were Caleb and Joshua. Jesus noted, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13,14).

Now comes the king's question, "Shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear?" Everything is quiet awaiting his answer. There is irony in Micaiah's answer ("Go, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king"), and Ahab detects it (v. 16). And now comes forth the real prediction from God when Micaiah says, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the Lord said, these have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace." Ahab gets the idea (he is the shepherd who is no longer with the sheep, and the sheep are his leaderless army), for he turns to Jehoshaphat and says, "Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?"

Micaiah resumes speaking and explains why Ahab's prophets actually prophesied victory: God wants Ahab to

fall, so He has put a lying spirit into the mouths of all Ahab's prophets who promise victory for him. This will draw Ahab into the battle where he will be slain. The smart, show-off Zedekiah walks over to Micaiah, smites him on the cheek, and scoffingly asks, "Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?" Momentarily and in the setting it looks like Zedekiah is the triumphant one, and Micaiah is not to be intimidated by a prophet, a king, or a throng, so he predicts trouble for the demonstrative Zedekiah: "Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself." It is always bad to resist God's messengers. Ask King Jeroboam (I Kings 13:4), Amaziah (Amos 7:16,17), Hananiah (Jer. 28:12-17), Jehoiakim (Jer. 36:20-23,27-31), and others.

The king wants no more of Micaiah's prophecies, so he orders him returned to jail and prescribes a bread-and-water diet for him until he can deal with him on his return from the battle. When the king says, "Until I come in peace," Micaiah replies, "If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me," and he bids the people to take note of his statement.

We are left wondering just why Jehoshaphat asks for a prophet of Jehovah and still will go to battle with Ahab when doom has been prophesied. Maybe the pressure that does not overwhelm Micaiah does overwhelm Jehoshaphat, for not all who intend to serve God have equal courage.

The battle-plan of Syria is to kill King Ahab and not fight with anybody else. Word of this has leaked out to Ahab but not to Jehoshaphat. Therefore, Ahab doesn't want to direct the battle himself but will enter the battle attired as one of the soldiers while hypocritically offering the glory of leading the battle to Jehoshaphat. As the battle opens, from what the bowmen say as they shoot at Jehoshaphat it is evident they think he is Ahab, and Jehoshaphat cries out he is not Ahab. For a while that stops the shooting until they can locate Ahab. But Ahab is not to be identified. He is doing

everything he can to save himself from the doom pronounced against him. But when God marks a person for destruction because of unrepented sin, no amount of human ingenuity can overthrow His pronouncement. You can be sure this is Ahab's last. How will this be brought about?

It appears from the Biblical account that some Syrian soldier just shoots an arrow at random, not aiming at anything or anybody, but that very arrow finds its way between the joints of Ahab's armor, severely wounding him. Hoping against hope Ahab courageously props himself up in the chariot all day throughout the battle. But at evening the king who has led Israel for twenty-two years finally succumbs, breathes his last, and dies in the chariot. His death brings a proclamation that ends the fighting, and the Syrians retain Ramoth-gilead.

Ahab's chariot is a mess with his blood all over its floor. His dead body is sorrowfully hauled back to the capital city for entombment. Since Samaria is a new city, beginning with his father Omri, Ahab is only the second king buried there. There will be many more in the future, of course. As the servants scrub out his bloody chariot, scavenger dogs are present to lick up his blood, reminding us of the dogs at Jezreel that licked up Naboth's blood.

A problem may arise in your mind over the place where dogs licked up Ahab's blood. Elijah told him, according to I Kings 21:19, "Thus saith the Lord, in the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." That would be Jezreel and not Samaria where it happens (I Kings 22:38). There is one Scripture that may take care of the problem. When Ahab repented after hearing Elijah's rebuke and pronouncement of doom on him and his house (I Kings 21:19-24,27), God said He would defer the punishment until after Ahab's death (I Kings 21:28,29). Evidently it was God's intention to destroy Ahab, Jezebel, and all his offspring at once, and Ahab would be in Jezreel where Naboth had lived. So at the

time of Elijah's prophecy Ahab was scheduled for a peaceful death with the predicted calamities coming on his family later. But because of Ahab's run-in with God's prophet Micaiah, God decided Ahab's new sin should bring its own punishment--a violent death. Thus, he dies in fulfillment of Micaiah's prophecy, and dogs still lick up his blood according to Elijah's prophecy even though it is at Samaria instead of Jezreel.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 5 memory-facts for this event.
2. What promise does Ben-hadad not keep?
3. What city does Ahab really want back?
4. Whom does he persuade to help him?
5. At whose insistence do they call in prophets?
6. How many prophets of Ahab are called in?
7. What is the gist of their message?
8. Who is not altogether pleased in the matter?
9. Why does Ahab not want to summon Micaiah?
10. What do Zedekiah and the prophets do while they wait for Micaiah to come?
11. What does the messenger tell Micaiah?
12. What does Micaiah say to him?
13. What does Micaiah foresee in the coming battle?
14. Tell of Zedekiah's smartness with Micaiah.
15. What does Micaiah say back to him?
16. What order does Ahab give concerning Micaiah?
17. What are Micaiah's parting words to Ahab?
18. What is Syria's battle-plan?
19. What seeming honor does Ahab give to Jehoshaphat?
20. When does Syria quit shooting at Jehoshaphat?
21. What brings about the wounding of Ahab?
22. When does he die?
23. When do dogs lick up Ahab's blood?

### 33. Jehoshaphat is Rebuked for Helping Ahab

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Chron. 19:1-3.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. The prophet Hanani reproves Jehoshaphat for going to battle with Ahab.
  - b. He also commends Jehoshaphat for his good points.

#### COMMENTS

We cannot help wondering about Jehoshaphat's thoughts as he makes his way back to Jerusalem following the defeat at Ramoth-gilead. At the beginning of the



battle he was actually near death himself when the Syrians were shooting at him. His friend (?) Ahab, who had put him up as the "target" instead of himself, is now dead, and Micaiah's prophecy has come true (Israel's army is without a shepherd). Jehoshaphat is bound to have some misgivings about the whole matter. Is the matter ended now that the battle is over?

A prophet Jehu, son of Hanani, who in his younger years rebuked King Baasha of the North for his wickedness (I Kings 16:1-4), is now summoned in his older years to intercept Jehoshaphat of the South and first rebuke him ("Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord"—referring to his having helped Ahab) and then encourage him ("Nevertheless there are good things in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God").

It is interesting to know that this same prophet Jehu will write a biography of King Jehoshaphat (II Chron. 20:34).

Upon his return to Jerusalem Jehoshaphat labors to bring all his people (from Beersheba in the south and Mt. Ephraim in the north) back to God.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Jehoshaphat is returning to Jerusalem from where?
3. Who meets him?
4. Where have we come across this prophet earlier?
5. What words of encouragement does he also have for him?
6. What does the king endeavor to do for the people from Beersheba to Mount Ephraim?

### 34. Ahaziah is Israel's New King

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 22:51-53 and II Kings 1:1.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. He perpetuates both Jeroboam's calf-worship and Ahab's Baal-worship.
  - b. Moab rebels against Israel in his reign.

#### COMMENTS

**N**ow that Ahab is dead, the North will have a new ruler. Who will he be, and what will he be like?

No aspirant-to-the-throne takes advantage of the sudden and unexpected death of Ahab to seize the throne, but his son Ahaziah is made the next king. Jehoshaphat of the South is now in the seventeenth year of his twenty-five year reign.

What parents are is often reproduced in their children, for often children "learn what they live". With a father and mother like Ahaziah has had (Ahab and Jezebel), we are not surprised that he is an evil ruler also, worshiping Baal and perpetuating Jeroboam's long-standing calf-worship. So God's efforts to gain the allegiance and worship of the North by giving Ahab two significant victories over Syria are not realized as neither he nor his son Ahaziah turn back to Jehovah-worship. And not every effort we put forth to turn individuals from sin to righteousness will succeed either, but we should continue trying just as God did.

Moab's rebelling against being tributary to Israel comes with the death of the powerful Ahab. Ahaziah will not attempt to regain control over Moab, but his successor will.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. What event brings Ahaziah to the throne of Israel?
3. In what year of his reign is Jehoshaphat when Ahaziah begins to reign?
4. How is Ahaziah's evil described?
5. What nation successfully rebels against Israel during Ahaziah's reign?

### 35. Jehoshaphat Reforms His Judicial System

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Chron 19:5-11.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehoshaphat places judges in all his fortified cities.
  - b. He establishes a special set of judges in Jerusalem.

#### COMMENTS

**I**n order to insure that every man's case receives a just hearing, Jehoshaphat places judges in each of Judah's fortified cities. This was a point on which Absalom criticized his father David's government and used it for his own ambitious ends (II Sam. 15:2,3).

Knowing every judge should respect the law of the land, the right of each innocent individual before the law, and the penalty to be placed on each violator of the law, Jehoshaphat charges his appointees with these words: "Take heed what ye do; for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment." And he goes on to warn them about having respect of persons in their judgments, and he also warns them about accepting bribes, which is in harmony with the law of God in Lev. 19:15 ("Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour"). Taking bribes was one of the sins of Samuel's sons: "They were judges in Beersheba. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment" (I Sam 8:2,3). And the same thing happened in Amos's day: "I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right" (Amos 5:12).

At the same time that Jehoshaphat establishes judges in all his major cities, he also establishes somewhat of a "supreme court" in Jerusalem for handling more serious cases and those involving technical interpretations of the law. Commenting on v. 11 "Clarke" says, "Here was a two-fold jurisdiction, ecclesiastical and civil: in the ecclesiastical court Amariah the high-priest was supreme judge; in the civil court Zebadiah was supreme." It is evident the Levites will fill an important place in this new national court.

We might observe it is just such wise and righteous moves as this by King Jehoshaphat that please God, bring His blessings on him, and make him the

great ruler he is. Prov. 29:4 says, "The king by judgment establisheth the land; but he that receiveth gifts (takes bribes) overthroweth it." "The throne is established by righteousness" (Prov. 16:12).

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. What does Jehoshaphat establish in all his fortified cities?
3. What charge does he give them?
4. What does he establish in Jerusalem?
5. What kind of cases will Amariah handle?
6. What kind will Zebadiah?

### 36. God Gives Jehoshaphat Victory over a Powerful Coalition

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Chron. 20:1-30.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. A great coalition of armies invades Judah.
  - b. Jehoshaphat calls a great fast and prayer meeting at Jerusalem.
  - c. God sends an ambushment among the opposing armies causing them to destroy each other.
  - d. Judah praises God for such a victory.

## COMMENTS

A powerful coalition composed of Moab, Ammon, and Edom is conspiring against Jehoshaphat. These are all ancient enemies of Israel. The nations of Moab and Ammon are descendants of Lot's incestuous union with his daughters after their escape from the burning Sodom. Though distantly related to the Israelites through Abraham's father Terah, they have constantly been at odds with Israel. Edom is a nation of Esau's descendants, and the ill-will set up over Jacob's obtaining Esau's birthright and blessing has continued through the centuries in the hearts of their descendants.

Moab and Ammon occupy the country east and south of the land allotted to the two and one-half tribes of Israel living east of the Jordan while Edom occupies the land directly south of the Dead Sea.

This great joint-army is already at Engedi on the west side of the Dead Sea in Jehoshaphat's own domain when he learns about their coming.

Fortunate indeed is a people whose ruler is in touch with God. King Jehoshaphat sets himself to seek the Lord, proclaims a national fast, and gathers people from Judah's various cities at Jerusalem to seek God, and he himself stands in the midst of them in a new court of the temple and prays a great prayer. The Lord loses no time in assuring Jehoshaphat and the people that He will take care of their enemy. One of the men of the group (Jahaziel) is given the inspired message that Judah will not even have to fight. He says, "The battle is not yours, but God's...Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you...Tomorrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you." These words are very similar to those spoken by Moses when the Egyptians pursued them before they had crossed the Red Sea out of Egypt (Exo. 14:13,14).

We can but imagine the thrill that comes to the hearts of the king and his worshiping subjects as they hear this wonderful promise. Oh, how the Levites do praise God with strong voices! There is not a doubt in their minds, and God will not fail them nor His Word.

In the morning as they leave Jerusalem and go toward Engedi where the great army is, Jehoshaphat urges the people, "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." He also has singers preceding the army, and hear them sing, "Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever." Various times the Old Testament shows God intervening in the affairs of men to work out everything after the counsel of His own will such as He does here. "Barnes" considers the divinely appointed ambushment to be angels, and it is very likely true. He says, "These liars in wait have been regarded as angels employed by God to confuse the host and cause its destruction, so that the Moabites and Ammonites first united to

destroy the Edomites, and then turned upon each other."

When Jehoshaphat, his army, and the singers arrive on the scene, the ground is covered with the dead bodies of Judah's would-be invaders. Since these ancient warriors have proudly worn much of their wealth on their persons, Judah strips the slain of everything of value (compare I Sam. 31:8). There is so much it actually takes Judah three days to gather all the spoil to carry home with them. But before returning to Jerusalem they hold a great praise service, and the place from henceforth will be known to people as "Berachah", which means "Blessing". As they joyfully make the trip back to Jerusalem, the king heads the procession. What music of psalteries, harps, and trumpets as the procession ends at the temple where they had held their great prayer meeting before departing for the battle they never had to fight! Just as these do not forget the special blessing God has given them, even so we should never fail to thank God for the special blessings He pours out upon us.

Word of all this so spreads that "the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries...so the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet... God gave him rest round about." This happens much as Solomon has written: "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. 16:7).

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. What three nations come against Judah?
3. Where is their great army when Jehoshaphat learns of their intentions?
4. What does this cause Jehoshaphat to do?
5. What message does God send through Jahaziel?
6. What group praises the Lord with loud voices?
7. Whom does Jehoshaphat have preceding the army as they leave for Engedi?
8. Tell of the way God gives Judah victory.
9. How long does it take Judah to strip the valuables from the dead soldiers' bodies?
10. What happens at Berachah?
11. Where does the victory procession end?

### 37. The Royal Fleet is Destroyed before Leaving Harbor

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Chron. 20:35-37 and I Kings 22:47-49.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah build a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber.
  - b. Because God is displeased with Ahaziah's participation in it, the fleet is destroyed before it can leave the harbor.
  - c. When Jehoshaphat rebuilds the fleet, he does so without Ahaziah's help.

### COMMENTS

**B**efore the kingdom of Solomon divided, he utilized two great ports: Joppa for his Mediterranean trade (II Chron. 2:16) and Ezion-geber on the Red Sea for his other trade (I Kings 9:26). They were his gateways to the outside world. Special mention is made in our text that Edom has no king at this time—only a deputy (a subservient ruler). It appears that with Jehoshaphat's victory over the Moab-Ammon-Edom coalition, he is the one who has taken over Edom. Edom is a narrow strip of land running from the Dead Sea on the north to an arm of the Red Sea on the south. Ezion-geber is the great port city on this arm of the Red Sea. Since Jehoshaphat is contemplating doing the same thing Solomon did in building great ships to go to Ophir for gold, it is evident God has blessed him with abundance, or he couldn't be doing this. Now that he appears to control Edom, he can make use of this great port. Ophir is a place famous for its gold (I Kings 9:28; I Chron. 29:4; II Chron. 9:10; Job 28:16; Psa. 45:9; etc.) and is far to the south on Arabia's western shore. "Tarshish" is both mentioned as a place of trade (thought to be "Tarsessus" of Spain at the western-most point of the ancient world) and also as designating the kind of ships being built (probably large, rugged vessels that could make such prolonged sea journeys). (Do you remember when Jonah was running from God's call, he boarded a ship at Joppa for Tarshish-Jon. 1:3?)

To build the kind of ships and the amount of ships Jehoshaphat wants is quite an undertaking, so he and King Ahaziah of the North combine in the venture. But because Ahaziah is so wicked, God is again displeased that Jehoshaphat has allied himself with him, so He sends the prophet Eliezer to prophesy doom on their fleet of brand new ships. After all the time and expense and work that have been expended building these great sea-going vessels, our text says, "They went not; for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber." What breaks them in Ezion-geber harbor? The most obvious and probable is a great storm that dashes the ships to pieces.

Our Biblical account is very brief, but the details in I Kings 22:49 (the verse after telling of the fleet's destruction) has led most scholars to think Jehoshaphat, now understanding why the first fleet was destroyed and still desiring to have vessels on the sea, resumes the ship-building but refuses to have Ahaziah have any part of it. This appears likely, indicating Jehoshaphat has accepted the wrongfulness of his earlier project and is desirous of doing it right this time.

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where is Ezion-geber?
3. Since it is not in Judah, why can Jehoshaphat make use of its harbor?
4. What item from Ophir is he wanting?
5. What mistake does he make in building the ships?
6. How does he pay for his mistake?
7. How do we know he has learned his lesson?

### 38. King Ahaziah has a Run-in with Elijah

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 1:2-18.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. King Ahaziah is seriously injured from falling out of his upper chamber.
  - b. Elijah sends word to him that he will not recover.
  - c. Two bands and their captains are destroyed when Ahaziah sends them to take Elijah.

- d. A third band and its captain beg for mercy and are spared.
- e. Elijah personally tells the king he will not recover, and he doesn't.

### COMMENTS

**A**haziah's reign seems to be one calamity after another: (1) During his reign Moab refuses to be tributary; (2) The fleet he and Jehoshaphat build at Ezion-geber is destroyed; (3) And now he has had a terrible fall down through some lattice-work from his upper chamber, and his condition is grave. He is in only the second year of his reign.

He summons messengers to his bedside and dispatches them to Ekron, a city of the Philistines, to consult its god Baalzebub. He hopes to obtain a message from him that he will get well. We wonder why he doesn't consult his own idol-prophets. Some think Baalzebub of Ekron is known for predicting favorable fortunes.

If you think God has given you nothing but thankless assignments to perform, think of Elijah whose job it seems is always to deliver bad news to kings of the North. We haven't seen Elijah for sometime, but here he comes again. An angel of God sends him to intercept these messengers of the king. He does not introduce himself to them but asks them if it isn't because there is no God in the Northern Kingdom that they are being sent to Ekron. After he tells them to tell their king, "Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die," they turn around and return to Samaria with the message.

Surprised they have gotten back so soon, the king is incensed with the message they bring. He inquires concerning the man who sends the message. Just as soon as they begin describing the man's looks and clothing, he says, "It is Elijah the Tishbite," and he dispatches a captain with fifty soldiers to find him and take him into custody. The detachment stands at the base of the hill

on which Elijah is resting. The captain orders, "Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down." Since he refers to the prophet as a "man of God", Elijah says, "If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty." And immediately God sends fire that destroys them. Elijah's calling down fire on his enemies will be well known among the Jews for generations to come, for when a Samaritan village refused to allow Jesus and His disciples to stay overnight, the sons of Zebedee said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them even as Elias did?" (Luke 9:54).

One would think Elijah's previous victory over Ahab and the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel and now this destruction of Ahaziah's captain and soldiers at his hand would cause the king to drop the matter, realizing he cannot fight against the prophet's verdict involving his death. But no, the king sends out a second captain with a second set of fifty soldiers. The captain says the same thing, Elijah replies in the same way, and the same fate befalls this captain and his men.

It is obvious the lives of a king's soldiers are very cheap and mean very little to him when Ahaziah sends out yet a third captain and another fifty men. How would you like to be that third captain or one of his soldiers? It looks like "curtains" for them too, except this captain tries a more humble approach to the prophet-in-touch-with-God. First he pleads for his own life and for the lives of his soldiers: "O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight." His attitude and appeal are honored when the angel speaks to Elijah, "Go down with him; be not afraid of him." And he gets down and walks with the group to the bedside of the ailing king. It is noteworthy Elijah is just as courageous in his message in the actual presence of the king as he has been when merely sending a message to him by his Ekron-bound messengers, for at the king's bedside he

says to the king, "Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron, is it not because there is no God in Israel to enquire of his word? therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die." And he dies. Thus comes to an end this son of Ahab and Jezebel, the third king of the Omri dynasty and the eighth king of the Northern Kingdom.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 5 memory-facts for this event.
2. Name three calamities that hit Ahaziah during his brief reign.
3. To what god does Ahaziah send messengers to inquire about his prospects of recovering?
4. How does Elijah know about these messengers?
5. What question and what verdict does Elijah send to the king via his messengers?
6. What surprises Ahaziah about his messengers' return?
7. What displeases the king about their message to him?
8. How do the messengers describe Elijah?
9. Where is Elijah when Ahaziah's soldiers find him?
10. What does the captain say to him?
11. What does Elijah say to him?
12. And what happens to the captain and his men?
13. How many such captains and their men does Ahaziah send to take Elijah?
14. Tell of the last captain's different approach.
15. What does Elijah say to the king in person?
16. What happens to king Ahaziah?

### 39. Another Son of Ahab Becomes King in the North

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 3:1-3.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehoram succeeds his brother as king in the North.
  - b. He puts away his father's image of Baal but continues Jeroboam's calf-worship.

#### COMMENTS

It is customary for a king's son to follow him to the throne, but since Ahaziah has no son (II Kings 1:17), his brother Jehoram becomes his successor. He too is a son of Ahab and Jezebel. The fact that he is not as evil as his father and his mother recalls the gross evil of their many years heading the

nation. Though it will be Jehu who will later exterminate Baal-worship from Israel, God still takes notice that this king takes some stand against it in that he puts "away the image of Baal that his father had made". Even though he is not good otherwise, God takes notice of and gives him credit for doing this good.

But he is still listed as "evil" because he continues the calf-worship so long ago instituted by the first king of the Northern Kingdom. When we see the way Jeroboam's calf-worship lives on, we cannot help saying, "Oh, that he had started something good!"

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Who is the new king of Israel?
3. What relation is he to his predecessor?
4. Why doesn't a son of Ahaziah follow him to the throne of Israel?
5. Is the new king labeled good or evil?
6. What is his evil?
7. In what way is the new king better than his father?

### 40. Elisha Sees Elijah Translated

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 2:1-18.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Elisha refuses to be apart from the traveling Elijah.
  - b. The Jordan divides before them as they cross to the east side.
  - c. Elisha requests a double portion of Elijah's spirit.
  - d. Elijah is taken up to heaven.
  - e. The Jordan also divides at Elisha's command.
  - f. The sons of the prophets go on a futile search for Elijah's body.

#### COMMENTS

The time has drawn near for Elijah's earthly labors to end. He and Elisha are together at Gilgal where he bids Elisha remain while he himself goes to Bethel. From what we read later, we conclude Elisha knows Elijah will be taken from him soon, so he does not want to be left behind. He treasures every precious hour with him who has been a

spiritual "father" to him. In going to Bethel Elijah may be wanting to see the sons of the prophets of this place before departing. God has revealed to the Bethel young men that God will take Elijah away this very day. When they speak of it to Elisha, he says he also knows it but asks them not to talk about it. It is an emotional matter with Elisha.

Elisha also refuses to be left behind at Bethel but accompanies the older prophet down to Jericho, affirming again the double oath, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." By his thus putting both "As the Lord liveth" and "As thy soul liveth" in the same oath, it makes a strong argument for the doctrine of human immortality like God's immortality.

The sons of the prophets here at Jericho approach Elisha with the same information as have those at Bethel, and he likewise asks them not to be talking about it. Just why Elijah keeps speaking to Elisha about remaining behind at all these places is not clear. If he really wants him to remain, Elisha is surely disobeying his orders. Or is he testing him to see if he will accept being separated from him at this time? Or does Elijah want to be psychologically bolstered by Elisha's continued affirmation that he will not be apart from him until he is gone?

As the two prophets head for the Jordan, the young Jericho prophets situate themselves so they can keep the older prophets in view (probably from an eminence). Elijah the Tishbite is a native of Tishbeh (on the east side of the Jordan). He is going to the east side for his departure. Here the unusual experience of not dying but being transported to heaven awaits him. Instead of crossing the Jordan at the ford where travelers customarily do, they come to the historic river where there is no ford and no bridge. Taking his mantle Elijah rolls it into a long, club-like object and swings it down upon the surface of the water, and the river opens a passageway so the two can walk across the river bed even without getting muddy feet!

As soon as they are east of the river, Elijah bids his successor ask what he should do for him before he is taken from him. Elisha loses no time in replying: "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." What is meant by a "double portion"? Many commentators take the position exemplified in "Barnes Notes" as follows: "The 'double portion' is that which denotes the proportion of a father's property which was the right of an eldest son (Deut. 21:17). Elisha therefore asked for twice as much of Elijah's spirit as should be inherited by any other of the 'sons of the prophets'." Others hold the view he is asking for a double portion of the Spirit Elijah himself has. In your writer's judgment the remark made by Elijah ("Thou hast asked a hard thing") favors the latter position. Obtaining the requested blessing will be conditioned on Elisha's getting to see Elijah taken away.

The two push ahead, talking as they go. Suddenly a chariot of fire pulled by horses of fire appears, and the older prophet is immediately taken up into heaven by a whirlwind. What is that falling back to the ground? It is Elijah's mantle. And Elisha sees him taken! His request will be granted! As Elisha sees him go, he exclaims about Elijah, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." This remarkable appellation so fittingly stated about Elijah will later be stated by a king about Elisha also when he is on his deathbed (II Kings 13:14).

We can imagine the sorrow Elisha feels as he sees his dear leader suddenly snatched from him never to be with him again. Standing with his clothes rent, emblematic of the sorrow he feels, reality comes home to him (his master has been taken away from him). Seeing the mantle lying on the ground and realizing his request will be honored, he picks up that mantle that was earlier cast on him when he was plowing and that had parted the Jordan when in Elijah's hand. Eager to see the spirit of Elijah manifested through him, he goes directly to the Jordan and smites the Jordan with the mantle, saying, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" His

God is with him, for the waters of the Jordan again open, and he crosses to the west side.

This has been quite a day for the sons of the prophets: They have seen Elijah smite the Jordan, have seen him ascend, and have now seen Elisha smite the Jordan. They concur among themselves, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha," and they go forth to meet and bow themselves before their new superior. They form quite a group in themselves (fifty strong young men). Though not as close to the dramatic ascension as Elisha, they have nevertheless witnessed it from their spot west of the Jordan. The big question in their minds now is, What has happened to Elijah since he was taken up? They fear the Spirit of the Lord who took him away may have cast him on one of the Gilead mountains on the east side of the Jordan. My mind struggles to figure out the nature of their thinking. Are they wanting to go look for Elijah himself or for his body? If for Elijah himself, then they are not conceiving the translation that has taken place. Elijah would still be alive over there, and they want to go see him. But why would God do anything to harm Elijah? On the other hand maybe they understand the separation of body and spirit when one leaves this life. They could have understood, for Solomon had already written Eccl. 12:7 ("Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it"). I think they know he has been caught up to heaven but suppose his body has been deposited somewhere in those bleak mountains east of the Jordan.

Elisha considers it a fruitless journey and discourages their going. But the basis of their concern for the unburied body of one whom they have respected so highly reflects the Jewish concept of the calamity of being unburied. Listen: "If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he" (Eccl. 6:3). They cannot stand not going to look for the body. Realizing it is

not a moral issue Elisha indulges their concern and permits them to go. Fifty men seeking for three days uncovers no trace of the body. Now satisfied he has not been cast on one of the mountains in that wild terrain, they return to Elisha at Jericho. James Smith in his commentary on I and II Kings explains Elisha's statement, "Did I not say unto you, Go not?" from the standpoint that Elisha's knowledge of the situation was being wrongfully called in question by them.

So we indeed do say goodbye to the great prophet Elijah. He is gone. He is no longer a part of this world. Elisha, blessed with a double portion of his spirit, will take over.

Before passing on into our history this side of Elijah, let us share some final considerations about him. (1) The brevity of the Bible's coverage of Elijah robs us of a full personality—picture of the prophet. It appears to this writer he can be quite a non-emotional person. Indications: even though he has been with Elisha several years and knows he is going to be taken away, he would leave Elisha at Gilgal, at Bethel, and at Jericho, and when he leaves he shares no parting instructions nor "God bless you" but only a business-like offer, "What shall I do for thee, before I be taken away from thee?" Nor is there any "Farewell" or "Goodbye" falling from his lips as he departs. However, when Jas. 5:17 says he was a man of "like passions as we are", when we see him fleeing from Jezebel, and when we see him discouraged in the cave at Mt. Sinai, it may be that the above conclusion should be modified. (2) The unusualness of his translation without dying is seen in the fact that only Enoch before him and nobody since him has ever experienced what he did. (3) Jesus' meeting with him and Moses in the Transfiguration is usually interpreted as Moses representing the Law and Elijah the prophets. If so, his being chosen to represent the prophets testifies to how great he was. Some scholars see something else in these two men at the Transfiguration. Since these appear "in glory" with Christ (Luke 9:31), they think

Moses represents the godly deceased at the time of Christ's coming and Elijah those who will be translated when He comes. (4) Are you aware that the Old Testament's last two verses contain a prophecy that God would send "Elijah" before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord (Mal. 4:5,6)? This is why some Jews asked John the Baptist if he was Elijah (John 1:21) and why some thought Jesus was Elijah (Matt. 16:13,14). It is reported that Jewish families at their passover meals leave an empty chair for Elijah. The angel told Zacharias that his son John the Baptist would go before the Lord "in the spirit and power" of Elijah (Luke 1:17), and though John himself did not realize he was fulfilling the "Elijah" prophecy, Jesus said he was the fulfillment (Matt. 17:12,13; 11:13,14). In Elijah's and John the Baptist's rebuking sins (even their kings' sins) together with the solitary manner of their lives, they are strikingly similar. (5) Just as God's name is associated with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (e.g. Exo. 3:6), even so does God's name get associated with Elijah (our text), and if we are obedient to Him, He will also be our God (Rev.21:7)!

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 6 memory-facts for this event.
2. At what three cities west of the Jordan does Elijah seek to leave Elisha?
3. What knowledge do the sons of the prophets have about Elijah?
4. Does Elisha already know it?
5. Who watch as the two great prophets go to Jordan?
6. How do they get to the east side of the river?
7. What request does Elisha make of Elijah?
8. On what condition will the request be fulfilled?
9. Tell of Elijah's translation.
10. How does Elisha get back across the Jordan?
11. What do the sons of the prophets want to do?
12. What do they find on their search?

### 41. The City of Jericho Asks Elisha's Help

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 2:19-22.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:

- a. Jericho sends for Elisha because of its spring.
- b. He comes and heals the spring.

#### COMMENTS

Travelers to Jericho today find it an oasis city in the midst of a vast, unbelievable arid desert. Luxuriant vegetation, delicious fruit, and beautiful blossoms greet the traveler as he enters Jericho. Has it always been this way? Evidently, for "Jericho" means "place of fragrance", and your writer has never been anywhere that the fragrance in the air is so pronounced as in Jericho. No wonder the elders of the city said, "The situation of this city is pleasant."

Everything of beauty and productivity at Jericho is traceable to its great spring of water issuing forth as a flowing stream at the base of the mound that was the Jericho of Joshua's day. Our text says for some reason the great spring that has been such a blessing has now become a problem. The King James reading, "The water is naught, and the ground barren," sounds as if it has dried up while other translations say, "The water is bad, and the land miscarrieth" (American Standard); "The waters are bad, and the earth sterile" (Young's Literal). We can see the situation is grave, and the elders of Jericho who realize Elisha has succeeded Elijah seek his help. Upon his arrival he requests two things: a brand new vessel and salt in it. In no way would salt be a natural cure for their spring (see Deut. 29:23 and Judg. 9:45), so the prophet's using such unlikely means demonstrates that the cure is indeed a miracle—which is what they had in mind in sending for him. In recognition of Elisha's great miracle at this spring, the Jericho citizens today refer to it as "Elisha's Fountain".

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. What problem arises at Jericho?
3. Who sends for Elisha?
4. How does he proceed to heal the spring?



## 42. A Bethel Kid-Gang Mocks Elisha

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 2:23-25.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Forty-two Bethel young people ridicule Elisha.
  - b. They are torn by two she-bears.

### COMMENTS

This section shows Elisha "on the move", which is somewhat characteristic of him. The various events recorded of him happen at a number of different places. In this study alone we see him going from Jericho (where he has healed the spring) to Bethel (where the golden calves are located), and from Bethel to Mt. Carmel (where Elijah had his contest with the Baal-prophets), and from Mt. Carmel to Samaria (where the Northern Kingdom kings rule).

As he is nearing idolatrous Bethel, he runs into a kid-gang that is up to no good. Observation generally teaches us to beware of "gangs", be they animals or kids. For instance, your pet dog may normally be a nice dog, but he may show another side if he gets in with a gang of dogs. And the same is true of children. Under these conditions more often than not, it seems, the bad comes out instead of the good. Therefore, as parents it is considered wise to keep your child/children at home in free time or with selected playmates than to have him/her a part of some gang.

These may know he is Elisha the prophet of Jehovah, or to them he may be just some bald-headed man about to enter their town. The following will probably show they do recognize him as the prophet after Elijah. When they mock him and say, "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head," they are not only making fun of his shiny head but are probably making fun of the report that has reached Bethel—that Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. Hear them roar

with laughter as they say, "Go up...go up."

It is too bad many youngsters are given to making fun of people's unfortunate situations. Adults may talk about others behind their backs, but children spare no feelings—they say what they want to say in the presence of or to the person involved in their "fun" (making fun of their crossed eyes, crooked feet, or whatever else they can find to mock or mimic). Again parentally be sure your child or children are taught it is much better for them to be normal and to thank God for it than to make fun of those who are less fortunate.

But the Bethel young people's laughter is soon turned to fright as two she-bears come out of the woods upon them. A mother bear can be so very vicious (see Prov. 17:12 and II Sam. 17:8). For only two bears to tare forty-two youngsters is evidently traceable to their accomplishing Elisha's curse on them. Neither our English word "tare" nor the Hebrew word from which it is translated throws any specific light on whether the bears actually killed them or seriously injured them. Since they are the recipients of a curse, we would think the bears have had the mastery over them and killed them. On the other hand, if they are not killed, such a brutal attack is to them a grim manifestation of Jehovah's serious displeasure with them.

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. List the three places named in this event where we see Elisha.
3. Who meets him as he nears Bethel?
4. What do they say to him?
5. How does Elisha respond to their action?
6. What befalls them?

## 43. God Gives Victory through Elisha

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 3:4-27.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehoshaphat agrees to go with Jehoram to put down Moab's rebellion.

- b. Elisha promises both water for the armies and victory over Moab.
- c. Thinking the armies have killed each other, the Moabites are surprised when they come to strip the dead.
- d. The king of Moab offers his son as a sacrifice.

### COMMENTS

There is a relationship between v. 5 ("When Ahab was dead...the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel") and II Kings 1:1 ("Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab"). The rebellion likely occurred at the time of II Kings 1:1 when Ahab's successor Ahaziah took over, but it is not until our present event under Jehoram that Israel is able to do anything about it.

Mention is made of the great flocks of sheep of the king of Moab. This country east of the Jordan and the Dead Sea is great land for livestock pasture (Num. 32:1-5). For sometime before the death of Ahab, Moab chafed under the yearly tribute it had to pay to Israel (one hundred thousand lambs and one thousand rams along with the rams' wool for that year). The death of Ahab opened the door for Moab's throwing off that yoke, evidently indicating Ahaziah's inexperience would be no match for Mesha and the Moabites.

How successful has Mesha's revolt been during the two years of Ahaziah's reign? Mesha tells his own story of it on what Archaeology calls the "Moabite Stone" found back in 1868 and now in the Louvre at Paris. Chiseled into it is this information: "I, Mesha, king of Moab, made this monument to Chemosh [Moab's god] to commemorate deliverance from Israel. My father reigned over Moab thirty years, and I reigned after my father. Omri, king of Israel, oppressed Moab many days and his son after him [Ahab]. But I warred against the king of Israel, and drove him out, and took his cities, Medeba, Ataroth, Nebo and Jahaz [cities east of the Jordan], which he built while he waged war against me. I destroyed his cities, and devoted the spoil to Chemosh, and the women and girls to Ashtar. I built Qorhah

with prisoners from Israel. In Beth-Diblathaim, I placed sheep-raisers."

Our present event is Israel's "reply" to that rebellion. This is too much annual tribute to forego. The present power of Moab is evidenced in Jehoram's raising a sizable army out of the Northern Kingdom and getting additional armies from Judah and Edom.

One wonders why Jehoshaphat agrees to go on any other project involving a king of Israel since God rebuked him for going to war with Ahab at Ramoth-gilead (II Chron. 19:2) and destroyed the ships he and Ahaziah built at Ezion-geber (II Chron. 20:35-37). "Smith" thinks since Judah has recently experienced a threatened invasion by Moab and its helpers (II Chron. 20:1 ff), Jehoshaphat is willing to help against Moab not so much with the idea of helping Israel as in the interests of his own kingdom.

The question comes up as to which way should they take to Moab. Look at a map of Bible lands, and you will see they either must cross the Jordan and then go south along the east side of the Dead Sea to enter Moab from the north or go south along the west side of the Dead Sea, enter the land of Edom, and then come against Moab from the south. Jehoshaphat recommended the western route and attacking Moab from the south. This is probably recommended from three considerations: (1) Edom being subject to Judah at this time can be enlisted to join them; (2) Moab is less fortified against an attack from the south; and (3) Their troop-movement will not be detected as early.

It is evident they have not sent any scouts ahead, or they would have returned with a report of a lack of drinking water. In time, therefore, they find themselves in a real plight—a lack of water both for the animals (brought along for meat) and the armies. This has happened after they have been joined by the king of Edom (v. 10). Jehoram of Israel evidently is of the "quitter" variety, for he is sure the campaign will end in sure defeat (v. 10). But Jehoshaphat's spirit is not so quickly broken. These two kings illustrate the two

ways people react when calamities arise. Jehoram represents the class that faints and falls apart while Jehoshaphat represents the class that looks to the Lord in prayer and faith. Jesus' parable of the unjust judge (Luke 18:12-8) was taught "that men ought always to pray, and not faint" (18:1). Paul had many adversities, but he said, "We faint not" (II Cor. 4:1). A verse that helps your writer is that chiding thought in Prov. 24:10: "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." The part that faith in God plays in such times is brought out in Psa. 27:13: "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living."

Jehoshaphat inquires if there be a prophet of Jehovah somewhere among them. Unbeknown to the kings the prophet Elisha has been traveling with them (likely divinely dispatched for this occasion). When this long-time servant of the great Elijah is reported among them, Jehoshaphat is happy, saying, "The word of the Lord is with him!" Although neither Elijah nor Elisha are what you would call Southern Kingdom prophets, this king of Judah knows about them. So desperate are the three kings and so much respect do they hold for the prophet that they do not summon him to them but go to him instead. What an honor for the prophet who began as one who "poured water on the hands of Elijah" (v. 11) but now has kings coming to him. Well, "before honour is humility" (Prov. 16:18), and before Jesus was "highly exalted" and given a "name which is above every name", He "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8-10). We are taught to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God with the assurance He will exalt us in due time (I Pet. 5:6). There is nothing wrong with starting at the bottom and through work and God's blessing rising to places of leadership whether it be in the occupational world or in the church.

As Elisha beholds the kings, he has a character evaluation of both the wicked Jehoram and the righteous Jehoshaphat.

This is evident when he says to Jehoram, "What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother...As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee." And Jehoram evidently respects his evaluation by his silence.

Elisha's only request is that a minstrel come and play music. The request is granted, and inspiration came to him with this message: "Thus saith the Lord, make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the Lord, ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand," after which they will smite every fenced city and choice place, cut down Moab's good trees, fill up their wells, and throw the stones back on to the field that they had cleared of them.

To ask if God will be able to turn death and defeat into such a victory is to answer it. The next morning water comes from Edom into the valley, filling their ditches with water for them to drink and also to set the stage for Moab's defeat. Even today great rains in these highlands can send big streams of water suddenly into the dry desert valley many miles below, which apparently God does here.

The position of the Moabite army is such that when the sun rises and casts its light on the water-filled ditches, the water looks red (like the light of a rising sun reflected from windows). History has recorded times when coalition armies developed trouble among themselves, and the different segments ended up fighting each other. This did happen to the Moabite-Ammonite-Edomite coalition in II Chron. 20:22-24. So when Mesha sees this "blood-like" water, he concludes this has happened among his would-be attackers, and he is glad, resulting in the joyous battle-cry in the Moabite camp, "Moab to the spoil!" As they rush over supposedly to strip the dead of their



treasures, was ever an army so surprised as when Moab finds all their enemies alive and ready to do battle for the unsuspecting, unorganized Moabites? Hastily they retreat with the western, victorious armies in hot pursuit. Thus the prophesying of Elisha not only comes true but has been the divine means of giving the victory.

In the final stages of the conflict Meshah chooses seven hundred choice men and seeks to break through just to kill the king of Edom (probably because he has been a former ally and is now a part of his opposition). But he is not succeeding, so in desperation he takes his eldest son (the heir to his throne) and offers him to his god Chemosh as a burnt offering. We today are shocked at this human sacrifice, but such was occasionally done among the heathen of those times.

With the Moabite rebellion put down Israel returns to its land, and the two years of freedom from paying tribute to Israel that Moab had enjoyed under Ahaziah now make the returning to this payment all the more bitter ("And there was great indignation against Israel").

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this issue.
2. After whose death does Moab rebel from paying tribute to Israel?
3. Who is king of Moab at this time?
4. What tribute has Moab been paying?
5. What king proposes bringing Moab back under his yoke?
6. What king of Judah agrees to help him?
7. What other king joins them?
8. Which way do they choose to go to attack Moab?
9. What calamity arises?
10. What prophet is among them?
11. How does he speak to the king of Israel?
12. What job does Elisha tell them to do?
13. What does he promise will happen?
14. What fools the king of Moab in the morning?
15. What does he think has happened?
16. What happens when Moab comes to take the spoil?
17. With which king is the king of Moab specifically angry?
18. What does the king of Moab do in desperation?

### 44. Elisha Solves a Widow's Serious Problem

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 4:1-7.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.

3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. A widow comes to Elisha with her problem.
  - b. She is told to borrow many empty vessels and fill them by pouring into them from her one vessel of oil.
  - c. By selling the oil she is able to pay her debt and have money to live on.

#### COMMENTS

Both in the Old Testament (Deut. 14:28,29; Deut. 24:19-21) and the New Testament (Jas. 1:27) God has shown a deep concern for widows and those who are victims of circumstances. In the present event we are not surprised God moves Elisha to perform a special miracle to relieve a desperate widow of a situation that will otherwise ruin her life.

She is evidently no stranger to Elisha, her deceased husband having been one of the sons of the prophets who has had a close connection with Elisha (II Kings 2:15). Also she says to him, "Thou knowest that thy servant [her husband] did fear the Lord."

Her husband had borrowed some money but had died before getting it paid back. Devoting oneself to God's service does not mean great financial gain therefrom as seen in the case under consideration, in the fact that the sons of the prophets did not so much as own an ax (II Kings 6:4,5), in Jesus' case (Matt. 8:18-20), and in Peter's case (Acts 3:2-6).

Her husband's death itself has been a great blow, but now the creditor comes to collect the money. She doesn't have it. In Bible days creditors had the right to sell a person to collect a debt (Matt. 18:25). The grief-stricken widow now faces the possible loss of her two sons to the creditor. This will not only multiply her domestic grief but rob her of her future provision through them.

She goes to the prophet Elisha, reminding him of the faithfulness of her husband to the Lord. When he inquires as to what she might have in her house, she mentions only a pot of oil (olive oil, used for so many purposes in Bible days). She has done what we Christians are taught to

do in I Pet. 5:7 ("Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you"). So many cases have been observed of God's turning people's desperation into blessing that it is a well known saying, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." The tide will turn now that she has brought her problem to the man of God. God delights in being good to those who put their trust in Him and who thank Him for what He does for them.

Elisha instructs her to go to her neighbors and borrow empty vessels. He says, "Borrow not a few"—get many of them! He tells her that when she obtains them that with her sons being with her in the privacy of their own dwelling, she is to pour oil out of her vessel into these and to keep pouring into the borrowed vessels until they are all full. She does this, and when the last vessel is full, what a thrill to this needy family to see so much valuable oil in their little house! And they know it is theirs because of a miracle of God performed in their behalf. Their gloom has given way to gladness as they send word to Elisha.

His instruction now is, "Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest." In one miracle God has taken care of their present problem and has also provided for their future. The family can now stay together, and they know God is indeed good and that His eye is upon the righteous (I Pet. 3:12).

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What has happened to this woman's husband?
3. Who was he?
4. Did Elisha know him?
5. Tell of the great problem she has.
6. What does Elisha tell her to do?
7. What miracle takes place in her house?
8. What 2 uses will there be for all this oil?

### 45. Elisha's Special Room at Shunem

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 4:8-17.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:

- a. A Shunammite couple builds a guest chamber for Elisha.
- b. The couple is rewarded with a son.

## COMMENTS

**S**hunem is near the Hill of Moreh at the east end of the Esdraelon Plain. It is the home of an unnamed "great woman" and her husband who have no children. We wonder why the woman is so prominent in the account while her husband is merely in the background. She is much younger than he and the active one in the home. Nor are we told of the meeting of this woman and the prophet Elisha. She and her husband enjoy having him as a guest whenever he passes through Shunem even though at first they did not realize he was a prophet. We might wonder why he has not told them or why that fact hasn't somehow come out during their conversations. But it is left for the woman to conclude to her husband, "I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually." And he concurs with her expressed proposal to build a small room just for him. How surprised Elisha is the next time he stops and sees his "home away from home"—a nice room furnished with everything he might need (a bed, table, stool, and candlestick). In providing this special chamber she has really gone out of her way to be good to a prophet of God like people do who have God's servants in their homes for meals or overnight. Such goodness is too much for an appreciative person like Elisha. He must see she is blessed with something special just as Naaman wanted to reward Elisha for healing his leprosy (II Kings 5:15,16). So as Elisha stretches out on the bed, surveying his special room with enjoyment, he asks his servant Gehazi (introduced here for the first time) to call the woman. It is evident she has not done this with any thought of being repaid for it. She has done good for goodness' sake alone (the highest type of goodness that can be rendered).

What does the prophet have in mind? His assisting the king of Israel in the

recent victory over Moab has given Elisha a favorable access to the king at Samaria, so he suggests he can speak to the king or to the captain in their behalf. Her answer ("I dwell among mine own people") indicates Elisha's speaking to the nation's leaders might involve a move to another place, and her answer shows she would prefer remaining where they are. "Be it ever so humble," the song says, "there's no place like home." Her contentment with where she is living probably means she would be happy wherever she might live. On the other hand, people who are unhappy will probably be unhappy wherever they might move. Contentment is a great attribute of character, and this woman has it. Upon her reply to Elisha, she departs without any further thought of any special gift.

As Elisha asks Gehazi what he might have to suggest, he suggests her childlessness would make the promise of a child a fitting blessing. This time she is summoned to the doorway where the prophet tells her, "About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son." She is sure this cannot happen to her and her aged husband. In her disbelief she responds much like Abraham did at first (Gen. 17:17), like Sarah (Gen. 18:12), and like Zacharias (Luke 1:18). Still at the prophet's set-time she is blessed with the birth of a son.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where is Shunem?
3. Who lives here?
4. Who often stops here?
5. What do they build for him because he is a prophet?
6. Who is with Elisha on his next visit here?
7. What does Elisha first think of doing for the couple?
8. What is her answer?
9. What does the prophet now promise her?
10. What is her response?
11. Is the promise fulfilled?

### 46. Elisha also Performs a Resurrection

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 4:18-37.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.

3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. The boy becomes deathly sick and dies.
  - b. His mother goes and gets Elisha.
  - c. Elisha restores the boy to life.

## COMMENTS

**W**e say "Elisha also", for his predecessor Elijah likewise performed a resurrection (I Kings 17:17-23). In both instances it is a son who is raised, and both mothers are prominent in the accounts.

Time has passed since the promised son was born to the Shunammite couple. They have had several years of enjoyment from their son now grown to be a lad. It is harvest time, and the boy's father and the servants are in the harvest field. Like any boy still too young to be included in the labor force, he enjoys being where the action is. While he is in the field watching the men work, a severe headache strikes him. He holds his throbbing head and says to his father, "My head, my head." The father does not realize how serious his son's case is, for he and the other servants go ahead with the work while another carries the boy to the house. In life sometimes things are worse than we realize.

The sympathetic mother tries to comfort the child as she holds him on her lap. But it is a losing battle, for even though she holds him all morning, he dies at noon. Throughout these anxious hours of the morning she has wished for Elisha, but she couldn't leave her son to go get him. Now that he is dead, she hurries to the prophet at Mt. Carmel some fifteen to twenty miles west.

Does she know about Elijah's raising the woman's son at Zarephath? Possibly she has this in mind in not telling her husband about their son's death but asking him for one of the servants and one of the asses (so she can get to Mt. Carmel quicker). Nor does she tell him her purpose when he inquires, "Wherefore wilt thou go to him today? it is neither new moon, nor sabbath."

Mounting the ass she orders the servant to make the beast go as fast as possible unless she bids him otherwise.

From their eminence on the mount Elisha and Gehazi see them coming, and the prophet recognizes her at some distance. He bids Gehazi run and inquire if all is well at her house. Her answer to the servant shows she is putting the servant aside as he proceeds directly to the prophet with her case. In life some of our tasks can be performed by others as well as by ourselves while other tasks require our own presence and attention (the woman would not converse with Elisha's servant sent by him, nor was the same servant dispatched by Elisha able to resurrect the boy).

Upon her arrival she falls at Elisha's feet and holds them in an emotional outburst. Gehazi doesn't understand and seeks to thrust her away. But Elisha says, "Let her alone: for her soul is vexed within her: and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me." This statement of Elisha's is useful in accounting for John the Baptist's saying he was not Elijah (John 1:21) when Jesus later said he was (Matt. 11:13,14). Even a prophet knew only the things revealed to him. If God chose not to reveal to John that he was Elijah, he had no way of knowing he was.

Her first words to Elisha reflect complaint: "Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?" At first, of course, she couldn't think she was going to be blessed with a child. Then he was born, and she has loved him so much. Now he is gone. Her sorrows now make her think it would have been better not to have had the child.

Sensing the child is dead, Elisha gives his staff to Gehazi and tells him to hurry to her house and lay it on the boy's face. But this does not satisfy the mother. She says, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." So Elisha accompanies her back to Shunem. On their way they meet the returning Gehazi who reports that nothing happened when he laid the staff across the boy's face. We are not told the effect his report has on

the mother. Upon entering the house Elisha goes directly to the familiar chamber, shuts the door behind him, and prays. Arising from prayer he uses the same procedure his respected predecessor employed at Zarephath (I Kings 17:21)—he stretches himself upon the boy's lifeless form. The warmth of his body begins to warm the lad's body. But still no sign of life. As the prophet paces the floor in the room, he appears to be in a quandary. The staff sent by Gehazi did not work, and now he is not seeing the expected results. For some reason God is delaying the miracle—maybe for Elisha's sake (has he been taking miracle-power for granted?), maybe for the mother's sake (who spoke critically to the prophet on the mountain). God's purpose in momentarily withholding the miracle is evidently accomplished, for when Elisha returns to stretching himself upon the child again, the boy opens his eyes and sneezes seven times. How comforted Elisha is as he bids his servant come up. Gehazi then calls the woman to come up. When she does, her son is alive!

This resurrection is one of only three resurrections recorded in the Old Testament. The others were Elijah's raising the widow of Zarephath's son (referred to above) and the resurrection of the dead man hurriedly buried in Elisha's sepulchre—which is yet to be studied (II Kings 13:20,21).

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where does the boy get sick?
3. What part of him hurts?
4. Who holds him until he dies?
5. Whom does the bereaved mother want to see?
6. Where is he?
7. How does she get where he is?
8. What does the woman do on arrival?
9. When she is finally able to talk, what does she say?
10. What does Elisha send Gehazi to do?
11. What does she say that causes Elisha to go with her?
12. What success does Gehazi have?
13. What is bewildering to the prophet?
14. How many times does the child sneeze?
15. How does the woman show her great respect for the prophet?

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 4:38-41.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. One of the sons of the prophets mistakenly makes some poisonous soup.
  - b. Elisha miraculously makes the soup safe to eat.

#### COMMENTS

Say, what has happened to the kings in this divided kingdom history study? Have you noticed the various events of Elijah's and Elisha's lives are so interesting that for awhile now we have been following their lives instead of events involving kings? In time, of course, we will get back to the kings but not before we follow several more events in Elisha's interesting prophetic career.

Elisha is back at Gilgal where one of the groups of the sons of the prophets is. One day when they are sitting before him, the prophet gives orders to his servant to make some pottage (broth) for the young men. With a dearth upon the land food supplies are in short measure, and people are eating whatever they can find. From all we read about the sons of the prophets, they live very frugal lives. God's servants have always been more connected with work than wealth.

One who goes out into the field to get herbs for the pottage comes across a wild gourd vine from which he fills his lap with its fruit. It was "probably the wild, or so-called 'squirting' cucumber, which he mistakes for the ordinary cucumber, one of the most common and favorite articles of food in the East" (Edersheim).

The abundance he brings back and shreds into the broth makes it a much awaited meal. But as soon as they begin to eat, the error is detected, and they cry out to the prophet in fear, "There is death in the pot," and they immediately stop eating it. The one who shredded the poisonous vegetable into the pottage thought that what he was doing was all

#### 47. A Hard-Times Miracle

right. Sincerity apart from knowledge is not enough but can be tragic (Prov. 14:12).

But there is no need to dump the pottage out when the miracle-working prophet is present. God's miracle-power can overcome poison: Jesus said if the apostles drank any deadly thing, it would not hurt them (Mark 16:18), and Paul shook a venomous beast off his hand into a fire with no resulting damage (Acts 28:3-5). So Elisha proceeds with another miracle. Again it will be a miracle employing "means" such as occasionally characterize a miracle: the tree cast into the bitter waters at Marah (Exo. 15:23-25), the salt cast into the Jericho spring (II Kings 2:21), the moistened clay for the blind man's eyes (John 9:6,7), the anointing oil in miracles of healing by the apostles (Mark 6:13), etc. The means used in this present miracle is meal put into the pottage. This being done, the eating continues.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where is Elisha at this time?
3. Who are with him?
4. What food is the servant preparing for them?
5. What is the cause of alarm?
6. "O thou man of God, there is \_\_\_\_\_ in the pot."
7. How is the problem taken care of?

### 48. Elisha Multiplies Loaves

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 4:42-44.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. A limited amount of food is on hand to feed one hundred men.
  - b. Through Elisha's miraculous help they all eat and have food left over.

#### COMMENTS

**P**rov. 3:9 says, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase." Thus we see a man from Baalshalisha (a city in the maritime plain north of Lydda) bringing his "firstfruits" to the man of God (Elisha). Normally the firstfruits

would be brought to the priest, but as "Barnes" observes, "It appears by this that the Levitical priests having withdrawn from the land of Israel (See II Chron. 11:13,14), pious Israelites transferred to the prophets, whom God raised up, the offerings required by the Law to be given to the priests (Num 18:13; Deut.18:4)." We might observe that the man bringing the firstfruits might have excused himself that since there is no faithful Levitical priesthood, he is not obligated to give his firstfruits. But recognizing Elisha as a man of God, he brings them to him. Would we have done the same, or would we have kept them and used them for ourselves?

The prophet receives it from the giver and orders his servant to set it before one hundred men (probably the sons of the prophets here at Gilgal). The amount would normally be enough to feed twenty men—not one hundred. When his servant balks at such an order, Elisha assures him "They shall eat, and shall leave thereof." And just as Jesus on two different occasions multiplied small quantities of food to make them ample to feed large multitudes (five thousand and four thousand), so Elisha miraculously feeds this group with this limited supply of food. And "they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the Lord." Notice here that Elisha's word is "the word of the Lord".

"Clarke" observes, "This is something like our Lord's feeding the multitude miraculously. Indeed, there are many things in this chapter similar to facts in our Lord's history, and this prophet might be more aptly considered a type of our Lord than most of the other persons in the Scriptures who have been thus honoured." Yes, there are similarities between this miracle and Jesus' miraculous feedings: (1) they both began with limited quantities; (2) the servants were told to give food to the people; (3) the servants could see the problem of not having enough for everybody; (4) all ate; and (5) there was food left over.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. What does the man bring to Elisha?
3. What does Elisha order done with it?
4. How many is he going to feed?
5. What promise does Elisha make?
6. Does the promise come true?

### 49. A Great Syrian General is Healed

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 5:1-27.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. The Syrian captain Naaman has leprosy.
  - b. His slave girl tells him of the prophet in Israel who can heal him.
  - c. Elisha tells him to dip seven times in the Jordan.
  - d. He is at first upset with such a ridiculous proposal.
  - e. But when he changes his mind and obeys, he is healed.
  - f. Elisha refuses his generous reward, but Gehazi covets the reward and ends up with leprosy.

#### COMMENTS

**W**e are here introduced to a foreign military captain (Naaman, head of the Syrian army). He is held in the highest esteem by his king because of a great deliverance to Syria he has brought about, which the Bible says, "By him the Lord had given deliverance to Syria." This deliverance was probably from the oppressing hand of Assyria. We can be sure God had some purpose either in favoring Syria or bringing the man Naaman into the limelight as a background to this miracle.

Verse 2 sounds like border-raids by the Syrians against Israel. In one of these a young girl is taken. Providentially she becomes maid to Naaman's wife. When Naaman becomes leprous, everything looks dark for him and those of his household. By this time the maiden has become a part of the household, so she too is concerned for her master. As a young girl she has adjusted to being a slave which would have been more difficult for an adult to do.

One day she says to Naaman's wife, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy." It is obvious the many miracles of Elisha have become household knowledge throughout the Northern Kingdom. The maiden's words are carried by others to Naaman himself. He wishes to go to Elisha, and his king provides him with a letter to the king of Israel.

Outfitted with the king's letter and taking with him a tremendous reward for the prophet (ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment) Naaman is off for Samaria full of optimism concerning the prospect of being healed.

Arriving at Samaria he is shown to the palace. The king of Israel reads the letter. Does he feel complimented that the king of Syria has turned to him for help? (Obviously it is a time of peace between the two nations, or the Syrian king would not be sending his general into Israelite territory with such a request.) No, he does not interpret it as a compliment but as an occasion to resume old hostilities between their countries. The king of Israel does not know the background of Naaman's coming—Naaman's maid's suggestion. Evidently the letter says nothing about the prophet Elisha.

The king is in a quandary as to what to do. He can't heal Naaman, and to send him home as he came will appear as a refusal to help. At this point Elisha sends this message to his king: "Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel!" (and so will Israel's king).

As Naaman rides away to the prophet's house, the king is relieved, and Naaman is soon to be where his maid knew he should be (with Elisha instead of the king of Israel). Likely Naaman sends a servant to the door, and the prophet responds by sending his servant (likely Gehazi) with this surprising message: "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean."

There is nothing hard to understand about the instructions. But both the instructions and the way his case is handled are totally different from what the great general had envisioned. In his rage he reveals what he had expected and also his contempt for the thought that dipping in Jordan will do him any good: "Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?" (Being mountain streams the Syrian rivers are much clearer than the silt-laden Jordan.)

It is obvious from the general's rage he is not intending to follow the instructions, and to him his whole trip has been futile. Besides, his hope of being cured is suddenly dashed to the ground. At this point his servants venture to offer him some sensible reasoning: "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" Yes, he would have carried out difficult instructions if such had been issued. Besides, it won't hurt to follow Elisha's instructions. While Naaman defers to carry out Elisha's order, Elisha is in his house fully aware of the general's thinking. He knows if Naaman obeys, the leprosy will be gone, but if he disobeys, it won't be. Notice, too, he doesn't go out and reason with him, nor does he send out a modified set of instructions that might be more acceptable to him. Here are lessons for us who preach God's message to people.

Naaman's servants' words evidently get through to him even though a general does not usually follow servants' suggestions. But if there is any way to get well, he is now at least willing to try it. So eastward the Syrian entourage heads. Jordan, here we come.

See the great military leader humbling himself as he leaves his chariot and walks out into the stream and dips himself once, twice, three times, etc. The count is

important, for the cure involves a definite number of dips. All remains the same with his disease until he dips the seventh and final time. And then "his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was healed!" Oh, how happy he is! How glad he is he did obey the prophet's order!

There is an interesting analogy between Naaman's dipping in Jordan and baptism today. Some people object to the necessity of baptism, saying water has nothing to do with one's salvation. Does water have anything to do with Naaman's cure? Yes, it is that in which he is to dip. Water doesn't cure him, but he isn't cured without it. Notice, too, that exact obedience is necessary: the right river, the right act (dipping), and the right number of dips.

So thankful is Naaman that even though he is actually part way back to Damascus here at the Jordan, he returns a day's drive to Samaria to give Elisha a reward. He personally goes to the door of the prophet and stands healed before the man of God and proclaims, "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel," and he goes on to ask for two loads of Israelite soil to take back with him (seemingly on which to erect his own altar to Jehovah), for he says, "Thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD." Realizing his own king will still require him to go with him into the house of his god, Naaman says he will be doing it purely as a matter of orders and not as a matter of personal religion, and he states, "In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing."

When Naaman brings forth all the gold and silver and changes of garments, Elisha responds like Daniel will years later when Belshazzar will offer him great gifts and honors for interpreting the handwriting on the wall (see Dan.

5:16,17). Elisha refuses the gifts even though strongly urged by Naaman to receive them. Obviously Elisha is not mercenary in serving God. If he were, he would tell Naaman ahead of time what the bill will be. Would most of God's servants today do as Elisha does here?

So Naaman departs for home with all his gifts, with two mules loaded with Israelite soil, and with a healthy body!

Now Elisha's servant Gehazi would like to have some of the treasure and clothing that Naaman offered Elisha. And his covetousness caused him to fabricate a lie in order to obtain some. He knows what he is going to say as he runs to overtake Naaman: "My master [Elisha] hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments." Believing the request to be from Elisha, Naaman is willing—in fact, he urges him to take two talents of silver so each will have a talent of silver as well as a change of garment. In fact, Naaman's goodness includes dispatching two of his servants to carry it for Gehazi. Naturally Gehazi does not want the servants to go along, or Elisha will find out what he is doing. When they get to a certain tower, he puts the items in the tower, and the men return to Naaman.

Lest Elisha miss him, Gehazi promptly returns to the prophet's presence. The prophet knows everything Gehazi has done. He opens the conversation by asking Gehazi where he has been. Like a disobedient child Gehazi answers, "Nowhere" (a lie). It has been said that a lie is often a twin-sin, meaning a lie is often told in an attempt to cover up some sin already committed. This is what Gehazi is doing.

Now Elisha shows he is fully aware of Gehazi's covetous deed: "Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee?" And in his following question Elisha reveals what he could have done with the amount offered him of which Gehazi now holds a part: "Is it a time to receive money, and to

receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?"

And what will Gehazi's punishment be for coveting, lying to Naaman, and now lying to Elisha? "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever," and the harsh judgment falls on him immediately, for "he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow." Gehazi had hoped to better himself, but his sin has ruined him instead.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 6 memory-facts for this event.
2. Tell about Naaman (who he is, his nationality, his position, his disease, etc.).
3. Who suggests Elisha can cure him?
4. Where does Naaman's king send him?
5. What does the king of Israel think when he reads the letter?
6. What message does Elisha send to his king?
7. What does Naaman think Elisha will do when he arrives at his place?
8. What does Elisha tell him to do?
9. What is Naaman's first reaction to Elisha's instructions?
10. Who persuades Naaman to do what Elisha has said?
11. Does Naaman decide to comply?
12. Where does Naaman go after being cured?
13. What does Elisha refuse?
14. What does Gehazi tell Naaman?
15. What does Elisha tell Gehazi?

### 50. The Borrowed Ax

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 6:1-7.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. As the sons of the prophets are cutting down trees to enlarge their living quarters, the head of a borrowed ax comes off and falls into the river.
  - b. Elisha miraculously retrieves the ax head.

#### COMMENTS

**I**n spite of the wickedness in the Northern Kingdom an encouraging sign is that the number of the sons of the prophets has grown to the point that their living quarters are too limited. They request permission from Elisha to go to

the timber along the Jordan and get some beams for constructing something larger. Each young man is to be involved. As you can see, theirs is a self-help project. Money is not on hand to hire the building constructed. Much of God's work has to be done on this basis for lack of available funds.

Permission is granted, and Elisha accompanies them upon request of one of the young men. All is going well as the sound of "chop, chop, chop" is heard throughout the area. But all of a sudden the unexpected happens: the ax-head flies off and goes into the river. Matters are made worse when the user exclaims, "Alas, master! for it was borrowed." Is something borrowed more apt to get lost or broken, or does it just seem that way?

Will the prophet involve miracle-power in something so trivial as to recover an ax-head? He asks to be shown the exact place where the head disappeared. He cuts off a stick and throws it into the river at the spot. And up comes the borrowed item to the joy of the group. It is a matter of course to reach out and take the head and put it back on the handle and continue its use.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. What problem faces the sons of the prophets as our event opens?
3. What do they propose doing?
4. Who accompanies them?
5. What calamity happens?
6. How is the matter taken care of?

### 51. Elisha Foils the Syrian King's Plans

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 6:8-23.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Elisha keeps tipping off his own king concerning the Syrian king's plans.
  - b. The Syrian king dispatches an army to take Elisha.
  - c. Elisha blinds the army and leads it to Samaria.
  - d. He opens their eyes in Samaria where they find themselves captives of Israel.



- e. Syria is glad to be released unharmed.

### COMMENTS

The king of Syria plans an attack against Israel. He gets everybody stationed, but his plans misfire because Elisha has tipped off his own king concerning these plans. The Syrian monarch revises his plans, and again the king of Israel escapes. We are not exactly sure how many times this happens, but our text says it is "not once nor twice".

The first time was written off as a coincidence by the king of Syria, but when this continues to happen, he is convinced of sabotage within his own ranks. The reputation of Elisha has continued to spread, and one answers the king in these words: "Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber." Well, if that's who's doing it, let's go get him. This is the king's intention, and he dispatches spies to find out Elisha's whereabouts. Learning he is in Dothan (a place about twelve miles north of Samaria and just south of the Esdraelon Plain) the king sends a large army of men with horses and chariots to Dothan.

One morning when Elisha and his servant arise, the servant sees they are completely surrounded by this Syrian military detachment. The servant (probably the leprous Gehazi's successor) shows fear and alarm when he says to Elisha, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" By Elisha's calm answer you would think Heb. 13:5,6 is already written, and that Elisha has read it, for it says, "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Listen to Elisha's answer: "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." And then he goes on to show his less experienced servant the truth of what he has just said: "Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of

the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." No wonder Elisha is unafraid! It is really the Syrians who need to be afraid, as we shall see.

As the army approaches Elisha, he calls on God to smite it with blindness. How stunned with surprise each Syrian is to find he is not only blind but all his comrades are too. Elisha approaches them in their blindness and offers to lead them to the man they are seeking. You would think they would want someone to lead them back to Syria instead. But they consent and follow him. But they gullibly go with their friendly guide not realizing he is leading them south to Samaria where the king of Israel is. Upon arrival Elisha prays once more—this time for their eyes to be opened. And are they surprised again—this time to find themselves in Samaria as captives of the very man they are seeking, of the king of Israel, and of Samaria's soldiers!

The king of Israel realizes Elisha is really the champion on this occasion, so he asks him what he should do with the Syrians. His thought is to smite them, but Elisha looks on them as war captives and responds by saying, "Wouldest thou smite those whom thou has taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow?" Obviously he wouldn't. Elisha directs him to "set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master." Bread-and-water is prisoner food. The king goes far beyond this when he prepares a great provision for them before releasing them.

Can't you imagine the conversation among the Syrian soldiers as they walk back to Damascus? They have had a trip full of unprecedented surprises, and they have learned the man whom they went to arrest has been the author of all their surprises.

Syria decides to leave Israel alone.

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. What upsets the king of Syria?
3. What does he think is happening?
4. What does one of his men tell him about Elisha?

5. What does he send an army to do?
6. What scares Elisha's servant one morning?
7. What prayer does Elisha pray?
8. What does his servant see?
9. What miracle does he perform on the Syrian soldiers?
10. Where does he lead them?
11. What does Elisha's king ask him?
12. What is his answer?
13. What decision does Syria make concerning Israel?

## 52. Elisha Predicts Incredible Plenty

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 6:24-7:20.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. The Syrian army surrounds Samaria until the people are starving within.
  - b. The king of Israel's intention to kill Elisha is stopped by Elisha's prediction of incredible plenty by the next day.
  - c. The king's representative who questions the prediction is trampled underfoot in fulfillment of Elisha's personal prediction concerning him.

### COMMENTS

Quite some time has passed since Elisha's "victory" over the Syrian army. This time the Syrian army encloses Israel's capital city in a starvation siege. In such warfare a greater power surrounds a city so nobody can either go out or come in. In time all foodstuffs within a city will be exhausted, and then the aggressor can easily break through and slaughter at will with a limited loss of his own men.

This "waiting" has been going on for sometime, and there is now a great famine within Samaria. Prices have skyrocketed (even an ass' head is selling for an exorbitant price as is dove's dung. The bony head will be boiled for broth, and the dung will be fuel.) So bad are conditions that a case of cannibalism is brought directly to the king himself as follows. While he is making an inspection tour around the top of the city's wall to view conditions both outside and inside the wall, he is accosted by a woman who tells him of an agreement she has with another woman. According to their



agreement they had eaten this woman's child yesterday, but the other woman now refuses to give up her child for today's food. Moses predicted such terrible conditions would prevail if Israel forgot God (see Deut. 28:52,53).

This report is too much for the sackcloth-wearing king as he speaks hatefully of Elisha. Why does he have it in for Elisha? Has Elisha called for this situation as punishment from God, or is the king blaming him for not using his miracle-power to change the situation? We think the former.

At that very moment the elders of the nation are at Elisha's house conferring with him. Fully aware of the king's intention to kill him, Elisha tells them "this son of a murderer" (son of Ahab, the murderer of Naboth) is sending a messenger to behead him, and he tells them to keep the door against the messenger, stating the king is close behind him.

Before he is through the above statement, the king's messenger is at his door. The prophet speaks (probably through the door), saying, "This evil is of the Lord." The next statement ("What should I wait for the Lord any longer?") we are attributing to Elisha, indicating it is time now for him to perform another miracle with national significance. So he says to the messenger, to the king, and to the king's "right hand man", "Hear ye the word of the Lord: Thus saith the Lord, To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria." What a thing to predict for a starved city and a price-inflated time! The king's "right hand man" exclaims in disbelief, "If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" And the prophet replies, "Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat thereof." As we shall see in the man's case, it does not pay to disbelieve God, His prophets, or His Word.

King Jehoram doesn't love Elisha, but he does respect his predictions, for he has seen them come to pass in the war with Moab and in the case of Naaman's

leprosy. So since he is prophesying such good for the city, he does not carry out his plan to behead Elisha.

But how is such a prediction to be fulfilled? From where is this fine flour and barley to come and in such abundance the price will be so cheap? God, who inspires the prophet's predictions, has His way of bringing this prediction to pass. And He will use four lowly lepers and not the king nor his army. The means He will use brings to mind the "base things" and "things which are despised" of I Cor. 1:28.

What about these lepers? They also are victims of this famine. To sit longer is merely to await death for them. And since the famine is in the city, it will do them no good to try to get into it. Their best option seems to be to go begging at the Syrian camp. If the Syrians kill them, they are going to die of starvation anyway, and if they feed them, they will live. So they decide to give it a try, but they decide not to go to their camp directly from Samaria's gate but to approach their camp from the other side ("the uttermost part of the camp").

As they make their way around and then arrive at the other side of the camp, how surprised they are to find the camp vacated! Where are the Syrians? Well, God has caused them to hear the noise of chariots, horses, and a great host. The Syrians concluded it was hired help (supposedly the Hittites and the Egyptians). At the time there was just enough twilight left for the fearful Syrians to grab what they could and escape for their lives. Thus the forsaken camp.

Oh, what a feast the hungry lepers have! Then after eating their fill, they gleefully begin plundering the campsite of silver and gold and raiment. What an unexpected turn of events for them! But one of them has a conscience with a resulting fear. He says to his comrades, "We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household." And the others concur. If they think they

have good news to tell immediately, what about us who have the Good News for a lost world? What about our conscience? What about our fear of not sharing it?

But the king is skeptical, fearing it to be a military trick whereby the Syrians are hiding, just waiting for Samaria to open the gates, and they can pour forth into their city. Yet he does order an investigation, and there is found a path of dropped garments and vessels all the way to the Jordan. So the camp is indeed evacuated. The Syrian flour and barley are brought to the gate of Samaria for governmental sale to the starving people. The prospect of food has turned the populace into animals rushing for food, and the king's "right hand man" who has been appointed to be in charge of the food sale is knocked down in the mob and trampled underfoot. In his death is fulfilled the prediction he will see this but not eat of it.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What is causing a famine in Samaria?
3. What problem does a woman bring to the king?
4. Whom does he blame for their terrible condition?
5. What does he vow to do about it?
6. What good news does Elisha predict that causes the king to spare him?
7. What does the king's "right hand man" exclaim?
8. How does Elisha reply to him?
9. What decision do four lepers make?
10. In what condition do they find the Syrian camp?
11. Why is it thus?
12. What does the king fear is taking place?
13. How does the king's "right hand man" die?

### 53. The Shunammite Woman and Her Land

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 8:1-6.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. While the Shunammite woman is out of the country during the drought, another has taken over her property.
  - b. He will not vacate upon her return to Shunem.
  - c. When she comes to the king with her problem, Gehazi is telling the king about Elisha's miracles including the resurrection of her son.

- d. The king orders her land restored to her plus its crops while she was away.

### COMMENTS

The Bible's coverage of the tremendous prophetic career of Elisha continues with another interesting event—a prophetic career not distinguished by long-range Messianic prophecies (he predicted none) but by predictions with immediate fulfillments and great miracles performed for the benefit of contemporary individuals like Naaman and the Shunammite woman and for the benefit of contemporary groups like Jericho and the sons of the prophets.

As we begin a consideration of the present event, we need to back up somewhat in time for its setting. Is Elisha's announcement to this woman of the coming drought following the last event studied (is there another famine coming?), or does her coming back into the land follow the last event because that famine is now over? In v. 1 the American Standard reads that Elisha had spoken to her in times past of the coming famine. I take it that sometime before the most recent event(s) studied, Elisha had spoken to her of the coming years of famine, that she believed him and left her country for those famine years, and that now she is back and is bringing her problem to the king. This fits the different tenses of the verbs in this section, and coming on the heels of Elisha's great miracle of "plenty" for Samaria probably accounts for the king's special interest in the other miracle-reports concerning Elisha.

Let us back up then to Elisha's announcement of the famine. Is it also possible this is the same famine that was on when Elisha healed the broth for the sons of the prophets, the "death-in-the-pot" incident (II Kings 4:38-41)? The fact the Lord "called for" this famine shows it to be sin-related. This good woman, of course, was not connected with the sin, but if she had stayed in the land, she too would have suffered because of it. She went to

sojourn in Philistine country as Abraham (Gen. 20:1) and Isaac (Gen. 26:1) had done before her. Like Egypt, Philistia often escaped famines that struck other places.

In her leaving Shunem for the duration of the drought, the prophet Elisha loses his good home at her house. In this, though, we see the prophet's unselfishness in his thinking of her personal welfare for the famine years rather than his own.

The time of her return is providentially timed with King Jehoram's asking Gehazi about the numerous miracles of Elisha. Jehoram has to be impressed by the prophet's great miracle at Samaria when he himself could do nothing about the food shortage prevailing throughout his city (II Kings 6:24-26). In the honesty of his own heart he has to know the "prophet" was more powerful in the matter than the "king". It is as Gehazi is reciting the unusual resurrection of the Shunammite boy that his mother comes to the king on business, and the boy is with her! Gehazi can hardly believe his eyes when he sees them just as he is telling about the miracle involving them. Note the providential timing. He exclaims to the king, "This is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life!" To see the very boy who was resurrected and to talk with his mother about it makes Gehazi's report more sure and more impressive to the king.

Now when she reports her problem (a stranger is living in her house, farming her land, and refusing to get out), the king is immediately on her side. He summons an officer to go with her to see that her house and land are restored as well as the fruits of her land while she was away.

Gehazi's connection with this event poses a problem. Since Naaman's cure, Gehazi has been a leper. Some say this event, therefore, has to be out of chronological order, this happening before he became leprous. But I am not comfortable with this thought. "Clarke," I think, more accurately observes that the king has an insatiable curiosity to know the private history of a man who had done

such astonishing things, and from whom could he get this information except from the prophet's own confidential servant? ...As to the circumstances of Gehazi's disease, he might overlook that, and converse with him, keeping at a reasonable distance, as nothing but actual contact could defile."

We might observe also Jehoram asks Elisha's servant for the information rather than the prophet himself because he knows Elisha does not think very highly of him (see II Kings 3:13,14), and he also recalls in the last event he had once vowed to take his life (II Kings 6:31) before Elisha performed the great miracle for his city.

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where does the Shunammite woman go during the famine years?
3. What problem does she face upon her return?
4. Which miracle of Elisha is Gehazi telling the king about when the woman comes with her problem?
5. What order does the king give concerning her?

## 54. The Syrian King Consults Elisha

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 8:7-15.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Ben-hadad of Syria in his sickness sends for Elisha.
  - b. Elisha predicts his messenger Hazael will become Syria's king.
  - c. Hazael returns and smothers Ben-hadad and takes over in his place.

### COMMENTS

What is Elisha doing in Damascus, Syria's capital? Since this event will introduce us to Hazael, one of the men God talked about to Elijah (I Kings 19:15-17), God has likely sent him here in connection with Hazael's becoming king of Syria. That is what comes out of this visit.

Elisha is apparently safe in Syria as well as in Israel, for his miracles involved in healing Syria's general Naaman (II Kings 5:10,14) and his handling the whole Syrian army (II Kings 6:8-23) have gained him a reputation so that even foreign countries respect him.

At this time the Syrian king Ben-hadad is sick, and hearing Elisha is in the city, he desires a good word from him that he will recover. His thought is if Elisha says he will recover, he will. Hoping to gain his favor, he sends a tremendous gift to him—a gift of "every good thing of Damascus" borne on forty camels! Barnes observes, "Forty camels were laden with it, and this goodly caravan paraded the streets of the town, conveying to the prophet the splendid gift designed for him. Eastern ostentation induces donors to make the greatest possible show of their gifts, and each camel would probably bear only one or two articles." Even so it still represents a tremendous gift for Elisha. Your writer's guess is the prophet does not accept it—he didn't Naaman's great gift (II Kings 5:5,15,16).

The man whom the king sends to make the inquiry is Hazael. Elisha says to tell the king, "Thou mayest certainly recover." Then to Hazael the prophet says about Ben-hadad, "Howbeit the Lord hath shewed me that he shall surely die." In other words the king is going to die even though it will not be from his sickness.

One has to figure out the pronouns in v. 11. Is this verse talking about Elisha or Hazael—or both? In view of later verses it seems it is Elisha who looks and looks at Hazael without saying a word until Hazael is ashamed and finally asks, "Why weepeth my lord?" He says it is because of what he can prophetically foresee about Hazael—that he will be utterly cruel in the mistreatment of Elisha's own people. Though Hazael cannot foresee this at this time, according to Amos 1:3,4 this is the way he will turn out.

It is obvious from the American Standard that Hazael does not yet visualize himself in such a powerful act,

for he says, "What is thy servant, who is but a dog, that he should do this great thing?" (v. 13) to which Elisha says, "The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria."

The king is happy upon Hazael's return, for he tells him that Elisha has said, "Thou shouldest surely recover." Now David knew he was to succeed Saul as king of Israel, but he did nothing to hasten the time. But Hazael is of a different spirit, for on the following day he takes a water-saturated cloth into the king's chamber and overpowers the helpless king as he smothers him to death and immediately takes over as king.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why does Ben-hadad send Hazael to Elisha?
3. Tell of the gift the king sends to Elisha.
4. Will the king die of his present sickness?
5. What did God reveal to Elisha concerning Hazael's future?
6. Why does Elisha look intently at Hazael and weep?
7. How does Ben-hadad die?

### 55. Jehoram Becomes Co-Regent with Jehoshaphat

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 8:16.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram begins to rule alongside his father.
  - b. Jehoram is ruling in the North.

#### COMMENTS

Usually the death of the king takes place before a new king is crowned either in Judah or Israel. Normally we read the king slept with his fathers (died), and his son reigned in his stead. But Jehoshaphat, who has been king of Judah during the Elijah-Elisha years, is still king in the South, and he will follow a different procedure. While he is still living, he personally has his firstborn son crowned co-regent with him. We are not told why, but it may have been to give some relief to Jehoshaphat or to be sure the proper son will be ruling after his death or to train him in ruling

before it all falls into his lap when his father dies. In the same way some colleges employ the same procedure, installing a new president to serve a while under the existing president. This tends to give continuity to existing policies and to prepare the incumbent for the role he is to fill.

Thus, both kingdoms have Jehorams as kings. In this same era of time they will both have Ahaziah's also. In Israel it is Ahaziah first and then Jehoram while in Judah it is the reverse order (Jehoram first and then Ahaziah). Judah's Jehoram is thirty-two when he begins his co-regent rule (II Kings 8:17).

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Who is Jehoram of Judah's father?
3. Who is ruling in the North at this time?

### 56. The Good King Jehoshaphat Dies

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read I Kings 22:50; II Chron. 21:1-3; II Chron. 20:34.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Upon his death Jehoshaphat is entombed at Jerusalem.
  - b. His son Jehoram continues as king.
  - c. Jehoshaphat leaves rich gifts and cities to his other sons.

#### COMMENTS

The good Jehoshaphat of Jerusalem has reigned twenty-five years over Judah. Much of his reign has paralleled King Ahab's twenty-two year reign in Israel. His has been an eventful reign (a Jehu, son of Hanani, will later write a full account of his reign). Jehoshaphat's firstborn Jehoram, who has been ruling co-regent with him for several years, will now continue as sole ruler of Judah. But Jehoshaphat did not forget his other six sons, leaving each of them large gifts of silver, gold, and other things as well as certain fortified cities.

You may notice in the list of these sons there are two Azariahs. In the Hebrew the two names show a slight variation ("Black").

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where is Jehoshaphat entombed?
3. How many sons did he have?
4. How come there are two Azariahs?
5. Which son becomes Jehoshaphat's successor?
6. What do the others inherit?
7. Who will write an account of Jehoshaphat's eventful reign?

### 57. Judah Declines under Jehoram

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Chron. 21:4-20 and II Kings 8:17-24.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehoram kills his six brothers and other princes.
  - b. Influenced by his wife he is wicked like his father-in-law (Ahab of the North).
  - c. Edom and Libnah revolt from his control.
  - d. A writing of Elijah foretells the troubles to befall Jehoram because of his wickedness.
  - e. Philistia and Arabia plunder his palace and take his family members.
  - f. He dies after two years of intense suffering.

#### COMMENTS

**W**hy does Jehoram kill his brothers and the princes? In order to eliminate any power-threat to his rule. History records many such cases of suspicion and intrigue among members of royal families. Now that they are out of the way, he feels secure in his kingship. But God has taken note of his heartless act (probably unprovoked by anything his brothers or the princes did), as God sees all that takes place on earth (see Prov. 15:3), which proves that the best laid plans of men do not always carry through to fulfillment.

This cruel act is but an indication of the character of the one now occupying

the once sacred throne of David in Jerusalem. He has as his wife Athaliah, daughter of the wicked Ahab and a "reincarnation" of her wicked mother Jezebel, and Athaliah has a strong influence in his administration. Things in Judah are now bad enough for God to destroy it from the face of the earth, and the only reason He doesn't is because of His special promises to David. Nevertheless God begins to reduce Jehoram's power by enabling both Edom and Libnah to revolt from under his rulership.

As Jehoram builds idolatrous high places in Judah and compels the inhabitants of Jerusalem to participate in his idolatry, a special writing of the now deceased prophet Elijah is delivered to him. We are not told in whose custody the writing has been since Elijah's passing—maybe Elisha's. The writing pays special tribute to three good kings preceding him (David, Asa, and Jehoshaphat) from whose ways Jehoram has departed while choosing the ways of Ahab, a wicked king of the north. In this he is preferring the ways of his wife (daughter of Ahab) to his own godly ancestors. It is noticeable that the women in his wife's line are husband-dominators: Jezebel dominated Ahab (I Kings 21:25), and Athaliah is dominating Jehoram, for II Chron. 21:6 says the reason he is walking in the ways of Ahab is because of her. The troubles Elijah's communication foretold will come because of following Ahab's ways and because Jehoram killed his brothers (said to have been better than he).

When God brings the invaders Philistia and Arabia into Judah who carry off Jehoram's treasure and some of his family members, you would think he will repent. But there are many people even today who disregard what God is bringing on them and continue in their wicked ways.

And how terribly he suffers from diseases during his final two years until finally his bowels fall out. And because of all the reverses that have come during his regime, when he dies they do not honor

him as they would usually do for their king. He departs "without being desired", and he is not entombed among the kings.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 6 memory-facts for this event.
2. What atrocity marks the beginning of Jehoram's reign?
3. Who is his wife?
4. Who is her father?
5. What two places revolted from under Jehoram?
6. What troubles does Elijah's writing foretell for him?
7. Who brings Philistia and Arabia against him?
8. Tell of his final illness.
9. What shows he died dishonorably?

### 58. Another Ahab-Related King in the South

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Chron. 22:1-5 and II Kings 8:25-28.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Ahaziah joins Jehoram of Israel in his battle against Hazael at Ramoth-gilead.
  - b. Jehoram goes to Jezreel after being wounded in battle.

#### COMMENTS

**A**lthough we associate the Judean offspring of Ahab with wickedness, "Barnes" makes a worthy observation when he says, "Such names as Athaliah, Jehoram, and Ahaziah indicate that the Baal-worshipping kings did not openly renounce the service of Jehovah. Athaliah is 'the time for Jehovah', Ahaziah 'the possession of Jehovah', and Jehoram or Joram 'exalted by Jehovah'."

Ahaziah is also called by two other names: Jehoahaz in II Chron. 21:17 and Azariah in II Chron. 22:6. Having more than one name was something more common in Bible days than today. For instance, the fisherman of Galilee was called "Simon" (John 1:41), "Cephas" (John 1:42), "Peter" (John 1:44), and "Simon Peter" (John 1:40). Other examples: "Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus" (Acts 1:23); "Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas" (Acts

4:36); and "Judas was surnamed Barsabas" (Acts 15:22).

In the preceding event when the invaders took King Jehoram's family (II Chron. 21:17), they somehow missed Ahaziah (the youngest). According to our present text the invaders killed his brothers. Now with King Jehoram dead, the inhabitants of Jerusalem still have Ahaziah to keep the Davidic line on the throne. His short reign of one year will be accounted for in a forthcoming event (No. 71).

His mother Athaliah is again spoken of as daughter of "Omri" whereas II Kings 8:18 calls her the daughter of "Ahab". In II Kings 8:26 where the text calls her the "daughter" of Omri, the marginal note calls her the "granddaughter". With all matters considered it appears she was the daughter of Ahab and the granddaughter of Omri. "Barnes" comments that "son" and "daughter" were used by the Jews of any descendants (compare Matt. 1:1).

At this time Israel and Syria are again having war over who is going to have Ramoth-gilead. You will remember that it was when Jehoshaphat and Ahab were at war with Syria over Ramoth-gilead that Ahab was mortally wounded (I Kings 22). As the king of the South Ahaziah comes up and goes with the king of the North Jehoram (his relative), it reminds one of that former event. Well, again the king of Israel is wounded, but not mortally as was Ahab. Because of this they withdraw from the battle, and Jehoram stops at his city Jezreel to recuperate, and Ahaziah returns to Jerusalem. From the next event to be studied it appears Jehoram has left several of his captains (including Jehu) at Ramoth-gilead.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. What are Ahaziah's two other names?
3. Why is he, the youngest of the deceased king's sons, made king instead of one of his older brothers?
4. How long does he reign?
5. Who is ruling in the North?
6. At what city do they join together in battle against Syria?

7. Which king is wounded?

### 59. Jehu is Anointed to Destroy Ahab's House and Baalism

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 9:1-13.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Elisha sends a servant to anoint Jehu secretly.
  - b. He tells Jehu he is divinely commissioned to bring judgment on the house of Ahab and on Jezebel.
  - c. His fellow-officers publicly proclaim him king.

#### COMMENTS

**A**s King Jehoram is resting and recuperating at his city Jezreel from the wounds he received at Ramoth-gilead, he is unaware of God's intentions concerning him, nor is he aware of a sudden conspiracy against his throne about to take place. This reminds us that while God knows what is going on in every place, we humans are often ignorant of what is "just around the corner". Thus we are told, "Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov 27:1).

As far back as Elijah at Mt. Sinai, God has mentioned Jehu's coming part in eradicating the wickedness brought into Israel by Jezebel. Hopefully you will remember Elijah was commissioned to anoint Hazael as king over Syria, Jehu as king over Israel, and Elisha as prophet in his stead (I Kings 19:15-17). Anointing Elisha was done in Elijah's lifetime (I Kings 19:19-21). Because of Ahab's humbling himself after Elijah pronounces divine judgment on him over the Naboth-vineyard matter (I Kings 21:20-29), God has held up the anointing of Hazael and Jehu until the proper time. Thus, it is Elisha instead of Elijah who fulfills the Hazael (II Kings 8:7-15) and Jehu anointings (this event).

Now that God's time has arrived for bringing judgment on the house of Ahab,

Elisha sends one of the sons of the prophets with anointing oil to Ramoth-gilead to anoint Jehu. When he arrives, he finds Jehu and other high-ranking officers together, who have been left by the wounded Jehoram to maintain Ramoth-gilead against Hazael of Syria.

Since Jehu is a rugged man of war, he does not fear to go alone into a secret chamber with the young man to see what his mission is. Undoubtedly the young man introduces himself as one of the sons of the prophets from Elisha and proceeds to give him Elisha's message, beginning with the prophetic beginning, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel." Otherwise it would be strange for him to be accepting this as a divine call to kingship from an unidentified stranger whose coming seems bizarre to Jehu's fellow-officers.

Jehu is all ears as he is told God is making him king over His people Israel, that he is to make the house of Ahab like the exterminated houses of Jeroboam and Baasha, and that Jezebel is also to come to her end. Jehu has long been associated with the military under Ahab and his successors, but his loyalty to them up to now is no deterrent to his willingness to go against them to become king himself.

After the messenger of Elisha makes a hasty exit, Jehu comes forth to his comrades who ask him what is going on. He either means or at least says they know the messenger and his mission, which they deny knowing whereupon he decides to break the news to them. Their willingness to proceed with a military recognition of him as king would indicate they prefer him to Jehoram.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Who sends his messenger to anoint Jehu?
3. Where is Jehu at this time?
4. Does he anoint Jehu publicly or privately?
5. How do Jehu's fellow-captains indicate their approval of him as a new king replacing the present king Jehoram?

### 60. Jehu Begins by Killing Israel's Jehoram

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 8:29 and II Kings 9:14-26.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Ahaziah of Jerusalem is visiting the recovering Jehoram at Jezreel.
  - b. Jehu makes a speedy chariot trip to Jezreel.
  - c. When Jezreel's watchman spot him and his group at a distance, Jehoram dispatches a messenger to see if the group is coming peacefully.
  - d. When two groups of dispatched messengers are not allowed to return, Jehoram and Ahaziah go out personally to meet the group.
  - e. When Jehoram senses it is a conspiracy, he hastily tries to escape only to be shot in the back by Jehu.

### COMMENTS

With the public proclamation of Jehu as king, he knows he must act hurriedly to get to the reigning King Jehoram at Jezreel before word does. He gives order that nobody be allowed to leave Ramoth-gilead to carry any news to Jezreel. Taking a small detachment with him, they cross the Jordan and head straight for Jezreel.

From the tower atop Jezreel's wall the watchman spots their group at a great distance. Jehoram dispatches a messenger to inquire if the group is coming in peace. As the watchman watches, he sees the messenger is taken into custody and not allowed to return. Jehoram sends out a second messenger, and he is not allowed to return either. By this time the group is getting closer, and the watchman analyzes it as Jehu by his furious driving.

Jehoram is surprised Jehu would leave his post at Ramoth-gilead, so he and Ahaziah get in their chariots to go out to see what the problem is. Obviously they do not sense any danger until Jehu answers his question about "peace" by saying, "What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?" It doesn't take Jehoram long to realize this is a different Jehu than he has known and trusted. As he orders his chariot to wheel around and get going to safety, he hollers out to his

comrade, "There is treachery, O Ahaziah!" And these must be his last words, for before he is out of arrow-shot, Jehu pulls the bowstring with all his might, the arrow hits him in the back piercing his heart, and he falls to the floor of his chariot like a shot bird. At the same time Ahaziah is making his get-away.

Jehu makes a hasty decision concerning Jehoram's burial based on what he remembered of Elijah's words to Ahab when Ahab took possession of Naboth's confiscated vineyard (compare v. 26 with I Kings 21:19-24).

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 6 memory-facts about this event.
2. Where is Jehoram at this time?
3. Why does Jehu not lose any time getting where Jehoram is?
4. What does Jehoram do when the watchman tells him of Jehu's unidentified group?
5. What does Jehu do with Jehoram's messenger?
6. How many such messengers does Jehoram send?
7. How does the watchman identify Jehu as the group gets nearer?
8. What mistake do Jehoram and Ahaziah make?
9. What question does Jehoram ask as he and Jehu meet?
10. How does Jehu answer him?
11. What does Jehoram holler out to Ahaziah?
12. How does Jehu kill Jehoram?
13. What order does he give concerning Jehoram's dead body?

### 61. Ahaziah is Sought Out and Killed Also

#### ASSIGNMENTS

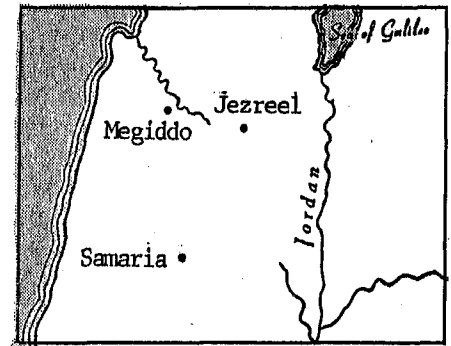
1. Read II Chron. 22:7,9 and II Kings 9:27,28.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehu finds and wounds Ahaziah.
  - b. He escapes Jehu but dies at Megiddo.
  - c. His body is returned to Jerusalem for burial.

### COMMENTS

Our two accounts of Ahaziah's death are very brief, and what details they contain are not as easily harmonized as most Bible events reported by two or more writers. Without being dogmatic permit your writer to compile a harmony of the two accounts as follows: "But when Ahaziah the king of

Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden house. And Jehu followed after him...And he sought Ahaziah: and they caught him, (for he was hid in Samaria,) and brought him to Jehu...And Jehu said, Smite him also in the chariot. And they did so at the going up to Gur, which is by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo, and died there. And his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his sepulchre with his fathers in the city of David...because he was the son of Jehoshaphat who sought the Lord with all his heart. So the house of Ahaziah had no power to keep still the kingdom."

Notice the accompanying map for the places involved in this event.



MAP OF ISRAEL

Jezreel = From which Ahaziah fled after Jehoram was shot.

Samaria = Ahaziah hid here until found by Jehu's men.

Megiddo = To which he escaped after being wounded and where he died.

Jerusalem = Where he was buried.

This sudden turn of events resulting in the premature death of Ahaziah accounts for his reigning only one year (II Kings 8:26).

Thus we come to a natural break in Divided Kingdom History when both kingdoms have simultaneously lost their kings, and when both kingdoms will start with new kings.

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where do they find the hiding Ahaziah?
3. What order does Jehu give concerning him?
4. Where does he die from being wounded?
5. Where is he buried?

## PART THREE

From the Time Both Kingdoms have Simultaneous New Kings until the  
Fall of the Northern Kingdom.

Even after getting rid of the wicked Omri dynasty, calf-worship continues to characterize the Northern Kingdom. Some rough times are in store for the Southern Kingdom also.



## 62. Jezebel's Ignominious Death

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 9:30-37.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jezebel tries to change Jehu's mind.
  - b. It doesn't work—he orders her thrown down.
  - c. He rides over her mangled body.
  - d. When he later gives orders to bury her, the dogs have eaten everything but a few pieces.

### COMMENTS

It may be debatable whether this event is to be placed here or between the deaths of Jehoram and Ahaziah. Your writer's studies cause him to place the death of Ahaziah after the death of Jehoram and the death of Jezebel after the death of Ahaziah. In other words the likely order of their deaths is: (1) Jehoram; (2) Ahaziah; (3) Jezebel. It seems reasonable that when Jehu shot Jehoram while Ahaziah was making his get-away that he would pursue Ahaziah until he put an end to him. And Scripture itself is even more convincing. In II Kings 9:16 It says, "So Jehu rode in a chariot, and went to Jezreel," and then it goes on to tell of his shooting Jehoram. This is followed in the same chapter by the death of Ahaziah. Jehu was by Ibleam when he ordered Ahaziah smitten in his chariot (II Kings 9:27). Then follows the death of Jezebel which event opens with these words: "And when Jehu was come to Jezreel" (II Kings 9:30).

Since Jehu has killed her son Jehoram and has been out of town until Ahaziah was rounded up and taken care of, Jezebel has had time to think what she will do if and when Jehu returns to Jezreel. By putting on cosmetics and fixing her hair she hopes to do to Jehu what Cleopatra of Egypt will do centuries later to both Julius Caesar and Mark Anthony; namely, she tries to entice him and buy him off with her beauty. But Jehu is not to be enamored by her immoral intentions. When she sees he is not

responding to her licentious offer, she now reminds him that Zimri in the past, who slew King Elah, had no peace but got to reign only seven days, suggesting this could be his fate if he continues to pursue his present course of action.

But looking up from the narrow street in Jezreel to the window out of which Jezebel is looking Jehu inquires, "Who is on my side? who?" And surprisingly two or three of the eunuchs designated to take care of the queen respond by looking out the window. They probably are motivated by fear of Jehu, so when he says to throw her down, they do so. Can't you imagine the fright in her heart and the hollering she does as they take hold of her and throw her down? As she hits the wall and caroms off on to the horses only to fall down under the chariot, Jehu rides back and forth over her in utter contempt. Jezebel's bloody body lies in the street when Jehu goes in to eat a meal. Since we would have no appetite for food were we to kill somebody as he kills Jezebel, it shows how hard Jehu is.

While eating, Jehu recalls she is the daughter of a king and should at least be buried rather than left to wild animals and the weather, so he gives order to bury her. But the men are surprised to find the dogs of the street have already eaten on her while Jehu was eating his meal—so much so there is very little of her to gather up and bury (only her feet, skull, and palms of her hands—things of a human body that would not be eaten as rapidly as the rest of the body). As Jehu's men report the matter to him, he tells them, "This is the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel: and the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel." In other words, so little of her is left that if they don't know whose the pieces are, they wouldn't know they are the remains of the famous Jezebel.

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.

2. What does Jezebel do in hopes of enticing Jehu?
3. What does she say to warn him of conspiracy?
4. What does Jehu ask anybody who is in her room?
5. Who responds?
6. What does he tell them to do?
7. What does Jehu do after she is thrown down?
8. What does Jehu do before burying her?
9. Why does he decide to give her a burial?
10. What has happened to her body while he was eating?

## 63. All of Ahab's Sons are Killed

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 10:1-11.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehu challenges the rulers to elect a son of Ahab to resist him in battle.
  - b. They choose rather to submit to him without a battle.
  - c. Jehu then calls for the heads of Ahab's seventy sons to be brought to him at Jezreel the next day.
  - d. When their heads are brought, he has them put in two heaps at the city gate.
  - e. Jehu realizes he is fulfilling God's word through Elijah against the house of Ahab.

### COMMENTS

Edersheim" is no doubt correct when he says Jehu must act quickly, sharply, and completely if he is to avoid a counter-revolution from the numerous offspring of a dynasty that has ruled Israel for four generations. So to those who have been entrusted with the bringing up of the younger royal offspring, Jehu immediately forces them to declare themselves for the house of Ahab or submit to his rule. While they naturally favor the house of Ahab, their fear of the rampaging Jehu causes them to submit to him. His order for them to bring the heads of the royal offspring to Jezreel tomorrow will not only squelch any resistance to his rule but will also have the rulers killing them instead of Jehu and his men killing them. Their consultation with each other ("Two kings stood not before him: how then shall we stand?") that leads to their surrender to Jehu reminds us of Jesus' teaching in Luke

14:31,32 that if an inferior army realizes it cannot successfully meet him on that day, it asks for conditions of peace as Peter's convicted hearers did on Pentecost (Acts 2:36,37). God's conditions of peace for convicted sinners are found in Acts 2:38 (repentance and baptism).

What a gory sight the two piles of heads make as people come in and go out of Jezreel's city gate! And while Jehu's talk in v. 9 appears to be an attempt to shift their death from him to those whom Ahab had appointed to bring up the royal offspring, people are made to fear before the powerful, aggressive new king. These heads give mute evidence he will allow no resistance to his kingship. Jehu tells the people that nothing God spoke against the house of Ahab by His prophet Elijah will fail.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 5 memory-facts for this event.
2. What chance does Jehu offer to have one of Ahab's sons be king instead of him?
3. Why do they not go that route?
4. What bold demand does Jehu make concerning Ahab's sons?
5. Where are their heads put?
6. What does Jehu tell the people about Elijah's prophecies?

### 64. Ahab's Descendants in Judah are also Killed

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 10:12-14 and II Chron. 22:8.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehu meets Ahab's descendants of Judah.
  - b. He orders all forty-two of them killed.

#### COMMENTS

Jehu will not have to go into Judah in order to wipe out Ahab's descendants there, for he comes across them on their way to visit their Northern Kingdom relatives. If they have not heard of the deaths of Jehoram and Jezebel (the ones they were going to visit) nor of the death of their own Ahaziah, it shows the rapidity with which Jehu has thus far

done his work against the house of Ahab. Your writer favors this conclusion, for when Jehu inquires as to who they are, they do not hesitate to identify themselves with Ahaziah. They too are put to death at Jehu's order. So far Jehu has killed both kings, Jezebel, Ahab's seventy descendants in the North, and now his forty-two descendants in the South. According to God's plans for Hazael of Syria, the prophet Elisha, and Jehu, they have wiped out Ahab's family (I Kings 19:17). As far as the Biblical record goes, it appears to be more Jehu than the other two.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where are the forty-two relatives of Ahaziah going?
3. How does Jehu learn of their identity?
4. What order does he give concerning them?

### 65. Jehu also Wipes out Baal-Worshippers

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 10:15-28.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehu and Jonadab are in agreement as to what Jehu has been doing.
  - b. Jehu invites him to go with him to witness his final act against the Ahab program.
  - c. Jehu calls a great Baal convention in Samaria.
  - d. Eighty armed men put every Baal-worshiper to death.
  - e. They brake the great image of Baal, burn the lesser images, and ruin the temple of Baal and make it into a public toilet.

#### COMMENTS

We are here introduced to Jonadab or Jehonadab, a Kenite. The Kenites are mentioned as early as Gen. 15:19. They have been friendly to Israel all through the years. This is understandable since Moses' father-in-law was of the Kenites (Judg. 1:16). This Kenite chieftain has forbidden his offspring to drink wine or to have a

vineyard or to sow seed (they were to live off the wild products of the land), and they were to live in tents and not build houses. Jer. 35:5-10 shows in Jeremiah's day they were still faithful to his charge.

This Kenite has been unhappy with the Omri-Ahab dynasty and so rejoices at its Jehu-overthrow. When he and Jehu meet, it takes them no time to find out they are both in full agreement with what Jehu has been doing. Consequently Jehu invites him to come with him to see further manifestations of his zeal for Jehovah. It is noteworthy that Jehu's zeal FOR Jehovah will be manifested in his zeal AGAINST Baalism. Biblical zeal expresses itself in both what we are FOR ("zealous of good works," Tit. 2:14) and what we are AGAINST (this event).

V. 17 is very brief and void of details. But whoever of Ahab is left in Samaria is killed by Jehu with Jehonadab along.

Though Jehu has been vicious in his treatment of the royal seed, the Baal-worshippers see in his action only that of a conspirator, so when he says, "Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much," they believe him, and all come to the special inaugural convention he is calling.

As to Jehu's wilful misrepresentation to get them all assembled, don't forget we are living in Old Testament times in this event when such is more acceptable than it is in New Testament times. Other such examples: Rahab's lying to her city authorities about the two Israelite spies she was then hiding (Josh. 2:3-6) and Michal lying to her father's messengers (I Sam. 19:11-17).

The worshipers of Baal are happy as they come to Samaria from all parts of the kingdom for the great convention, for it is to be an unprecedented convention attended by every Baal-worshiper, and with only seven thousand in Israel who have not been Baal-worshippers as recent as Elijah's time, you can see it is going to be quite a convention. Not only that, but it will be "death" for any Baal-worshiper not attending.

There is no other way Jehu can wipe out all Baal-worshippers. If he sends out

police to hunt them down, it would be only partially successful. But since they are invited by the new king, and it is "death" if any does not come, they will all come, and it will take only one day to finish them all off whereas the hunt-them-out method would take months.

So far Jehu's moves have been bold and lightning-fast. The same will be true in this event.

Special vestments are issued to each worshiper (more "buttering up"). Some Jehovah-worshippers might be present just out of curiosity. Jehu's order to the Baal-leaders to be sure there is no Jehovah-worshiper present will assure that no Jehovah-worshippers will be killed.

To make sure his eighty door-guards allow none to escape, Jehu imposes the death-sentence on any guard allowing any Baal-worshiper to get away.

It appears Jehu himself officiates at the altar. As soon as he completes the sacrifice, the captains begin the chaotic slaughter. The helpless, unsuspecting, unarmed mob cannot defend itself against Jehu's slaughter-crew. We might wonder why some don't head for the doors. They probably do only to find them locked and secured.

The multitude of dead bodies, each bloody from a sword wound or more, is removed unceremoniously, the great stone image of Baal is broken down, the burnable images of Baal are burned, and the house of Baal is so defaced that it no longer looks like a temple, and its final disgracing is when it is made into a public toilet.

Elijah had killed four hundred and fifty priests of Baal after his Mt. Carmel contest, but that figure shrinks into insignificance with the slaughter under Jehu.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 5 memory-facts for this event.
2. Who is Jehonadab?
3. Does he agree with what Jehu is doing?
4. What invitation does Jehu extend to Jehonadab?
5. What does Jehu do that causes Baal-worshippers to think he is also one of them?
6. What charge does Jehu make to his eighty door-guards outside the convention temple?
7. When does the slaughter begin?

8. What else does Jehu destroy besides the worshipers?
9. What finally becomes of the house of Baal at Samaria?

### 66. Surprise: Jehu Continues Jeroboam's Calf-Worship

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 10:29-31.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehu does not depart from Northern Kingdom calf-worship.
  - b. For executing God's wrath on the house of Ahab God promises the throne of Israel to Jehu's house for five generations.

#### COMMENTS

For a number of events (from the anointing of Jehu till this present event) it has looked as if the Northern Kingdom will finally have a king who can be listed as "good"—one who is not following the calf-worship set up by King Jeroboam when the Northern Kingdom began. But we are surely left puzzled after so many dramatic events in which Jehu has performed God's will now to read, "Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan."

Nothing recorded in II Kings or II Chron. implicates Jehu in any wrongdoing. His own recorded statements have been that God has been bringing judgment on the house of Ahab through him (see II Kings 9:25,26; II Kings 9:36; II Kings 10:10), but sometime later when God said in Hos. 1:4, "Yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel (where Jehu killed King Jehoram and Jezebel) upon the house of Jehu," it indicates Jehu's motives for what he did were not Simon-pure.

In spite of Jehu's allegiance to the golden calves, God still appreciates his getting rid of the wicked Ahab-line for which He assures Jehu his family will occupy the throne of Israel for five

generations (himself and four generations of descendants). And God will keep His word to Jehu, for the following descendants will succeed him on the throne of Israel: Jehoahaz (seventeen years), Jehoash (sixteen years), Jeroboam II (forty-one years), and Zechariah (only six months). With Jehu's reign lasting twenty-eight years, you can see his family will rule Israel a long time.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. What does God promise Jehu for his blotting out the wicked house of Ahab?
3. What is Jehu's attitude toward Jeroboam's calf-worship?

### 67. Athaliah Usurps the Throne of Judah

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 11:1-3 and II Chron. 22:10-12.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Because King Ahaziah is dead, his mother Athaliah kills all the royal seed and takes the throne of Judah for six years.
  - b. She does not realize that Joash, Ahaziah's youngest son, is alive and is being secretly brought up by the high priest Jehoiada and his wife Jehosheba.

#### COMMENTS

Who is this woman Athaliah who dares to do this? She is the offspring of that wicked couple of Israel, Ahab and Jezebel. She was married to Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram who ruled Judah eight years before dying a violent death. After her husband died and her son Ahaziah succeeded to the throne, she became the queen-mother in Judah. But now that Ahaziah has been killed by Jehu, the queen-mother position will pass to Ahaziah's widow. This strong-willed, domineering Jezebel-of-the-South loses no time sizing up what has to be done immediately if she is to be

anybody in the future. So with no thought of conscience she immediately puts to death all the royal seed that is left which has already been greatly reduced by her husband's killing his brothers (II Chron. 21:4), the Arabs having taken some of them captive sometime ago (II Chron. 21:17), and Jehu's so recently killing forty-two of them (II Kings 10:14). Even though neither kingdom has ever had a woman ruler, Judah now has this unworthy one who has even murdered some of her own grandchildren to get the throne. But Judah submits to her out of fear rather than out of respect.

However, she is unaware of a lone development that in six years will be her undoing and death. A daughter of her deceased husband Jehoram (Jehosheba) has providentially been able to save her infant nephew (Ahaziah's son) Joash from the ambitious Athaliah. Josephus says Jehosheba was the daughter of Jehoram by one of his other wives and not by Athaliah. She is married to the godly priest Jehoiada who is also willing to risk his own safety in an attempt to save an offspring of David for the Jerusalem throne. The little prince grows up in the absolute privacy of one of the secret areas of the temple. God sees that the light of David is not put out, and his seed will soon be back on his throne in Jerusalem.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Identify Athaliah.
3. How does she get the throne of Judah?
4. How long will she usurp it?
5. What infant escapes her bloody deeds?
6. Who rears him?
7. Where does he live while growing up?

## 68. A Boy-King for Judah

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 11:4-12:1 and II Chron. 23:1-24:1.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehoiada and those in whom he confides plan the overthrow of Athaliah and the coronation of young Joash.
  - b. Joash is crowned king.

- c. Athaliah learning of it shouts, "Treason!"
- d. She is taken out and slain.
- e. Jehoiada leads in renewing the covenant for the people to worship Jehovah.
- f. The people rise up and destroy Baalism.
- g. Jehoiada organizes the leadership for future progress.

#### COMMENTS

Now that the rightful heir to the throne of Judah is seven years old, the priest Jehoiada thinks there is no need to wait longer to overthrow the usurper Athaliah and to enthrone the seed of David once more in Jerusalem. Though Joash is young, Jehoiada himself will direct him as the "power behind the throne".

But the priest must act with great precaution. Being in touch with many of the prominent men of Judah, he already knows who are anti-Athaliah in their sentiments. Since he will need the involvement of a number of people to make the power-change, he secretly gathers together those who are of the same mind as he. Among them are five captains of hundreds (Azariah, Ishmael, another Azariah, Maaseiah, and Elishaphat). They are surely both surprised and pleased to learn what Jehoiada and his wife have done. They are glad the seed of David is still represented among them, and they too are determined he shall be proclaimed king.

The next step is for these to go throughout Judah with the same precaution Jehoiada has exercised to get an amount of people ready when the day comes. Less suspicion will arise if it occurs on the sabbath when the people come together and when special guards will be on duty.

In preparation for the coronation Jehoiada issues arms and weapons from David's day, guards are assigned to strategic places, a special guard is to be set around young Joash in the temple, and instructions are given to kill anybody who interferes.

The day comes, and the future monarch is brought forth, a crown is put on his head and a copy of the law of Moses into his hands, he is anointed, and the rejoicing people shout, "God save the king!"

Hearing the tumult in the temple Athaliah rushes in to see what is taking place. She can't believe her eyes as she sees the young king near one of the pillars of the temple and carefully guarded. Seeking to summon the help she needs to put down this uprising against her rule, she shouts, "Treason! Treason!" Isn't this something for her to be shouting when she herself has been ruling after pulling an act of "treason" herself?

But whoever might be in favor of her do not come forth to provide any help, for they can see the opposing forces are mobilized against her cause. They remain silent as Jehoiada orders her out of the temple where she is to be slain. Our guess is if any set of guards ever took into custody a hollering, kicking, wild woman, it was Jehoiada's men who took her out to her death. She comes to as abrupt an end as her wicked mother Jezebel did at Jezreel at the hands of Jehu.

It has been sometime since Judah has had a Jehovah-worshiping ruler, so Jehoiada renews the covenant between Judah and Jehovah on that day. One of the first things the people do in consequence of the covenant is to go break down the house of Baal, destroy the altars and images to Baal, and kill the Baal priest Mattan.

Now Jehoiada reinstates the temple worship as David had it set up and according to the law of the Lord. And the pleasure of the people over the change is well stated when it says, "All the people of the land rejoiced: and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword."

Thanks to the godly priest Jehoiada and his good wife Jehosheba, who did what needed to be done though nobody knew they were doing it, and who exercised both patience and wisdom until the time came to act. Because of them a new era has dawned on the life of the

Southern Kingdom. We, like Jehoiada and his wife, need to see what should be done and do it, and we shall see that God may use us to bring in either better things or a better day!

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 7 memory-facts for this event.
2. How old is Joash now?
3. Who plans the overthrow of Athaliah and the enthronement of Joash?
4. Who helps him plan that event?
5. What day of the week will it take place?
6. Tell of the actual coronation of Joash.
7. What does Athaliah declare it to be?
8. What order does Jehoiada give concerning her?
9. What covenant does Jehoiada lead in renewing?
10. Tell of the destruction of Baalism that day.
11. What else does Jehoiada do as the new regime gets underway?
12. What is the attitude of the people over the power-change?

### 69. The Continuing Power of Jehoiada

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 12:2,3 and II Chron. 24:2,3.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. As long as Jehoiada lives, King Joash does that which is right.
  - b. Jehoiada takes two wives for Joash by whom are born sons and daughters.

#### COMMENTS

The great high priest Jehoiada will live about one-half of Joash's long forty-year reign. Until Joash is old enough to assume the responsibilities of his kingly office, Jehoiada continues to direct the ship of state. In the meantime he, like a father in these patriarchal times, takes two wives for Joash, who bear him an unrecorded number of sons and daughters. From a later account we know one of his sons was named Amaziah and one of his wives Jehoaddan—Amaziah's mother (II Kings 14:1,2).

As long as Jehoiada lives, Joash is greatly influenced by the godly man who has brought him up and set him on the throne of David. As we shall see later, under the influence of others he will depart from the right way (II Chron. 25:17,18). Let us observe it is a great

thing to be able to influence others just as Jehoiada does here. Yet one's influence is usually more powerful while he is living than after he is dead. In this connection the great leader Joshua called on the nation to follow his example of worshiping Jehovah (Josh. 24:15), and his influence remained over the nation as long as he lived and as long as the leaders who served under him lived (Josh. 24:31).

Mention is again made about the "high places". We would judge they are not being used for idolatrous purposes but in time to come will be. It would be good if they were removed under Joash as they later will be under King Hezekiah, for in Hezekiah's time they will be used idolatrously (II Kings 18:4).

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. How many wives does Jehoiada take for Joash?
3. What is said of the character of Joash's reign throughout the days of Jehoiada?
4. Were the high places removed under Joash?

### 70. Joash Repairs the Temple

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 12:4-16 and II Chron. 24:4-14.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Joash plans to repair the temple and makes arrangements for income by which to do it.
  - b. When his plan for collecting the money fails, he puts a money chest in the temple for the people's freewill offerings.
  - c. Now with money in abundance the work gets underway.
  - d. With the money left over they replenish the vessels of the temple.

#### COMMENTS

Time takes its toll on any structure, and Solomon's temple has stood for a century and a half, and as far as the divine record goes there has been no major repairing of it. But besides the natural deterioration of time, the temple has suffered great damage from the family of Athaliah: "The sons of

Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the Lord did they bestow upon Baalim" (II Chron. 24:7). In other words they plundered the temple of whatever could be used in their temple of Baal. Again we witness the far-reaching effects of the Ahab-reign, and much of it is traceable to his marriage to Jezebel. Sometimes a single decision will affect many lives over many years of time. How important, then, for us to consult the Lord in all matters of decision, be they considered by us little or great decisions!

In the years that Joash has been growing up, why has not the high priest Jehoiada repaired the temple? "Clarke" explains it by judging Jehoiada to be a man of piety instead of zeal: "Though Jehoiada was a good man, he does not appear to have had much of the spirit of an active zeal; and simple piety without zeal and activity is of little use when a reformation in religion and manners is necessary to be brought about." And then for those with a knowledge of church history he illustrates, "Philip Melancthon was orthodox, pious, and learned, but he was a man of comparative inactivity. In many respects Martin Luther was by far his inferior, but in zeal and activity he was a flaming and consuming fire; and by him...was the mighty Reformation from the corruptions of popery affected. Ten thousand Jehoiadas and Melancthons might have wished it in vain; Luther worked, and God worked by him."

But "Smith" is more gracious in his approach, admitting it is strange Jehoiada has not made the needed repairs, but supposing he must have had a good reason for not doing it.

Either writer's view might be the correct one, but at this distance it remains a mystery. At any rate now that Joash is old enough to take hold of the reigns, we are glad to see him undertake the great project.

It will take much money for the project. Men will have to be hired to quarry the stones, and others will have to be employed to do the actual repair work.

The three sources of revenue to be channeled for this purpose mentioned in II Kings 12:4 are explained by "Barnes" as follows: "Three kinds of sacred money are here distinguished—first, the half shekel required in the Law (Exo. 30:13) to be paid by every one above twenty years of age when he passed the numbering; secondly, the money to be paid by such as had devoted themselves, or those belonging to them, by vow to Jehovah, which was a variable sum dependent on age, sex, and property (Lev. 27:2-8); and thirdly, the money offered in the way of free-will offerings." According to II Chron. 24:5 Joash orders the priests and Levites to go out into the cities of Judah and collect this money.

Since we do not know which year of Joash's reign he instituted this repair-program, we do not know how long it has been since he authorized the priests and Levites to go forth collecting the money when II Kings 12:6 records, "But it was so, that in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house." And why have they not done it? Our judgment is one of two reasons: either they are accustomed to the temple being as it is and are content to let matters remain as they are instead of having to do so much extra work, or Joash does not possess strong leadership qualities in which case he can give orders that others do not fear not carrying out.

But the king is stirred up over the neglect, and he reprimands Jehoiada and the priests about the matter. The last of II Kings 12:7 sounds as if the priests have actually utilized the money for themselves instead of Joash's project.

At this time Joash and Jehoiada put a money chest (a box with a hole in its top) for the convenience of the people, and much money is received every day. This money is used to hire wood workers and stone masons and to buy materials for the project. How the people rejoice to help and see the work being done, and people are no different today. Those who are handling the money are men of such reputation that with the money left over, vessels are made for the temple, and no

accounting is required of them. With the repairing of the temple the last vestige of the wicked Athaliah is overcome.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. What is the condition of the temple at this time?
3. Why is it in this condition?
4. From what sources is the money to come?
5. What is upsetting to Joash?
6. Where does he finally get the money?

### 71. Jehu's Last Years are Troublous

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 10:32-36.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Hazael of Syria takes away Jehu's territory east of the Jordan.
  - b. After reigning twenty-eight years Jehu dies and is buried in Samaria.

#### COMMENTS

Jehu has had a long reign—one of the longest for a Northern Kingdom king. This may be due to his having abolished Baal-worship. But now in his latter years God begins to cut him short. He loses much (maybe all) of his territory east of the Jordan where the tribes Reuben, Gad, and one-half of Manasseh live. Gilead is the southern part (from the Jabbok on the north to the Arnon on the south). Bashan is the northern part (from the Jabbok on the south to Syria on the north). Various writers marvel at Jehu's "might" being mentioned when his only military record found in the Bible concerns his territory losses to Hazael of Syria. But later we will study about another Northern Kingdom king (another Jeroboam) who reigned 41 years, yet his reign is covered in II Kings in only 7 verses (14:23-29). Both of these kings have to be powerful to rule so long, so your writer's judgment is that both have triumphs not recorded in the Biblical account. If we had the archives of the Northern Kingdom (referred to in v. 34 as the "book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel"), we would no doubt find such

information. Jehu's entombment is likewise on Samaria's hill.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. How long does Jehu reign?
3. Who is his military adversary in his latter years?
4. What territory does he lose to him?
5. Does the Bible credit Jehu with being a powerful king?
6. Where is he buried?

### 72. Syria Gives Jehoahaz Trouble

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 13:7.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Because Jehoahaz perpetuates calf-worship, God sends Syria against him in both Hazael's and Ben-hadad's reigns.
  - b. The oppressed Jehoahaz prays to Jehovah who grants peace once more to Israel.

#### COMMENTS

Jehu's line is to have the throne of Israel for five generations for his destruction of Baal-worship. With his death his son Jehoahaz comes to the throne as the second generation. We note it is the 23rd year of Joash of the South. This is the year Joash gets concerned the temple repairing has not been done (II Kings 12:6ff). "Edersheim" thinks the inroads Hazael is making in Israel as divine judgments is hastening Joash to finish the temple project lest God's displeasure likewise befalls his kingdom. Hazael, as you may recall, took away the territory east of the Jordan from Jehoahaz's father Jehu. Now he and his son Ben-hadad continue to weaken Israel until it is virtually powerless, leaving it only enough horsemen (fifty), chariots (ten), and foot soldiers (ten thousand) to mock Israel. The prophet Elisha foresaw years ago Hazael would become a cruel king (II Kings 8:7-12), and this event records some of his cruel acts: he makes Israel "like the dust by threshing". Amos 1:3 says these Syrians (Damascus) "threshed Gilead with threshing

instruments of iron". "Barnes" notes this is the "literal use of threshing-instruments in the execution of prisoners of war".

Such warfare and reduction of Israel's power humble Jehoahaz, causing him to do what few Northern Kings ever did ("Jehoahaz besought the Lord"), and the divine record says, "The Lord hearkened unto him." Possibly in Jehoahaz's day, in answer to his prayer, God gives relief from further aggression by Syria. The "saviour" God gave to Israel so they "went out from under the hand of the Syrians" and dwelt peacefully as in olden times (v.5) was realized under Jehoahaz's son Jehoash: "Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael the cities which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel" (II Kings 13:25).

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. How long does Jehoahaz rule Israel?
3. Who was ruling in Judah when he began?
4. Who oppresses Israel in Jehoahaz's day?
5. How little military does Jehoahaz have left?
6. In what way does he humble himself before God?

### 73. Apostasy Sets in after Jehoiada's Death

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Chron. 24:15-19.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehoiada dies at one hundred thirty.
  - b. Princes of Judah persuade Joash to restore idolatry.
  - c. Displeased, God sends prophets whose rebukes are disregarded.

#### COMMENTS

God has blessed the godly priest Jehoiada with long life, which is one of God's promises to those who, like Jehoiada, exalt wisdom (Prov. 3:13,16). Even after passing the prescribed age for serving as priest, he has been a bolstering influence for good on King Joash whom he and his wife

reared. Because of asserting the power of a king to Judah during Joash's growing-up years, he is entombed royally at Jerusalem.

Writers struggle for a plausible explanation as to why Joash would change at the instigation of the princes of Judah following Jehoiada's death. But if he has been under the fostering influence of Jehoiada all his life, he is a "sitting duck", so to speak, to be influenced by somebody else after Jehoiada is gone. An important lesson in parenthood is found in Joash's case. To begin with, a parent makes all the decisions for the child. When the child grows up, marries, and has his own home, he—not the father—will be making all his decisions. Now between the time when a father makes all the decisions and later when he will relinquish all the leadership to the mature son, the father must gradually and carefully allow his maturing child to make whatever decisions he is old enough and mature enough to make, being watchful, of course, that the child is making the right decisions. Thus his child develops individual responsibility and leadership, and he is not so easily influenced by more dominant personalities as Joash is in this event.

The immediateness with which this switch in policy takes place reminds us of Paul's words to the Galatians: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel" (Gal 1:6). All this is a serious reminder that people who are right at this time may be wrong later, and that those who are godly today may become wicked in days to come.

"The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov 15:3), and His face is against those who do evil (I Pet. 3:12). If Judah will not follow God's law, He will send prophets to correct them and show them their sins (cf. Isa. 58:1). The prophets God sends to rebuke Joash and the princes are brazenly disregarded. Could any of these prophets be among those who wrote Old Testament books? We are not told.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. How old is Jehoiada when he dies?
3. Tell of his burial.
4. What change in Judah comes in after his death?
5. How does God correct Judah?

### 74. Another Joash Becomes King in the North

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 13:8-11.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. After Jehoahaz of Israel dies, his son Joash succeeds him as king.
  - b. He will reign for the next sixteen years.
  - c. Like all Northern Kingdom rulers he continues Jeroboam's calf-worship.

#### COMMENTS

The death of King Jehoahaz after ruling Israel for seventeen years brings his son Joash to power for the next sixteen years. Since he is beginning in the thirty-seventh year of King Joash of the South, both kingdoms now have a Joash ruling them, but not for long as Joash of Judah is in his latter years. Both are also called "Jehoash", which can further add to a casual reader's confusion. Joash of the north will also follow the calf-worship at Dan and Bethel.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Who is ruling in the South at this time?
3. What does Joash of the North do about calf-worship?

### 75. Reverses Come on Judah's Joash to His End

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Chron. 24:20-27 and II Kings 12:17-21.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. The priest Zechariah who publicly opposes Judah's idolatry is ordered killed by Joash.



- b. Zechariah's dying words are, "The Lord look upon it, and require it."
- c. Hazael of Syria comes against Jerusalem, kills the princes, and spares the city when Joash pays him off with temple and palace treasures.
- d. They leave him a very sick man.
- e. Joash's servants conspire against him and kill him in his bed.
- f. He is buried in Jerusalem but not among the kings.

### COMMENTS

**Z**echariah as a godly successor to the deceased Jehoiada is moved by God's Spirit to stand on an elevated place in the temple as he publicly reprimands the people for their idolatry. King Joash is involved in the conspiracy that kills the preaching priest. In thus murdering the son (or maybe grandson) of the very priest who rescued him as an infant from the murderous Athaliah, Joash shows extreme ingratitude toward Jehoiada as well as defiance toward God. And in having him killed in the temple, he does not show the respect for the temple Jehoiada did in commanding Athaliah to be taken out of the temple before being killed (II Kings 11:13-16). Jesus refers to this terrible event in Matt. 23:35.

We note the dying words of Zechariah: "The Lord look upon it, and require it." Since Judah will not regard God's law nor listen to His prophets but kills His priest, God sends the Syrians against Judah this very year who destroy the princes who persuaded Joash to turn idolatrous and take their spoil, accomplishing this by a smaller army than Judah's because God is chastising Judah by them. As Judah sees the tide of battle turn against them, you wonder if they don't recall the dying priest's words: "Lord, look upon it, and require it."

Where to place the speech and death of the priest Zechariah is a difficult problem in harmonizing Kings and Chronicles. In Event 12 we studied about Joash's apostasy after Jehoiada died. Did the princes come immediately and put pressure on him to restore idolatrous worship? It is usually thought they did.

Did God immediately send prophets to rebuke them? Again it would seem He did. It would even seem when Judah did not listen to the prophets, the priest Zechariah would immediately speak up. But somewhere in these there is a time-break, and your writer is arbitrarily placing it between the prophets' rebuking Judah and Zechariah rebuking them (this event). The break may have come at another time, but it appears that a series of fast-moving events proceeds from Zechariah's death through God's bringing Syria (that is in neighboring Philistia) against Judah that very year that killed Joash's evil counselors (the princes), plundered the treasures of the temple and the palace, and left him in great diseases (New International Version says, "Seriously wounded"), and in his helpless condition upon his bed he is killed by a conspiracy by Zabad (Jozachar), the son of a Ammonite woman Shimeath, and Jehozabad, the son of a Moabite woman Shimrith. When God has decreed the doom of a wicked person like Joash, escape is impossible—much as Amos 5:19 says, "As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him." "Clarke" gives a graphic summary of Joash: "This man, so promising in the beginning of his reign, apostatized, became an idolater, encouraged idolatry among his subjects, and put the high priest Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada his benefactor, to death: and now God visited that blood upon him by the hands of the tyrannous king of Syria, and by his own servants." Joash's shameful, dishonorable end is followed by not being buried among the sepulchers of the kings—all this because he has walked in the "counsel of the ungodly" (cf. Psa. 1:1).

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 6 memory-facts for this event.
2. Tell of Zechariah's speech.
3. Who orders Zechariah killed?
4. Where is he killed?
5. What are his dying words?
6. What trouble befalls Joash before year's-end?
7. In what condition do the Syrians leave him?
8. How does Joash die?

9. What honor is denied Joash in his burial?

## 76. Judah's New King Executes His Father's Assassins

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 14:1-6 and II Chron. 25:1-4.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. The twenty-five-year-old Amaziah succeeds his assassinated father.
  - b. He will reign in Judah for the next twenty-nine years.
  - c. He executes his father's assassins but not their children.

### COMMENTS

**A**s Amaziah takes the throne of Judah, he has witnessed Syria's defeats of his father and its helping itself to the temple and palace treasures, followed by the sickness and assassination of his father. The expression, "As soon as the kingdom was confirmed in his hand," suggests there were some problems for a time in his establishing his kingship. He does not execute his father's assassins until he is well established as the new king. "Clarke" suggests, "No doubt those wicked men...who murdered his father had considerable power and influence, and therefore he found it dangerous to bring them to justice till he was assured of the loyalty of his other officers." It is especially mentioned that he, in executing his father's assassins, did not put their children to death. This is mentioned because it was contrary to the prevailing practice of those times and also to indicate his obedience to God's instructions in the matter: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deut. 24:16). When it says, "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like David his father: he did according to all things as Joash his father did," the first two statements show he was an admixture

of good and evil, this mixture being a carry-over of his father--as is so often the case. So many times "children learn what they live" with. "Smith" makes an interesting comparison between him and his father: (1) both began better than they ended, being Jehovah-worshippers to begin with but idolatrous later; (2) both resisted a prophet who rebuked them; (3) both knew defeat in war and paid off their conquerors with temple and palace treasures; and (4) both were assassinated.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. When did Amaziah execute his father's assassins?
3. What law of Moses did he especially regard in the matter?
4. How does the Bible speak of his goodness?
5. What were some of the comparisons between him and his father and their reigns?

### 77. Israel's King Joash Visits the Ailing Elisha

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 13:14-19.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Joash honorably visits Elisha in his final illness.
  - b. Elisha promises the king three victories over Syria instead of complete destruction.

#### COMMENTS

A king paying a visit to a dying prophet? A king of the Northern Kingdom? When he respectfully calls Elisha "my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof," he is calling him the same that Elisha called Elijah immediately after his translation (II Kings 2:12). When he says, "O my father, my father," he speaks with feeling--probably because of the nearing-death of the prophet. When he calls him "the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof", he is referring to the previous military victories enjoyed by Israel because of Elisha's divine help. Instances: II Kings 3:9-25; 6:8-12; 6:13-23; 6:24--7:16. All these were before King

Joash's time, but the prophet had remained an honored man in Israel ever since. When he calls him "my father", you can see his desire to be associated with the good man.

The aged prophet is moved by the Lord, probably in response to the king's honoring Elisha, to promise Joash some victories like those he has heard about. It will be victories over Israel's constant foe--Syria. Remember that Syria had greatly reduced Israel in the days of his father (II Kings 13:3-7). What a welcome prophecy that God will give him deliverance from Syria! The manner of delivering the prophecy is interesting--the prophet placing his hands on the king's hands on the bow and the arrow as he shoots an arrow eastward toward Aphek where Joash will defeat the Syrians. God has in mind Joash's smiting "the Syrians in Aphek until thou have consumed them", but in the second phase of the prophecy (where Joash is told to smite the ground probably shoot arrows into the ground), he smites only three times which would evidently not be enough to destroy Syria. Because of the brevity of the account and not knowing exactly the mind of King Joash, it is difficult to know that Joash should have smitten the ground more than three times. Evidently he would be satisfied merely to subdue Syria and drive them out of his land instead of destroying it as a nation. If so, he is but perpetuating the trait of Israel that was satisfied to settle in Canaan and subject the pagan nations instead of destroying them as God had willed (Judg. 1:27-33). It is an all too frequent failure of God's people to settle for less than He has willed whether it be in their own spiritual attainment or in their evangelistic accomplishments. Let each of us pause at our next time of personal prayer and ascertain in what categories we are too much like King Joash and Israel!

Verse 25 of this chapter (II Kings 13) shows the prophecy was fulfilled exactly as prophesied. The deliverance under Joash was also prophesied in the days of his father Jehoahaz, Joash being the "saviour" mentioned in II Kings 13:5.

Thus comes to a close the unusual visit of a king of Israel to one of God's greatest prophets.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why does the king of Israel pay Elisha a visit?
3. How does he address the great prophet?
4. Elisha promised him victory over what country?
5. How many times will he defeat that country?
6. What displeased God about the king on this visit?

### 78. A Most Unusual Miracle

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 13:20,21.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Sometime after Elisha's death the Moabites invade the land.
  - b. A funeral entourage spots a nearby Moabite band and decides to lay the corpse in Elisha's sepulchre.
  - c. The dead man is immediately resurrected.

#### COMMENTS

It is evidently not long after the king's visit that Elisha dies and is entombed (Josephus says with great pomp). Sometime afterwards marauding bands of Moabites come across the Jordan to plunder--in the Spring when the field grains are ripening. One day as a funeral party is carrying a man to his burial, one of these enemy bands is nearby. The funeral procession cannot proceed, and noticing Elisha's sepulchre they temporarily lay the dead body in it only to have it resurrected by contact with the prophet's remains. There is no other miracle in the Bible like this, and it climaxes a great miracle-performing career of Elisha.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Bands from what neighboring country are a scourge to Israel at this time?
3. What is the occasion of putting a strange body into Elisha's sepulchre?
4. What happens?

### 79. Israel Recovers Its Cities beyond the Jordan

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 13:22-25.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. After Hazael of Syria dies, his son Ben-hadad replaces him.
  - b. Joash defeats Ben-hadad three times and recovers Israel's cities east of the Jordan.

## COMMENTS

Why are these verses split off from Joash's visit to Elisha in which Elisha predicted the victories recorded here? Probably because there is a break in time between the prediction and the fulfillment. In the interval Elisha dies, the miracle of a resurrection takes place, and the Syrian king Hazael who has troubled Israel for so many years dies. It is under his son Ben-hadad that the deliverance under Joash comes. God had not allowed Hazael to destroy the Northern Kingdom because of His regard for His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When it says, "Neither cast he them from his presence as yet," there is an intimation that in time God will forget about the covenant which they had long-ago broken and allow the Northern Kingdom to be destroyed. He will spare it for seventy-eighty years through the reigns of several more kings.

It may be helpful for you to know that Syria had three kings in this order: Ben-hadad, Hazael, another Ben-hadad. The first Ben-hadad was suffocated by his servant Hazael (II Kings 8:7-15). Hazael for some reason named his son Ben-hadad.

Those cities east of the Jordan are in a war-zone between Israel and Syria. In recent times Hazael has taken them from Jehoahaz as a punishment from God. Now they are taken back by Jehoahaz's son Joash from Hazael's son Ben-hadad in fulfillment of Elisha's prophecy to Joash in II Kings 13:19. The Bible does not include a record of these battles by which Israel recovers the cities.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why is this account of victories over Syria placed immediately after Elisha's prophecy concerning them?
3. What king of Syria had most recently taken these Israelite cities from Israel?
4. From what king of Israel had he taken them?
5. What king of Israel recovers them?
6. From what king of Syria?

### 80. Amaziah has a Great Victory over Edom

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Chron. 25:1-16 and II Kings 14:7.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Amaziah musters a large army, including some hired soldiers from the Northern Kingdom, to go against Edom.
  - b. A prophet instructs him to send the Israelite soldiers home, who plunder on their way home.
  - c. Amaziah defeats the Edomites.

## COMMENTS

Judah will also seek to recover its lost domination over Edom that lay to its south. In the wicked days of King Jehoram (around forty years ago) Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah (II Kings 8:20). Now King Amaziah contemplates bringing Edom back under Judah's control. God can give him victory without the help of the one hundred thousand soldiers hired from Israel. When Amaziah obediently refuses to let them go with him even though he has already paid them a fair sum, we can be sure God will bless His campaign against Edom. In the conversation between Amaziah and God's prophet notice two significant statements: (1) "God hath power to help, and to cast down." His help will be greater than the dismissed one hundred thousand soldiers. If the king doesn't obey the order, God is able to overthrow him. (2) When the king complains he has already paid the Israelites, he is told, "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." We need to believe when we do right, God will bless us. Obviously the soldiers who are told they cannot go do not like it and

show their feelings by taking their vengeance on several cities of Judah (both in killing and plundering). The battle against Edom begins in the unidentified Valley of Salt in Edom's rock-fortress Petra, which Amaziah takes. In the battle ten thousand Edomites are killed and another ten thousand are taken and are ruthlessly thrown from the top of the rock bluff to their deaths below. Those who have been to Petra can visualize this from the setting.

From the spoils of the battle are saved the gods (images) of the Edomites, and King Amaziah bows down before them and burns incense to them. Tit. 3:3 connects "disobedience" and "foolishness", and we can surely see this is Amaziah's foolishly and disobediently worshiping the lifeless objects that could not deliver their former worshipers out of his own hands. God whom he should worship and who gave him the victory over Edom is angry with Amaziah for this and sends an unnamed prophet to rebuke him. But he does not listen to the prophet, so the prophet tells him of his coming doom.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. How many soldiers of Judah are in Amaziah's army?
3. How many more does he hire out of Israel?
4. What does the prophet tell him to do about the latter?
5. What do they do when they go home?
6. Give some of the details of Amaziah's victory over Edom.
7. How does Amaziah act very foolishly after this victory?
8. What is his response to a prophet's rebuke?
9. What is the prophet's final word to him?

### 81. Amaziah Picks a Fight with Israel

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 14:8-14 and II Chron. 25:17-24.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize the event until you can tell it.
  - a. Amaziah's counselors advise him to challenge Israel to battle.
  - b. The king of Israel tries to persuade Amaziah not to engage in a battle.
  - c. Amaziah will not be persuaded.

- d. They clash at Bethshemesh in Judah, and Amaziah is defeated.
  - e. Before going home the king of Israel destroys six hundred feet of Jerusalem's wall and plunders Judah's treasures.
2. What motives may Amaziah have had in challenging Israel to battle?
  3. Does Jehoash really want to fight?
  4. Narrate his fable.
  5. Where does the battle take place?
  6. Why does Amaziah lose this battle when he won the battle with Edom?
  7. What damage does Jehoash do to Jerusalem?
  8. What plunder does Jehoash take?

### COMMENTS

There are several lines of thought that will soon converge in a battle between Judah and Israel. As Amaziah returns from his victory over Edom, he feels triumphant--ready to challenge anybody to battle. He either remembers or has just heard about the pillaging done by the Israelite soldiers who were not permitted to go with him to fight Edom. He is ready to retaliate. He issues a challenge to Jehoash, king of the North. At the same time God's displeasure with Amaziah for bringing back Edom's idols is needing a way to chasten him. He will have it in the proposed battle. It is obvious that Jehoash does not want to fight as much as Amaziah, reflected in his suggesting that Amaziah stay home and savor his recent victory over Edom rather than fight with him and lose. Jehoash's fable about the thistle, the cedar, and the wild boar is no compliment to Amaziah. When it is obvious to Jehoash that Amaziah is not to be dissuaded from fighting, he chooses to attack rather than be attacked by going into Judah with his army. The two armies clash at ancient Bethshemesh southwest of Jerusalem. And God delivers Amaziah into Jehoash's hand. Amaziah is powerless to stop his conqueror from breaking down four hundred cubits (six hundred feet) of Jerusalem's north wall, thus destroying the military defense of the city. Nor can he keep Jehoash from helping himself to the temple treasures, Amaziah's own treasures, and some of the people of Judah whom he took with him. Again we see the truthfulness of the proverb, "The way of the transgressor is hard" (Prov. 13:15).

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 5 memory facts for this event.

## 82. A Second Jeroboam Becomes King in the North

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 14:15,16,23,24.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. After Jehoash dies, his son Jeroboam becomes king of Israel.
  - b. This powerful king has a forty-one year reign.

### COMMENTS

We know nothing of Jehoash's reign following his significant victory over Amaziah. His death and entombment at Samaria enthrone his son Jeroboam as Israel's new king. Don't confuse this Jeroboam with Israel's first king who set up the golden calves at Dan and Bethel. This Jeroboam is usually called Jeroboam II for distinguishing purposes. His forty-one years on the throne will make him the longest ruling king of Israel.

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. How long is Jeroboam's reign in comparison with the reigns of other kings of Israel?

## 83. Jeroboam again Regains Cities beyond Jordan

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 14:25-27.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jeroboam regains territory to Israel.
  - b. God grants this victory according to a prophecy by Jonah.

### COMMENTS

Jeroboam II's reign is not only long but powerful. He completes regaining all the territory east of the Jordan that was begun under Jehoahaz (II Kings 13:25), restoring all the land east of the Jordan from Hamath in the far north to the Dead Sea in the south ("the sea of the plain"). Hardly any writer or teacher in considering the predictions of doom of the Northern Kingdom found in the book of Amos, written in Jeroboam II's day when Israel was so strong and prosperous, fails to note that Amos's prediction seemed so impossible. Amos called them, "Ye that put far away the evil day" (Amos 6:3), referring to the calamity to come on them.

When did Jonah make the prediction of Jeroboam II's military success--before he was sent to Nineveh or afterwards? Though the end of the book of Jonah leaves the reader wondering how he responded to God's rebuking question (see Jon. 4:9-11), it is your writer's understanding that Jonah responded favorably. And so it is possible that his prediction referred to in our present account could have been made even after his trip to Nineveh.

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where is Hamath?
3. What is "the sea of the plain"?
4. When might Jonah have made this prediction in relation to his going to Nineveh?

## 84. Amaziah Becomes Judah's Second Assassinated King

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 14:17-20 and II Chron. 25:25-28.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Amaziah outlives Jehoash by fifteen years.
  - b. He is assassinated by his servants.

### COMMENTS

Jehoash may have defeated Amaziah and exercised authority over him, but both II Kings and II Chron. take note that

Amaziah outlived Jehoash by fifteen years somewhat in the spirit of Eccl. 9:4 ("A living dog is better than a dead lion"). And Amaziah might live longer except that some of his servants assassinate him. II Chron. notes that things have gone bad for him ever since he turned away from following Jehovah in the matter of the Edomite idols. Many since Amaziah have found the same thing--that life can be beset with reverses by forsaking God. Discovering the plot against him, he flees to his great fortification at Lachish on his southwestern border, but it does him no good, for he is killed there and returned to Jerusalem for burial.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. How many years does Amaziah outlive his rival Jehoash?
3. When do things begin going bad for Amaziah?
4. Tell of his sad end.

### 85. A Powerful King Takes over in the South

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Chron. 26:1,3-5; II Kings 15:1-4.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. In the midst of Jeroboam II's long reign Uzziah comes to Jerusalem's throne at the young age of sixteen.
  - b. He will reign for fifty-two years.
  - c. Through a prophet Zechariah he seeks Jehovah and prospers.

## COMMENTS

Remember that an assassination in Judah is different from an assassination in Israel. In Israel it brings a new dynasty to the throne. Not so in Judah. The assassinated king's son will succeed him. So an assassination in Judah is not motivated by some aspirant-to-the-throne but by people dissatisfied with the condition of things under the existing ruler. So Amaziah's son Azariah (or Uzziah as he is better known) is crowned the new king. In the North Jeroboam II is in the twenty-seventh year of his forty-one reign. With Uzziah's long

reign of fifty-two years both kingdoms enjoy a long stretch of political stability. "Smith" in his excellent commentary on I and II Kings calls it "the heyday period", and attributes it principally to the Assyrians being in a period of military dormancy. Helping Uzziah also is the blessing of God realized because he is influenced to do good by the prophetic visions of one Zechariah. Do not confuse this prophet with the post-exile prophet by the same name who authored the book of Zachariah. Their dates are far apart. We have no details about the Zechariah of Uzziah's day.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Comment on the different motives for assassinations in Israel and Judah.
3. What is Judah's new king's two names?
4. How long will he reign?
5. How far along is Jeroboam II in his long forty-one year reign?
6. How does "Smith" account for this long period of political stability in both Kingdoms?
7. What prophet strengthens Judah's new king?

### 86. Uzziah's Reign is Prosperous for Judah

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 14:22 and II Chron. 26:6-15.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. He regains the seaport Elath on the Red Sea.
  - b. He subdues neighbor nations that fear him and pay tribute to him.
  - c. He fortifies Jerusalem.
  - d. He is rich in livestock and agriculture.

## COMMENTS

Uzziah's long reign and success are results of his own doing and God's blessing. Recovering Elath on the Red Sea, the port that dates back to Solomon's reign, gives Judah a valuable connection with many parts of the world. His victories over the Philistines and other neighbor nations are reminiscent of David's wars and victories. Besides having a large army and able officers over it, he repairs Jerusalem's

wall, builds towers on the wall, and invents engines for shooting arrows and catapult stones. We do not know how large the stones are that they shot, but catapult stones to be seen today in the ruins of Masada and the Herodium are around the size of a bushel basket. Because he had livestock in various places, he digs many wells and builds many towers for guarding against marauders. Exalted with such power and prosperity, his name is understandably spread abroad throughout his world. His success is attributed to two sources: (1) "he strengthened himself exceedingly" (II Chron. 26:8); and (2) "he was marvelously helped, till he was strong" (v. 16). Will this success go to his head, or will he be able to handle it spiritually? We shall see.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. What does the recovering of Elath mean to Judah?
3. Tell of his military set-up and record.
4. Tell of his livestock and agricultural pursuits.
5. What two things account for his greatness?

### 87. Israel's Last Powerful King Dies

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 14:28,29.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jeroboam II's exploits are recorded in the chronicles of the kings of Israel.
  - b. His death terminates his long reign.

## COMMENTS

We might wonder why Inspiration has recorded so little about Jeroboam II's long reign. Because little of it is related to the spiritual life of Israel. And yet in our text's brief summary of his reign, mention is made of his military exploits. Though his reign is one of strength, Israel will begin its final decline after his death.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.

- Why is so little recorded about Jeroboam II's reign even though it was a long reign?
- What of Israel's political condition after his death?

## 88. Time Runs out on the Jehu Dynasty

### ASSIGNMENTS

- Read II Kings 15:8-12.
- Study the event until you can tell it.
- Memorize these facts about the event:
  - Zechariah succeeds his father Jeroboam II.
  - He is assassinated after ruling only six months.
  - He is the last of the Jehu dynasty to rule, fulfilling God's promise to Jehu.

### COMMENTS

You will recall that God raised up Jehu to wipe out Baal-worship in Israel and to wipe out the wicked house of Ahab. For this God promised that he and his offspring would occupy the throne of Israel for four more generations (II Kings 10:30). The following tabulation will show that God has kept His promise and that the Jehu dynasty rules Israel for many years:

Jehu - 28 years

Jehoahaz - 17 years

Jehoash - 16 years

Jeroboam II - 41 years

Zechariah - ½ year

The assassination of Zechariah will bring a new dynasty to power. The combined fact that he is the final generation promised to Jehu and that he gets to reign only one-half year indicates God is ready to remove that family from power. But it has gotten to rule Israel for around one-half of Israel's entire history, from its beginning in 933 B.C. to its fall in 721 B.C.

### QUESTIONS

- Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
- What promise had God made to Zechariah's ancestor Jehu?
- Why had God made such a promise to Jehu?
- How is Zechariah's reign terminated?
- Approximately how much of Israel's history does the Jehu dynasty rule?

## 89. Another Assassination within a Month Rocks Israel

### ASSIGNMENTS

- Read II Kings 15:13-18.
- Study the event until you can tell it.
- Memorize these facts about the event:
  - Zechariah's assassin (Shallum) gets to rule only one month before he is assassinated by Menahem.
  - Menahem is a wicked, brutal ruler.

### COMMENTS

These are turbulent times for Israel following the death of their powerful Jeroboam II. Shallum has assassinated Zechariah after the latter has reigned only six months, and now Shallum is assassinated by Menahem after Shallum has reigned only one month. There is no question but what Shallum is reaping what he has sown. Things quiet down for a time as Menahem rules for the next ten years. When the inhabitants of the Israelite city Tiphshah refuse to recognize his rule, Shallum smites it most violently as is indicated by his ripping open its pregnant women and letting the fetuses fall out on the ground. Through all this Uzziah continues his quiet reign in Judah.

### QUESTIONS

- Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
- What is an instance of Menahem's brutality?

## 90. Uzziah's Success Goes to His Head

### ASSIGNMENTS

- Read II Chron. 26:16-21.
- Study the event until you can tell it.
- Memorize these facts about the event:
  - King Uzziah's heart is filled with pride, and he goes into the temple to burn incense.
  - The high priest Zechariah and eighty priests are unsuccessful in their attempt to forbid the king's action.
  - Uzziah is angry because of their rebuke.
  - While yet angry, God strikes Uzziah with leprosy.

- The priests banish the leprous king from the temple.
- He is a leper until his death, living in a separate house while his son Jotham reigns co-regent with him.

### COMMENTS

God has made Uzziah a very strong, prosperous ruler. But there is danger in strength and prosperity (Deut. 8:7-14). It is sad that if God blesses us too much, we are not able to take it in stride and be thankful. So with Uzziah: "When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction," reminding us of the proverb, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). Uzziah, though, is not the first to try to usurp the priesthood. In the Korah, Dathan, and Abiram insurrection against Moses and Aaron, there were two hundred and fifty men who wanted to burn incense, and when they died, fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, at which time Moses was instructed to have their censers beaten into a single plate and fastened to the altar of incense as a warning against anyone not of the priestly tribe attempting to burn incense (Num. 16:36-40). Eccl. 4:13 speaks of an "Old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished", and King Uzziah fits the description, for he disregards all the words and warnings of the high priest and the other eighty priests, using his kingly authority to do what he has determined to do. To the day of his death several years later he will regret that he did not listen to these warnings, for God immediately smites him with leprosy—and he is finished! He hastens to get out of the temple, thoroughly humbled (reminiscent of what Nebuchadnezzar said in Dan. 4:37). Having exalted himself, he is now humbled of God, a divine principle older than Jesus' teaching on it later in Luke 18:14; Matt. 23:12; Luke 14:11. And the priests rise up and thrust him out. Whatever satisfaction he has had in pushing past the objecting priests is momentary—not so with the punishment

for it. He will remain a leper every moment of the rest of his thirteen years. As he idly sits in his separate house while his son Jotham rules, he can only regret what he has done and brought upon himself that God chooses not to reverse.

Here is an interesting sidelight from Uzziah's time. Amos was a prophet in Uzziah's day, and the book of Amos begins "two years before the earthquake". There was a great earthquake sometime during the reign of Uzziah, according to Zech. 14:5 ("Ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah"). "Through the years the Jews have held that this earthquake was sent because of God's wrath against King Uzziah for entering the temple to burn incense" (from your author's work, "Commentary Studies in 5 Minor Prophets").

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 6 memory-facts for this event.
2. Can most people be prosperous without becoming proud in some way?
3. Who earlier than Uzziah tried to burn incense when they were not priests?
4. What is on the altar of incense to warn Uzziah not to attempt to offer incense?
5. How many priests try to keep the king from burning incense?
6. With what does God smite the king?
7. For how long will he be thus afflicted?

### 91. Assyrian Invasion Begins Israel's Downfall

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 15:19,20.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Assyria withdraws after being paid one thousand talents of silver.
  - b. Menahem collects the money from wealthy men in Israel.

#### COMMENTS

God has borne long with the perpetual calf-worship inaugurated by the Northern Kingdom's first king Jeroboam. Now that Menahem has assassinated Shallum and taken the throne, God will begin the weakening process that will eventually

put an end to the Northern Kingdom. It would appear that Assyria under their ruler Pul (also known as Tilgath-pileser III) takes advantage of the political unrest in Israel to come against Menahem in 734 B.C. Menahem's offer to pay Assyria a thousand talents averts Israel's destruction and causes Assyria to confirm him as ruler in the North. This sizeable sum is raised by Menahem's levying a special tax (fifty silver shekels) of the kingdom's wealthy men. What was the force that caused Pul to accept the pay-off and spare Israel? If we can parallel this invasion with Amos's first vision in Amos 7:1-3 (and we can in view of Amos's series of three visions in chapters 7 and 8 predicting the three Assyrian invasions that will spell doom to the Northern Kingdom), then it is the prophet Amos's prayer, "O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small" (Amos 7:2). Result? The next verse says, "The LORD repented for this" (changed the decree--D.G.H.): "it shall not be, saith the Lord" (final destruction is temporarily called off--D.G.H.).

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. What Assyrian ruler comes against Israel?
3. What does Menahem do that delays the destruction of the Northern Kingdom?
4. Where does Menahem get the money?
5. What is Amos's connection with this invasion?

### 92. Death Ends Menahem's Ten-Year Rule

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 15:21,22.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Like the reigns of the other kings of the North, the happenings of Menahem's reign are recorded in the secular chronicles of Israel.
  - b. Menahem's death appears to be of natural causes.

#### COMMENTS

Since the only record of Menahem we have is this II Kings account, we know nearly nothing about his

rule. Since his son rather than an assassin follows him to the throne, we conclude he died a natural death.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why do we know so little about Menahem's rule?
3. Why do we conclude that Menahem died a natural death?

### 93. Pekahiah is Israel's New Ruler

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 15:23,24.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Pekahiah becomes king.
  - b. Uzziah (Azariah) is still king in Judah.
  - c. Pekahiah continues calf-worship.

#### COMMENTS

The leprous Uzziah of Judah is in the closing years of his life when Pekahiah becomes king in Israel. He will have a short reign. He too will follow the calf-worship of all previous Northern Kingdom rulers. Nothing significant happens in his brief reign as not one event is chronicled in the Sacred Record.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What of significance happens during his reign?

### 94. Another Assassination in the North

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 15:25-28.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. In the fiftieth year of Uzziah of Judah Pekah kills Pekahiah and takes his throne in Israel.
  - b. He is flanked by fifty men of Gilead in the take-over.

#### COMMENTS

The disobedient Northern Kingdom is not to know peace and quiet very long between assassinations



and take-overs. Now after Pekahiah has reigned only two years, he is assassinated in the tower of his Samaria palace by one of his captains, Pekah, helped by a fifty-man band from Gilead. This latter fact is sometimes taken to suggest that Pekah is from that part of the kingdom east of the Jordan. Argob and Arieah, who are evidently killed along with the king, might be royal guards of the king who were greatly outnumbered by Pekah's host. The many-year reign of Uzziah in the South is still going on.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where does the assassination take place?
3. Who could Argob and Arieah be?
4. Where may Pekah be from?

### 95. Judah's Second Longest Reign Ends

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Chron. 26:22,23.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Uzziah's death concludes his fifty-two years as king.
  - b. Isaiah compiles a book on Uzziah's life.

#### COMMENTS

The great prophet Isaiah is called to be a prophet this year that Uzziah dies (Isa 6:1ff). Though Uzziah's presumptuous act has removed him from kingly activities, there was much that was great about the first thirty-eight years of his reign, and Isaiah writes a story of his reign in recognition of Uzziah's greatness. His death concludes the longest reign in either kingdom up until now (fifty-two Years), but there will be one yet longer in the future (Manasseh's with fifty-five year reign). It appears from the text that though he is buried in the royal burial plot, he is not buried close to the others because of being a leper.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.

2. In what year of Uzziah's life is Isaiah called to be a prophet?
3. How many years of Uzziah's reign were very eventful?
4. Who compiles a record of Uzziah's reign?
7. Tell of his burial.

### 96. The Godly Jotham Prospers in the South

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 15:32-35; II Chron. 27:1-6.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Though Jotham does what is right, there are still some vestiges of idolatry.
  - b. God's blessing enables him to build and fortify both in Jerusalem and in the mountainous and forest regions of Judah as well as subjugate Ammon.

#### COMMENTS

Ever since Jotham's father Uzziah became leprous, Jotham has been the functioning monarch in the South. Now that Uzziah has died after thirteen long years of isolation, the Bible account returns to tell us about Jotham and his reign. It is said that he does what is right in the eyes of the Lord as his father had done before him, but it expressly mentions that he does not go into the temple as his father had done. It is folly indeed not to learn from the obvious mistakes of others. Because he is a good king, even though the people are still persisting in high-place worship, God helps prosper him in the things he builds. Whether in Jerusalem, where he builds the high gate of the temple and on the wall south of the temple area (Ophel), or in the mountains and forests of Judah, where he fortifies, wherever you look you can see God is with Jotham. In war with the Ammonites east of the Jordan he is victorious so that for three successive years they pay him tribute money. Again it is the case of a godly king who becomes mighty through the blessing of God, and that because he himself chooses to be godly. The same choice and blessings are still ours today.

#### Questions

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. When does Jotham actually begin functioning as Judah's king?
3. How is the character of Jotham described?
4. What does he not do what his father had done?
5. Tell of his building operations.
6. Whom does he defeat in war?

### 97. Reverses in Jotham's Last Years

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 15:36-38.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. In Jotham's last days God sends Syria against him.
  - b. Jotham dies.

#### COMMENTS

Jotham has been a good king, but since it says God sends a coalition of Syria under Rezin and Israel under Pekah against him in his last days, Jotham has done something to displease God, for God does not afflict any of His people without a just reason. However, there is not the slightest hint in our text as to what evil Jotham has done. The war that begins in Jotham's day will escalate into a greater war under his son Ahaz (see later event). Thus, on a down-graph does Jotham's life and reign come to an end.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why do Syria and Israel come against Judah?
3. What has Jotham done to cause this?

### 98. A Wicked King Takes over in Judah

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 16:1-4; II Chron. 28:1-4.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jotham's son succeeds him in the seventeenth year of Pekah's reign in Israel.
  - b. The new king Ahaz is wicked (idolatrous) like the kings of Israel rather than godly like his ancestor David.

## COMMENTS

**P**ekah, the king of Israel who troubled Judah in the final days of Jotham, is on the throne when twenty-year-old Ahaz succeeds his deceased father. Ahaz was only three when Pekah became king in the North. If we would change the last letter of Ahaz's name to "b", we would have the name of "Ahab", and the terrible idolatrous practices of Ahaz's reign make him more like Ahab and the other kings of the North than like his venerated ancestor David. Reference to making his son pass through the fire refers to his worship of the Ammonites' fire-god Moloch. We note too his patronage of Baal, the idolatrous religion reminiscent of Ahab and Jezebel.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Who is reigning in the North when Ahaz begins in the South?
3. How old is Ahaz when he becomes king?
4. Ahaz is actually more like the kings of \_\_\_\_\_ than like his ancestor \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Causing his son to pass through the fire in the worship of the Ammonite god \_\_\_\_\_.
6. What other heathen deity is mentioned as being worshiped by Ahaz?

**99. Assyria Again Invades Israel**

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 15:29.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Tiglath-pileser of Assyria takes several of Israel's northern cities.
  - b. Some captives are taken to Assyria.

## COMMENTS

**A**s you may recall, Assyria has already invaded Israel in the reign of Menahem (II Kings 15:19,20). Bear in mind Assyria is the dominant power of the time, and the only reason it is not included in Daniel's listing of world-powers from his day to the setting up of the kingdom of God is that Assyria flourished prior to Daniel's time. It is sometime during Pekah's twenty-year

reign ("Pfeiffer" says in 733 B.C., one year after the first invasion) that Assyria again invades the North, and again under Tiglath-pileser (he was called by his personal name Pul in the earlier invasion). In his first invasion he settled for a large payment of money, but this time he takes away some of Israel's territory--the northern part comprising the cities Ijon, Abel-Bethmaachah, Janoah, Kedesh, and Hazor, plus Naphtali's allotment, Galilee, and the land of Gilead east of the Jordan River. And just as the prophet Amos envisioned the first invasion, so does his second vision (the vision of fire, Amos 7:4) envision this invasion in which "a part" is eaten up. In Amos's vision he prays for Israel (Amos 7:5), and God keeps Tiglath-pileser from totally destroying Israel at this time (Amos 7:6).

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. What Assyrian ruler invades Israel again?
3. What year is this?
4. What damage does he do?
5. What keeps him from totally ending the Northern Kingdom with this invasion?

**100. A Series of Military Struggles Involving Judah**

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 16:5-18; II Chron. 28:5-21; Isa. 7:1--8:8.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Damascus unsuccessfully besiege Ahaz at Jerusalem.
  - b. After Rezin captures Elath, he and Pekah return and successfully defeat Ahaz.
  - c. Ahaz worships Damascus's gods.
  - d. Pekah and Rezin threaten Jerusalem again.
  - e. Isaiah assures Ahaz that Jerusalem will soon be rid of both opposing kings.
  - f. Ahaz hires Assyria to help him.
  - g. Rezin has to withdraw from Jerusalem when Assyria attacks Damascus (Rezin is killed).
  - h. While Ahaz is at Damascus, he sees an altar that becomes the model for one he has built at Jerusalem.

- i. Ahaz is besieged by the Edomites and the Philistines.
- j. Though he sends money to Tiglath-pileser to come help him, he doesn't.

## COMMENTS

**T**he blending of the II Kings, II Chron., and Isa. accounts into an exact chronological sequence is not easy nor something about which your writer is absolutely certain and dogmatic. The "memory-facts" listing above, at best, is a studious attempt to create a probable order of events. With Assyria rising to such prominence, Israel and Syria, who have off-and-on been involved in hostilities against each other, now band together in an attempt to defend themselves against any Assyrian attack. Because Ahaz evidently does not join them, probably fearing they will eventually lose to Assyria, the two kings attack him but at first cannot overcome him. Giving up for the time, Rezin of Syria takes his army down to Elath, Judah's port on the Red Sea, and takes it. Afterwards he and Pekah resume their war with Ahaz, and this time they are successful, killing one hundred twenty thousand in one day, including three men very close to the king of Judah. They also take many captives. But God sends a prophet to forbid the Northern Kingdom to keep the captives it has taken, and Israel restores them to Judah. Because Damascus has been victorious over Judah, Ahaz foolishly begins to worship its gods, hoping they will help him in the future as they have supposedly helped Damascus against him. In time Rezin and Pekah return to Jerusalem, this time to the non-cooperative Ahaz with a ruler of their own choosing (Tabael), probably to assure Judah's joining them against Assyria. With their threatening to take away Ahaz, who though wicked is at least the living representative of the line of David on the throne, God wants to use the occasion as an opportunity to show Ahaz He is the true God by sending the prophet Isaiah to him, assuring Ahaz God will soon rid his land of both his oppressors.

When Ahaz refuses God's offer of a sign, God says He will give the house of David (not Ahaz) a sign that David's line will always be in power. Jeremiah made the same promise: "Thus saith the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel" (Jer. 33:17). When Jesus, the "son of David", was born of a virgin (see Matt. 1:18-23), the sign came to pass, and we can be assured of Christ's continued rule (Luke 1:31-33). Ahaz, though, has his own program for the deliverance of Jerusalem; hiring Tiglath-pileser of Assyria to come against his opponents. Tiglath-pileser and Ahaz's going to Damascus to meet him is in conformity with the Assyrian ruler's practice of having his vassals come to him and personally bow down in recognition of his authority over them. While in Damascus Ahaz sees an altar that greatly appeals to him, and he has one like it made for Jerusalem. God has kept the line of David on the throne of Jerusalem even though He is not pleased with Ahaz's doings. He, therefore, brings the Edomites from the south and the Philistines from the southwest against him, and Ahaz again turns to Tiglath-pileser for help. Tiglath-pileser comes all right, but instead of helping Ahaz, he further distresses him, only adding to his military woes.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 10 memory-facts for this event.
2. Is it easy or difficult to harmonize the several accounts at this time into a dogmatic chronological sequence?
3. Why are Israel and Syria probably allied together at this time when they have usually been antagonistic to each other?
4. What is the probable reason for their attacking Ahaz at this time?
5. What are Rezin and Pekah planning to do if they defeat Jerusalem?
6. What will be the fulfillment of the virgin-birth prophecy of Isa. 7:14?

### 101. The North's Last King Takes Over

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 15:30; 17:1,2.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:

- a. Hoshea assassinates Pekah and takes over in the North.
- b. He is evil but not as bad as the kings before him.

#### COMMENTS

God has seen that Rezin is slain, and now Pekah gets what's coming to him. Hoshea kills him and rules in his place. Though he is said to be evil but not as evil as the kings before him, the ten-tribe kingdom of the North will come to an end nine years later.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. How long will Hoshea reign?

### 102. Hezekiah Becomes King in Judah

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 16:19,20; 18:1,2; II Chron. 28:26--29:1.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Ahaz dies, but they do not bury him in the sepulchres of the kings.
  - b. Ahaz's twenty-five-year-old son Hezekiah begins his twenty-nine-year reign.

#### COMMENTS

When a king of Judah's reign was marked by severe military reverses, it was customary not to honor him with the normal burial of its kings. Because of the political weakness the kingdom has suffered under Ahaz, he is not entombed among the kings of Judah. As is customary in Judah, a son of a deceased monarch succeeds him on the throne--this time Hezekiah.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Tell of the burial of Ahaz.

### 103. Hoshea Pays Tribute to Assyria

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 17:3.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Shalmaneser of Assyria invades Israel.
  - b. Hoshea pays tribute to him.

#### COMMENTS

Israel has been paying tribute to the Assyrian Tiglath-pileser. Now that he is dead, Hoshea tests the sovereignty of Tiglath-pileser's successor Shalmaneser. Thus Shalmaneser comes against Israel and again forces it into a tributary position to the power of Assyria.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Who succeeds Tiglath-pileser as ruler of Assyria?
3. What causes him to come against Israel?
4. What is the result of his coming?

### 104. Revival under Judah's New King

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 18:1-6; II Chron. 29:1-36.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Hezekiah reverses the policies of his father, immediately proceeding to purify the temple of all idolatry and to restore the temple services.
  - b. One of the items of idolatry he destroys is the brazen serpent Moses made in the wilderness because they are worshipping it.

#### COMMENTS

Like father, like son?" Not always--surely not in Ahaz and Hezekiah's case. Ahaz was wholly idolatrous; his son Hezekiah is just the opposite (a Jehovah-worshiper). He departs from the ways of his father (idolatry) not because he is a rebel but because he is wise. He said, "Our fathers have trespassed...Wherefore the wrath of the Lord was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he delivered them to trouble". Possibly the low esteem held for his father in Judah's not burying him among the kings

has helped Hezekiah in his thinking. From the very outset of his reign (the first month of his first year) he begins his much needed reforms. We are surprised to hear again of the brazen serpent of Moses' day (Num. 21:8) some eight hundred years ago. Now because the people are worshipping it, Hezekiah has it broken in pieces also. Since Ahaz's administration discontinued temple service (II Chron. 28:21), King Hezekiah restores the priests to their temple roles. After the temple and its vessels are cleansed, the king and his rulers come up to the temple to see that the temple sacrifices and music are restored and to rejoice. Some today actually blame David for the introduction of instrumental music into the temple, but II Chron. 29:25 says he and his seer Gad and the prophet Nathan introduced it at the commandment of the Lord.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why does Hezekiah depart from the idolatrous ways of his father?
3. About how many years has the brazen serpent been around?
4. Was the introduction of instrumental music into the temple service of human or divine origin?

### 105. The Great Passover under Hezekiah

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Chron. 30:1-27.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Hezekiah sends messengers throughout Israel inviting them to come to the Passover.
  - b. While some in Israel ridicule the messengers, others come to the feast.
  - c. It is the greatest Passover since the days of King Solomon.

#### COMMENTS

**H**ezekiah does what Jeroboam I feared Rehoboam would do: get the people of the North to attend the feasts at Jerusalem (see I Kings 12:26-28). Hezekiah not only wants them to attend the Passover, but he recognizes

that their fathers have lived in disobedience that has been bringing God's wrath down upon them, and he sees some hope of God's mercy for them yet if they will again become obedient to Jehovah (v. 6-9). The "posts" who are sent out are messengers (our words "postman" and "post office" are related to their word "post"). Hezekiah sets a good example in not only wanting to be right himself but in wanting to help others be right also.

You will notice that this Passover is to be in the second month of the year instead of the usual first month. Purifying the temple in the first month of the year (II Chron. 29:17,18) was such a big work that it left no time for the priests themselves to become suitably purified to hold it at the usual time. Hezekiah remembers the provision God made in Num. 9:10,11 whereby the Passover can be observed in the second month instead of the first; thus, they plan it for the second month.

His messengers are variously treated as they go through the tribes of the North. Can't you hear some of the Northerners ridicule the invitation? But that doesn't make the messengers wrong and the ridiculers right any more than mocking today makes the mockers right and believers wrong (see II Pet. 3:3,4). The faithful messengers continue their mission, and they are rewarded by those who accept the invitation. Why are only five tribes mentioned as attending? "Barnes" explains: "Two (Reuben and Gad) are in captivity. One (Dan) was absorbed into Judah. Simeon and Naphtali, which alone remained seem to have been more than ordinarily idolatrous (II Chron. 34:6)."

So strongly does Hezekiah feel about having those of the North take part in this Passover that he invites them even though they will not have time to purify themselves ahead of time. In consequence he prays about their case: "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary." "And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah." So

happy are the people of the North who have for so long been deprived of this privilege and the people of the South who have received them and observed this seven-day feast together that they stay on for another seven days. It is the greatest Passover since the days of King Solomon, for following his death the kingdom was divided.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What is the gist of the message Hezekiah sends to those in the Northern Kingdom?
3. Do his messengers let the mistreatment by some stop them from fulfilling their mission?
4. Why is this Passover being observed in the second month of the year instead of the first?
5. Why does Hezekiah pray a special prayer for those of the North who take part in the Passover?
6. What indicates the extreme joy of those observing this Passover?
7. What factor makes this the greatest Passover observance since Solomon was king?

### 106. Further Revival under Hezekiah

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Chron. 31:1-21.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. The reaction against idolatry that has been in Jerusalem is now extended throughout the Southern Kingdom and into the Northern.
  - b. Hezekiah organizes the priests and Levites and appoints his own burnt offerings.
  - c. He reinstates God's system for the support of the priests and Levites.

#### COMMENTS

**H**ere is another entire chapter devoted to King Hezekiah. Some kings did so little to take note of that only a few verses were devoted to them whereas several chapters are devoted to the worthy reign of Judah's present king.

As the prolonged Passover comes to an end the rejuvenated worshipers go forth from Jerusalem to destroy idolatrous places throughout the Southern Kingdom and also in the Northern Kingdom. "Then

all the children of Israel returned, every man to his possession, into their own cities."

David divided the tribe of Levi into its three sections: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. He further broke down the priestly work into sections (see I Chron. 23 and 24). These were known as "courses". John the Baptist's father was a priest. As a part of the "course" of Abijah, it was his "lot" to burn incense (Luke 1:5,9). Hezekiah reinstates this system of service for the priests and Levites.

He is going to call on the people to bring of their substance for the temple and those serving in it, so he sets a good example by setting aside his portion also. The people seeing their king so generous, they do likewise, and it is a surprising abundance that they bring. When the king sees the heaps of things brought, he can hardly believe it either. As a result he arranges for proper storage of these items in designated temple chambers and appoints officers to be in charge.

The chapter closes with a beautiful report of Hezekiah's good work. In some ways he reminds your writer of the good work that will be undertaken and done by Nehemiah some years later.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why is so much information recorded about Hezekiah's reign?
3. How generous are the people in their giving?
4. What arrangements does Hezekiah make for taking care of their offerings?

### 107. God Blesses Hezekiah and Judah

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 18:7,8.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Hezekiah is able to rebel against paying tribute to Assyria.
  - b. He also is victorious over Philistia.

#### COMMENTS

The good reign of Hezekiah shows that good leadership can arise when situations are very bad. In fact, most of history's great leaders have come on the scene when it was very dark. Man is not always faithful to God who is good to him, but God never fails to be faithful to anyone who is good to Him—thus, "The Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth."

Hezekiah's father Ahaz was tributary to Assyria. As it is now so evident that God is prospering Hezekiah, he refuses to continue paying this tribute money. This bold act is based on his great trust in his God Jehovah. It is possible that he does so when the new Assyrian king Shalmaneser becomes ruler. God also enables Hezekiah to smite the neighboring Philistines decisively. Judah truly has a great king in Hezekiah.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. How does Hezekiah's case encourage courageous leadership in times that are dark?
3. When did Judah begin paying tribute to Assyria?
4. When does Hezekiah probably rebel against Assyria?

### 108. The Northern Kingdom is Topped by Assyria

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 17:3-23; II Kings 18:9-12.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Hoshea who earlier submitted to Assyria's tribute demands now rebels and calls on Egypt for help.
  - b. Assyria takes Samaria and Israel after a three-year siege.
  - c. With its deporting of the Israelites the Northern Kingdom falls.

#### COMMENTS

Several Bible verses speak of the "forbearance" and the "longsuffering" of God--like Rom. 3:25; Rom. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9; I Pet. 3:20. While it was God's will that ten tribes be broken off from Solomon's family, it was

not His will that the newly formed kingdom be worshipers of Dan and Bethel's golden calves and of various other forms of idolatry from time to time. But God has borne with nineteen different kings (from Jeroboam to Hoshea) over a two hundred and twelve year period (from 933 B.C. to 721 B.C.), but He will bear with Israel no more. Amos's third vision (Amos 7:7-9) has God setting a plumbline in the midst of Israel, and Israel (like a wall about ready to topple) is beyond repair. God says, "I will not again pass by them any more," meaning His mercy has run out. And so when King Hoshea thinks he can get sufficient help from Egypt to throw off the tribute-yoke of Assyria, God uses Shalmaneser and the Assyrians to come against the Northern Kingdom in its final days. For three years the Assyrians surround the capital Samaria, awaiting its ultimate collapse when all food supplies within the city are depleted. There is a division of thought whether Shalmaneser died before the fall of the North or whether right after. Some say he died before so that the actual fall came under his successor Sargon. Most of the verses setting forth this event are explanations why God has brought this destruction to Israel. In harmony with the Assyrian policy, the ruler deports the citizenry out of the land so there is no possibility of a rebuilding and a later uprising on the part of the conquered. The captives are taken to the land of the Medes (several hundred miles to the north and east of Palestine). Mark 721 B.C. as the date for the fall of the Northern Kingdom.

There is a false theory known as the British-Israel or Anglo-Israel theory that has the British people the lineal offspring of the deported tribes. We commonly refer to them as the "ten lost tribes of Israel" because they are. They were deported as captives, sold as slaves into different nations, and as individuals they were absorbed into the nations to which they were sold. Besides, the prophet Amos two different times said the Northern Kingdom people were going to fall and would never rise again: "The

virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise" (Amos 5:2); "They shall fall, and never rise up again" (Amos 8:14).

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Through how many kings and over how many years has God borne with the Northern Kingdom and its idolatry?
3. In what year does the Northern Kingdom fall?
4. What prophet prophesied that it would never rise again?
5. To what land are the captives taken?

### 109. A New Nation Replaces Israel in Its Land

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 17:24.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. The Assyrian king brings captives of his from other nations to repopulate the area vacated by captive Israel.
  - b. This is the beginning of the Samaritan people.

## COMMENTS

This is the other half of the Assyrian victory policy--not only to take the defeated out of their native land to some other land but to bring in captives from other campaigns and settle them in the land just conquered and vacated. We commonly hear that the Samaritans were a half-breed nation composed of the offspring of these foreigners as they intermarried with the Israelites who remained in the land. The Biblical evidence that there were any amount of Israelites left in the land by the Assyrians is slight, making the Samaritans basically a mongrel people resulting from the intermarriage of the various peoples Assyria brings in.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. How is the vacant land of Israel repopulated?

### 110. The Conglomerate Religion of the New Nation

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 17:25-41.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Since this new people do not worship Jehovah, He sends lions among them that slew some of them.
  - b. They appeal to the king of Assyria to send an Israelite priest who can teach them what the "God of the land" would have them know.
  - c. A priest is sent back to teach them.
  - d. The result is adding some aspects of Jehovah-worship while each national group maintains its own previous god.

## COMMENTS

What will God do next? He has had Israel deported from the land that has been sacred because of God's promise to Abraham and His giving it to Abraham's seed after him. Naturally this heterogeneous group is not God's people and does not know nor obey God's laws. God wishes to go on record at the very beginning of their occupation of the land that things are not right. He sends hungry lions into the various cities. Various Old Testament passages indicate that lions are native to Palestine (Samson killed one that roared against him, David killed a lion in caring for his father's sheep, etc.). They were evidently no real problem while Israel was in the land, but now that God has a mission for the lions, He causes them to invade Samaritan towns so suddenly that in their superstitious belief in local or provincial gods, they conclude that the God of their area is highly displeased with them. It is on this background they request an Israelite priest to be sent back to teach them about the "God of the land". So one of the priests is selected and sent back to teach them the law of God. Can he be one hundred per cent correct

because of the degenerate religious conditions he has grown up in and operated in before Israel's fall? He succeeds at least in giving them the writings of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy), for the Samaritans to this day have those writings (altered here and there to fit their own set-up). But they do not take seriously the commandment that says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me ('in my presence'--D.G.H.)", for each nation continues with the worship of its own native god. We are surprised to read, "They feared Jehovah and served their own gods," until we stop to reflect that much the same can be said about our own American nation that affirms faith in God while serving its own gods of mammon and pleasure.

Having the writings of Moses we can see why the Samaritan woman said to Jesus, "We know that Messias cometh" (John 4:25) and why He appreciated the response given Him by her and her townspeople enough to spend a couple days with them (John 4:39-43). Later Philip (Acts 8:5) and Peter and John (Acts 8:25) preached in various places in Samaria, and Acts 8:12 and Acts 15:3 show that there came to be churches among the Samaritans.

Being mongrel by blood and apostate in religion we can see why Zerubbabel and the returning Jews will refuse to let them have a part in rebuilding the temple after the Captivity (Ezra 4:2,3), and the trouble between the two peoples will set in (Ezra 4:4) that will persist even to Jesus' day (John 4:9 and Luke 9:51-53).

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. What evidence do we have that there were lions in the land before we read of them here?
3. How much of the Old Testament do the Samaritans have?
4. How does this fact show up in the Samaritan woman at the well?
5. When does the hostility between the Samaritans and Jews begin?

## PART FOUR

### Judah's History after Israel's Fall

**This period, highlighted by the reigns of two godly kings (Hezekiah and Josiah), will be otherwise plagued by wicked and weak kings, resulting in Judah's "Babylonian Captivity".**



## 111. Sennacherib Attacks Judah's Fortified Cities

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 18:13; II Chron. 32:1; Isa. 36:1.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Sennacherib is the powerful king of Assyria.
  - b. He comes against Hezekiah's fortified cities (and will ultimately take them).

### COMMENTS

Because the prophet Isaiah is personally connected with this stretch of history in the reign of Hezekiah, we not only have the II Kings and II Chron. coverages but also an Isa. coverage.

It is now the fourteenth year of Hezekiah. He is nearly midway through his twenty-nine-year reign. It was in his sixth year that Samaria fell to the Assyrians (II Kings 18:10). According to archaeology it was Sargon II who brought the final destruction to the Northern Kingdom. Sennacherib, who is now ruling in Assyria, is Sargon II's son. A visit to the Ancient Assyria display in the British Museum in London will convince anybody that Sennacherib was indeed one of Assyria's powerful kings. In coming against Judah he hopes to do to the Southern Kingdom what his father did to the Northern. Before attacking the capital (Jerusalem) he attacks Hezekiah's defense cities (Lachish, Libnah, and others).

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. How long has it been since the Northern Kingdom fell to Assyria?
3. Who is the present Assyrian king?
4. What cities is he attacking?

## 112. Hezekiah Becomes Deathly III

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 20:1-11; Isa. 38:1-22.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.

3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Hezekiah is told to prepare to die.
  - b. God regards his tears and prayers and promises to add fifteen years to his life.
  - c. God also promises to deliver Jerusalem out of the hand of Sennacherib.
  - d. Hezekiah asks for and receives a special sign.

### COMMENTS

It is arbitrary on the student's part just when he thinks Hezekiah's sickness takes place. Both II Kings and Isa. devote several chapters to Sennacherib's case before giving attention to the king's severe sickness. In telling of it both accounts merely says, "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death," leaving us to decide just at what point of time during Sennacherib's invasion it takes place. (II Kings 38:6 does confirm the fact that it occurs during the Sennacherib ordeal.)

Neither of the accounts affords us any information about the purpose of the king's sickness. If it is not purposeful on God's part, then it is a natural sickness such as can occur to any of us at any time.

At thirty-nine Hezekiah is not reconciled to the thought of dying. God who answers prayer (Matt. 7:7), and especially earnest prayer (Jas. 5:16), is touched with Hezekiah's tears and petition and through His prophet Isaiah sends word that He will add fifteen years to his life. His will not be a miraculous healing (instantaneous) but providential such as God grants us (in a matter of days and by the use of means--a fig poultice). This account demonstrates that God is not against medical means but actually uses them to bring about man's cure--something to be thankful for.

In that day of open communication with God through prophets it was not uncommon for one to ask for a sign (recall Moses, Gideon, Zacharias, Mary, and others--Exo.4:1-9; Judg. 6:36-40; Luke 1:18; 1:34) such as Hezekiah does. God's sign will be that the shadow on King Ahaz's sun dial will either go forward or return backward ten degrees.

Either way will be adequate, but Hezekiah considers it an even greater sign if the shadow reverses itself. With God no work of power is impossible (Luke 1:37), for He can do more than we ask or think (Eph. 3:20), so He grants Hezekiah's request.

The thoughts about all this which Hezekiah puts in writing (Isa. 38:9-20) form a precious piece of literature. Study it carefully.

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. How do we know Hezekiah's sickness takes place during Sennacherib's invasion of Judah?
3. What do we know about the purpose of the king's sickness?
4. How old is Hezekiah at this time?
5. What is his response to the message that he will die from this sickness?
6. What good news now comes to Hezekiah?
7. By what means does he get well?
8. What other people in the Bible asked for signs?
9. What sign does God give the king to assure him that he will get well?

## 113. Hezekiah Receives Visitors from Babylon

### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 20:12-19; Isa. 39:1-8.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. The king of Babylon sends congratulations on Hezekiah's recovery.
  - b. Hezekiah shows them his possessions of treasure and armor.
  - c. Isaiah foretells that all these treasures will one day be carried to Babylon.

### COMMENTS

Bear in mind that Babylon has not come into its great power and won't for nearly a hundred years. It, too, has to fear the present might of Assyria. It is thought that the purpose of the Babylonian embassy coming to Hezekiah is probably more political than personal endearment--that from this may come an alliance with Judah that will be to both nations' mutual benefit in resisting the aggression of Nineveh. If so, Hezekiah's showing them his possessions

and military equipment is to show them what he has to contribute to their alliance. But God has never been pleased with His kings depending on alliances rather than on Him, so He sends Isaiah to administer a rebuke and to tell Hezekiah that everything he has shown the men from Babylon will someday be carried off to Babylon. "Smith" wisely notes, "Here for the first time, it would seem, Babylon and not Assyria was identified as the true and ultimate enemy of Judah. It would be Babylon which would bring to fulfillment all the predictions of the prophets since the days of Moses concerning the deportation of the people of God and the destruction of the holy city." Hezekiah humbly accepts the rebuke and verdict. It may seem to us selfish of him to say, "Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?" yet there could be some of this in all of us as we acknowledge troubles that will probably overtake our nation sometime after we are dead and gone. From II Chron. 32:31 we see that God is watching Hezekiah's behavior during this visit and vs. 25, 26 indicate that Hezekiah is not really as grateful for his healing nor as humble before God afterwards as he should be. Therefore, He allows Sennacherib to continue his conquest in Judah and his threat to Jerusalem.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What is the stated purpose of the Babylonians' visit?
3. What might have been another purpose of their coming?
4. What does Hezekiah show them?
5. Does God like this?
6. What prediction does Isaiah make?
7. What is Hezekiah's reaction to the prediction?

### 114. Jerusalem Prepares to Withstand Assyria

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Chron. 32:2-8.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. He brings the city's water supply inside its walls.
  - b. He repairs the city wall and builds an additional wall.

- c. He increases their military supplies.
- d. He assures his captains that God will be with them against Assyria.

#### COMMENTS

It is but natural that Hezekiah and Jerusalem do all they can to prepare for the coming invasion by Sennacherib. It is a fearful time as the invader attacks the outlying fortified cities first, Jerusalem knowing this to be in preparation for his attacking it. Jerusalem's principal water supply is the great Gihon Spring just outside its east wall in the Kidron Valley. They decide to dig a tunnel from the spring through the ridge that parallels the east wall of the city, diverting the water through the new tunnel into the Pool of Siloam in the valley west of the ridge. This will put the city's water inside the city's wall rather than leaving it outside. Archaeologists have reopened this tunnel by removing the silt that had nearly filled it through the centuries, making it possible for one to carry a light and wade from the spring to the pool, a distance of a third of a mile. The two times your writer has done this, the depth of the water was different each time. From a study of the pick-marks on the tunnel's walls it can be seen that Hezekiah's men started at both ends and tunneled toward each other. At the completion of the job they chiseled information about the tunnel's digging on the tunnel's wall near the Siloam end. The inscription has been removed and is in the museum at Istanbul. In addition to the water supply, Hezekiah makes other preparations: walls, equipment, and appointing captains.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. The water of what spring does Hezekiah bring inside the city wall?
3. The tunnel ends at the Pool of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. How long is the water tunnel?
5. What other war preparations does Hezekiah make at Jerusalem?

### 115. Hezekiah Offers Assyria a Pay-Off

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 18:14-16.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Fearful of Sennacherib, Hezekiah asks what it will take for peace.
  - b. Sennacherib demands three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.
  - c. Hezekiah pays by giving him all the silver in the temple and palace and by removing the gold from the doors and pillars of the temple that he had previously put there.

#### COMMENTS

Chronological arrangements concerning this period of Hezekiah's reign are arbitrary and not at all easy nor certain. Hezekiah's showing all his treasures to the Babylonians has to precede this event when he uses them to pay off Sennacherib. (Of course, he will soon get them back at the defeat of Sennacherib so that ultimately they can be carried to Babylon.) The visitors from Babylon do not come until Hezekiah's recovery from his sickness. So we have the sickness, then the recovery, then the visitors, and sometime later this event.

Though Hezekiah is regarded as one of Judah's best kings, he still has some faults: his response to his recovery was not altogether pleasing to God; God did not like his pride over his treasures; and now his fear of Sennacherib is more manifest than his complete trust in God. Even before Sennacherib attacked his fortified cities, he defeated Tyre, Ashkelon, and Ekron, and now he is in Hezekiah's domain. Hezekiah's, "I have offended," may refer to some tribute he has failed to pay or to entering into an alliance against him. Has Hezekiah forgotten God's power to give victory to His people over their powerful enemies in the past? Is God weak today who was strong back there? Or is Hezekiah like Peter who started out well by walking on the water by faith but whose faith failed in the face of a grave circumstance? Luke

18:1 says we should pray and not faint. This is what Hezekiah should be doing, trusting God to take care of them instead of capitulating to the wicked enemy. With such divine help available he should not faint even in this day of adversity (see Prov. 24:10). Do you think God approves Hezekiah's taking money from the temple treasury and the gold from the temple's doors and pillars as well as his own treasure with which God has blessed him, and giving them to this foreign monarch? Of course, He doesn't. And will Sennacherib be satisfied with this payment? We shall see.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What cities has Sennacherib subdued before coming against Judah?
3. Really Hezekiah should be trusting \_\_\_\_\_ rather than fearing \_\_\_\_\_.

**116. Sennacherib Wants a Full Surrender**

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 18:17-27; II Chron. 32:9-16,26; Isa. 36:2-22.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Sennacherib dispatches three military leaders and soldiers to intimidate Hezekiah and Jerusalem.
  - b. From the valley floor they speak of the futility of thinking Jerusalem can resist Sennacherib, of trusting in Egyptian help, or of trusting in their God.
  - c. When Hezekiah's officers ask them not to speak in the language of the Jews, they deliberately speak so the common people can hear them and be fearful.
  - d. The people remain quiet, obeying Hezekiah's orders.

COMMENTS

**S**ennacherib is not content with the pay-off sent him by Hezekiah but sends a preliminary force to Jerusalem, hopefully to affect its surrender without a battle. To accomplish this the three leaders of the military

regiment loudly call to Hezekiah from the valley floor outside Jerusalem's wall. Hezekiah sends three of his own officials to see what they are saying. Their message to Hezekiah is three-fold: (1) don't trust in your own military strength; (2) don't trust in any help from weak Egypt; and (3) don't trust in God to deliver you out of my hand. They are correct in the first two—Hezekiah is not militarily strong enough to resist the great power of Assyria, and Egypt is not strong enough either. But they are wrong in bringing Hezekiah's God into the matter, especially in comparing Him with the pagan gods of other cities conquered by Sennacherib. When Hezekiah's officials try to get Rabshakeh to speak in Syrian instead of Jewish so the people cannot understand their conversation, he refuses, saying he wants them to hear what he is saying—so they will fear and be more willing to surrender than fight. So he continues his tirade, and the people do not say a word back to him, for Hezekiah has ordered them not to.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. Does Sennacherib settle for Hezekiah's payoff?
3. Whom does Sennacherib dispatch to Jerusalem?
4. What three-fold message does he send to Hezekiah?
5. Why does he not respect the request not to speak in the Jewish language?
6. What do the people answer him?

**117. The Prophet's Comforting Message**

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 19:1-7; Isa. 37:1-7.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Hezekiah goes into the temple and sends messengers to the prophet Isaiah, asking him to pray about their grave situation.
  - b. Through Isaiah God assures Hezekiah of the destruction of Sennacherib.

COMMENTS

**I**t is a fearful time for Hezekiah and Judah. Sennacherib has been crushing

all opposition in his way, Judah's outlying defense cities are falling to him, and Jerusalem is next on his list. Hezekiah has been a good king but should have trusted in God instead of sending Sennacherib the temple and palace treasures. But now that the pay-off is not working, what can he do but cast himself on the mercies of God even as he did when he was deathly sick? The one hope on which he stands is that Sennacherib has blasphemed God. Notice the four things in Hezekiah's message to Isaiah: (1) it is a day of "trouble"—that is apparent; (2) a day of "rebuke"—in their trouble he admits God is displeased with them; (3) "it is a day of blasphemy"—Sennacherib's statements; and (4) "the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth"—likely a proverb expressing human helplessness in a life-and-death situation. The king not only goes to the temple but calls on God's great prophet to pray who had earlier brought him a merciful message during his sickness-prayer. Immediately his messengers are sent back from Isaiah with the assurance God is going to take care of the blaspheming Sennacherib. What a comforting message to receive from God in such a dark hour!

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where does Hezekiah himself go at this time?
3. How does he describe the gravity of their situation to Isaiah?
4. What urgent request does he make to Isaiah?
5. What message does God send to Hezekiah?

**118. Another Threatening Message to Jerusalem**

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 19:8-37; II Chron. 32:17-22; Isa. 37:8-38.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Sennacherib is now warring against Libnah in Judah.
  - b. When Rabshakeh hears that the king of Ethiopia is coming against them, he sends a quick letter to Hezekiah, hoping for his surrender.

- c. Hezekiah spreads the letter out before the Lord in the temple and prays a great prayer.
- d. Isaiah again sends word to the king of the coming destruction of Sennacherib, of Jerusalem's deliverance, and of Judah's prospective future.
- e. Sennacherib's mighty army is smitten with death during the night, and he returns to his land where he is later assassinated by his own sons while worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch.

### COMMENTS

When Sennacherib's officials return to him from Jerusalem, they find he has left Lachish (having defeated this great stronghold) and is now attacking Libnah (another important stronghold not far from Lachish). But he cannot bring to Sennacherib that Hezekiah has surrendered to his intimidation. Hearing the king of Ethiopia has marched against him, Sennacherib has to march against him before going against Jerusalem. But he sends a letter to Jerusalem urging its surrender while going against the Ethiopians whom he routs. The letter contains the same type of message as Rabshakeh delivered on his previous trip to Jerusalem. Even though Isaiah had assured Hezekiah God was going to take care of the blasphemous Sennacherib, the king still regards the threatening letter enough that he takes it to the temple where he spreads it out before the Lord as he prays about it. God is pleased that the king talks his problems over with Him, and He sends a very elaborate message to him through the prophet Isaiah concerning the overthrow of Sennacherib and the complete deliverance of his kingdom from him. "He will not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it," and he doesn't, for on that very night his total army is smitten with death—one hundred eighty five thousand soldiers—and he goes back to Assyria without either his army or his pride. When it says, "He dwelt at

Nineveh," it means he discontinued his aggressiveness, and ultimately gets slain by two of his own sons. So the second time in Hezekiah's reign God has providentially rescued him, first from death and now from the invader.

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 5 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where is Sennacherib warring when Rabshakeh returns to him?
3. What king comes against Sennacherib?
4. What are the contents of Sennacherib's letter to Jerusalem?
5. What does Hezekiah do about the letter?
6. What message does God send to Hezekiah through Isaiah?
7. What happens to Sennacherib's army?
8. What does Sennacherib do afterwards?
9. What ultimately happens to him in his own land?

### 119. Hezekiah's Fifteen Years of Prosperity

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Chron. 32:23,27-29,32,33; II Kings 20:20,21.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. God prospers Hezekiah after his deliverance from Sennacherib.
  - b. Hezekiah is greatly honored at his death.

### COMMENTS

Special mention is made of Hezekiah's growing wealth following Judah's deliverance from the Assyrians. First of all, we would judge he retrieved the pay-off treasures of the temple and his palace he had earlier sent to Sennacherib. So happy are the surrounding nations that the Assyrian invasion is over that they send Hezekiah many presents, and he is well known among many nations. Then God blesses Judah with abundant harvests of grain and grapes and olives as well as abundance of livestock. He is truly one of Judah's greatest kings. Have you noticed how much Biblical material is devoted to his reign? This is because, as II Kings 18:5 says, "He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that

were before him." While Josiah, according to II Kings 23:25, excelled all other kings before and after him in other ways, Hezekiah excelled them all in his prayerful trust in God. And those whom God greatly blesses, and He does Hezekiah, will likewise be honored by his fellowmen, so at his death after fifteen years of great prosperity he is buried with the greatest of the kings. He was twenty-five when he began to reign, and he has reigned twenty-nine years (II Kings 18:1,2), so he is fifty-four when he dies.

### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. What were some of the sources of Hezekiah's wealth after the destruction of the Assyrian army?
3. How long does he live after this event?
4. In what special way does he distinguish himself above all kings of Judah?
5. How is he honored in his burial?

### 120. The Exceeding Wickedness of Manasseh

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 21:1-16; II Chron. 33:1-9.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. The twelve-year-old Manasseh begins his fifty-five-year reign in Jerusalem.
  - b. He is completely idolatrous, being more wicked than the pagan nations that inhabited the land before Israel.
  - c. He does not listen to the prophets God sends to rebuke him but kills them.

### COMMENTS

Since he is only twelve when he becomes king, and since he reverts to the idolatry his father Hezekiah destroyed, it is a reasonable assumption that the element that secretly did not go along with Hezekiah's reformation now surfaces and influences his son in their direction. From the various types of idolatry in which he is involved, he has to be the most wicked king Judah has ever had. He worships Baal (the Phoenician deity of Ahab and Jezebel), the host of heaven (sun, moon, and stars), and

Moloch of the Ammorites ("he caused his children to pass through the fire"). He also engages in witchcraft and sorcery. And he even desecrates God's temple by brazenly setting up some of this idolatry in that place where God has recorded His name. In fact, the abominable religious practices he follows in Jerusalem make him and Judah more corrupt even than those pagan nations God had driven out when He gave this land to Israel. His father Hezekiah would "turn over in his grave" if he knew what his son is doing. But God who sees all that goes on will not be blind to what Manasseh is doing. He sends prophets to speak His displeasure, telling them that such wickedness nullifies God's promise to sustain them in the land He has given them and actually foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem to befall it because of their sins. The Jewish historian Josephus states that King Manasseh put to death the righteous and even killed the prophets. Jewish tradition has it that the prophet Isaiah was placed inside a hollow log which Manasseh commanded to be sawed through. This could be what Heb. 11:34 refers to when it speaks of some being "sawn asunder". These deaths, then, would be the "innocent blood" which he sheds. It takes courage to rebuke, for you are dealing with the honesty of the human ego. Will the person accept the rebuke? This is the worthy purpose behind a proper rebuke. A rebuke not accepted can result in the loss of friendship or in being villified or even in being killed. John the Baptist's rebuke resulted in imprisonment and finally death.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why might a son of the righteous Hezekiah turn back to idolatry?
3. What are some of the pagan gods Manasseh worships?
4. How does his corruption compare with the heathen nations God drove out before Joshua?
5. What does such wickedness do to God's promises concerning the promised land?
6. What does God do at this time about Manasseh's wickedness?
7. How far does Manasseh go in rejecting the prophets of God?

**121. A Chastened Manasseh Repents**

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Chron. 33:10-13.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Because Manasseh will not listen to the prophets, God chastens him with personal captivity in Babylon.
  - b. He humbles himself, recognizes Jehovah as God, and is mercifully restored to his rule in Jerusalem.

COMMENTS

**M**anasseh is probably a combination of being deceived as to who is Deity and who aren't and of kingly pride. God will later deal with the proud Babylonian monarch Nebuchadnezzar in much the same way He here deals with the king of Judah who will not listen to God's prophets. The few verses here do not give us much elaboration about an Assyrian invasion, the deportation of Manasseh to far-away Babylon, in what year of Manasseh's reign it occurs, how long he is there, who rules while he is gone, nor of the process of Manasseh's thinking in Babylon that finally gets him restored. This captivity must have come during the Assyrian king Essarhaddon who mentions Manasseh among his tributaries, and "Barnes" mentions that he is the only king of Assyria who from time to time held his court at Babylon. We know it takes a powerful God to deal with a stubborn king like Manasseh, but the king who will not listen to God's rebuke delivered through prophets is completely humbled by His powerful hand of chastening. Upon being restored to his throne he knows now that Jehovah is God. How his father Hezekiah would rejoice if he knew this!

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Besides probably being deceived as to who Deity is, what is another problem of Manasseh's?

3. Is God able to humble a powerful king who will not listen to His prophets?
4. What Assyrian king appears to be the one who deported Manasseh to Babylon?
5. Why is Manasseh restored to his throne in Jerusalem?

**122. Manasseh's Prosperous Years in Jerusalem**

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Chron. 33:14-17.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. He fortifies Jerusalem and Judah's defense cities.
  - b. He destroys the idolatry he formerly worshiped.
  - c. He restores Jehovah worship he formerly stopped.

COMMENTS

**M**anasseh's case gives us hope concerning people who are not right at the present. Maybe their present pattern will not be permanent. God's dealings may yet change their course as it has Manasseh's. Remember Saul of Tarsus also. When Manasseh comes back to power, he is a different person: "old things" (idolatry) have passed away with something "new" to him (Jehovah worship) taking its place. It is good to know that the God who can chasten a sinning person can also bless that person when he gets right—as He does in Manasseh's case. We are especially glad to see him take away the idols he formerly worshiped and renew temple-worship. The road of repentance is the same for us all: we must react against our former sins and begin doing God's will. Anything other than this is not really repentance. "Barnes" places v. 14 quite a ways along in Manasseh's reign when he comments, "We may gather from this verse that late in his reign Manasseh revolted from the Assyrians and made preparations to resist them if they should attack him." And when that verse opens, "Now after this," it allows for such a passage of time. While Manasseh does all he can to correct the evil he has instituted, it still does not eradicate it all, for when

Nebuchadnezzar will later invade Judah, II Kings 24:3,4 says, "Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did: and also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the Lord would not pardon." God had to punish Judah for what happened to His people and prophets. Manasseh's story reminds your writer of a man from Bandon, Ireland who gave Bandon, Oregon its name. He brought here a hedge plant called "Gorse" that he liked in Ireland but which spread all out of control in Oregon and clear down into California and which because of its resin makes forest fires worse. In his will the man left his money to fight the plague of gorse!

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What actions show Manasseh is a totally different person now?
3. Why does "Barnes" think he is building up his military fortifications?

### 123. Summarizing Words about Manasseh

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 21:17,18; II Chron. 33:18-20.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Special mention is made of the prophets who spoke to him, his being humbled, and the prayer he prayed.
  - b. He is buried in his own garden.

#### COMMENTS

**Y**es, Manasseh did sin (and how!), he was humbled (ditto), and he must have prayed some prayer to have it mentioned as it is here. The praying example of his father Hezekiah probably came before his mind in his predicament in Babylon, and God heard his prayer as he had his father's. Why is he buried in his own garden? "Barnes" observes, "The catacomb of David was

probably full, and the later kings (from Ahaz downwards) had to find sepulchres elsewhere. Ahaz was buried in Jerusalem, but not in the sepulchres of the kings (II Chron. 28:27). Hezekiah found a restingplace on the way that led up to David's catacomb (II Chron. 32:33). Manasseh and Amon were interred in 'the garden of Uzza,' a portion apparently of the royal palace-garden; perhaps so called after the name of the previous owner. Josiah was buried in 'his own sepulchre' (II Kings 23:30)." His fifty-five-year reign is the longest in either Judah or Israel.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Whose great example of earnest prayer under extreme distress does Manasseh imitate?
3. Why is he probably buried in his own garden?
4. How many years has he reigned?

### 124. The New King Reverts to Idolatry

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 21:19-22; II Chron. 33:21-23.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. The new king Amon is Manasseh's son, is twenty-two at the beginning of his reign, and he will have a short rule of two years.
  - b. He restores some of the idolatry once practiced by his father.

#### COMMENTS

**J**udah is getting worse. Hezekiah was a good king. Manasseh was bad and later good. Amon is never good. Things getting back into a bad condition will call for the revival under Amon's son Josiah, the last revival Judah will experience before its ruin and captivity. Again we are made to marvel at another reversion to idolatry. Won't children ever learn? But don't we often see the same thing today—young people not taking warning from their previous generation? When it mentions he did not humble himself as Manasseh did, he must surely

have been rebuked by prophets but refused their rebuke.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Do young people always listen to the warnings of a previous generation concerning their ways?
3. What seems to be implied when it says he does not humble himself before God?

### 125. Amon is Assassinated by His Servants

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 21:23-26; II Chron. 33:24,25.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. His servants slay him in his own house.
  - b. The people slay them and make his son Josiah king.

#### COMMENTS

**W**e are not told why his servants slay him. It is probably a judgment from God. It does account for the shortness of his reign (two years). What they do does not set well with the people of the land, for they kill the assassins, and they crown Amon's son Josiah to replace him. Thus comes the king the young prophet of I Kings 13 predicted by name around three hundred and fifty years beforehand. He will prove to be one of Judah's best kings and its last good king.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why does Amon rule only two years?
3. What indicates the people of the land do not go along with the assassination?
4. What kind of king will Josiah prove to be?

### 126. A Boy-King for Judah

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 22:1,2; II Chron. 34:1,2.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Josiah is only eight when he begins to reign.
  - b. He will reign thirty-one years.

c. He is good like King David.

COMMENTS

Judah has had two other boy-kings: Joash was seven (II Chron. 24:1) and Manasseh twelve (II Chron. 33:1). His righteous reign probably contributes toward its length of thirty-one years. It is good to have ruling in the city of David a good king like David. How is it that Josiah is a good king? Some see in those who assassinated Amon an intention to overthrow the line of David on the throne, accounting for the people of the land bringing them to justice and putting them to death. If so, those who bring up the young king to his maturity impress upon his young mind the right way to go—to be a good king like David. He will be.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Who were the other two boy-kings of Judah?
3. How might we account for Josiah being a good king when coming to power so young?

**127. Josiah Reacts against Idolatry in His Eighth Year**

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Chron. 34:3-7.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. In the eighth year of his reign he personally began to seek Jehovah.
  - b. In the twelfth year of his reign he began to purge Judah and surrounding areas of idols.

COMMENTS

The eighth year of his reign finds Josiah twenty years old at which time he personally begins to seek the God of his father David. He is now mature enough that he wants his reign to be as righteous before God as was David's. Worshiping the true God involves rejection of false gods, so when he is twenty-four he conducts his first campaign against idolatry, not only in Jerusalem and Judah but also in Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, and

Naphtali of the old Northern Kingdom area. His scattering the dust of their destroyed images on the graves of those who once sacrificed to them and burning the bones of the idolatrous priests on their altars further demonstrate his utter contempt for every aspect of idolatry. How such a king must have pleased God even as our all-out service to Him today does!

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this lesson.
2. How old is Josiah when he begins to seek the God of his father David?
3. How old is he when he begins his first campaign against idolatry?
4. To what extremes does he go in showing his contempt for idolatry?

**128. Josiah Orders the Temple Repaired**

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 22:3-7; II Chron. 34:8-13.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. In preparation for repairing the temple the Levites gather money from the remnant of Israel and all of Judah.
  - b. This money is given to the workmen to repair the damage done to the temple by former idolatrous kings.

COMMENTS

The once-beautiful temple of Solomon, now several hundred year old, has been abused during the reigns of various idolatrous kings before Josiah. He wants to see the temple put into a good state of repair, so he sends Levites throughout Judah and Benjamin as well as among the remnant up in Manasseh and Ephraim to take up money for this worthy project. In the eighteenth year of his reign, (when he was twenty-six) he places three capable men (Shaphan, a scribe; Maaseiah, governor over Jerusalem; and Joah, recorder) over the project. They give the Levite-gathered offering into the hands of various foremen who give it to the men doing the actual work. It is interesting to notice that no accounting is called for concerning the

workers' expenditure of the money, for they are all counted very true and faithful men. The same was true when former King Joash repaired the temple (II Kings 12:15).

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why is the temple in need of repair?
3. How old is Josiah when he orders this project?
4. Who are the three men Josiah puts in charge of it?
5. Who does not have to give account of the expenditure of the money, and why don't they?

**129. The Book of the Law is Found**

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 22:8—23:20,24-27; II Chron. 34:14-33.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. The book of the law is found in the temple.
  - b. Shaphan reads it to Josiah, who sends men to inquire of the Lord concerning its warnings.
  - c. Huldah, the prophetess, says Judah will be severely punished for its sins but not in Josiah's day.
  - d. The king has the book read to the people after which he makes a covenant with God to be obedient to the law, and he has the people also pledge their obedience.
  - e. Josiah inaugurates a new campaign against idolatry throughout Judah and even at Bethel where he fulfills the ancient prediction about himself.

COMMENTS

Immediately the king summons the leaders and the people of Judah to the temple so they can hear all the words of the law of God. The king publicly promises God he will abide by His law, and he calls on the people to do the same. As a consequence every form of idolatry is destroyed, and the idolatrous priests are killed. Some of this traces all the way back to the idolatry of Solomon. And in his rampage he goes to Bethel to destroy that idolatrous altar set up by Jeroboam that ultimately caused the Northern



Kingdom to be destroyed. While there to break down that altar he notices the sepulchres of the idolatrous priests who one time officiated at that altar, and he brings out their bones and burns them on that altar, thus fulfilling to the letter the prophecy in I Kings 13:2: "O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee." According to Ussher's date-system the prophecy was uttered 351 years prior to this fulfillment. But when Josiah notices the sepulchre of the young prophet who faithfully uttered this prophecy, he respectfully commands not to disturb his sepulchre.

While Hezekiah was Judah's greatest king in his trusting God (II Kings 18:5), Josiah is its greatest king in his opposition to idolatry and his zeal for Jehovah-worship.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 5 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why was the law of God kept in the temple?
3. What emotion is aroused in the king as he hears the reading of the Scriptures?
4. What does he send messengers to find out?
5. What good and what bad news does the prophetess give his messengers?
6. Why is Judah less excusable for its ways than even Israel had been?
7. What covenant with God does Josiah make and ask the people to make also?
8. After this Josiah destroys every form of \_\_\_\_\_ and even kills the idolatrous \_\_\_\_\_.
9. At Bethel what altar does he break down, and whose bones does he burn?
10. How long ago had this been predicted?
11. Whose sepulchre at Bethel does he not disturb?
12. In what sense is he the greatest king Judah ever had?

### 130. Josiah Observes a Great Passover

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 23:21-23; II Chron. 35:1-19.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. In Josiah's eighteenth year of reign he calls the greatest Passover observance that has been since Samuel's day.

- b. The II Chron. account contains many of the strict details of its observance.

#### COMMENTS

Now it is the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, and he is twenty-six years old. He has not only reacted against idolatry, but he now wishes to carry out his covenant to be obedient to God. During Hezekiah's reign, you may recall from II Chron. 30, he too called a great Passover—the greatest Passover that had been held since the time of Solomon (v. 26). But now Josiah calls an even greater. You should notice in the details of Josiah's Passover as covered in II Chron. how careful he is to see that everything is done according to the will of God. And we who carry out the will of God today need to be equally as careful that we do everything according to God's revealed will. Heb. 12:28 says, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear," assuring us that even in the New Testament times that our God of love and mercy is also a "consuming fire" (v. 29) for deliberate disobedience to His plan.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. How old is king Josiah at this time?
3. How great is this Passover said to be?
4. Can you name at least two details that are mentioned in its observance?
5. Why should we who serve today also be careful about doing everything according to God's plan?

### 131. Josiah Meets an Untimely End

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Chron. 35:20-27; II Kings 23:28-30.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Pharaoh-Necho is passing by to war at Carchemish.
  - b. Somehow Josiah goes out against him.

- c. After Pharaoh-Necho fails to dissuade him, a battle ensues in which Josiah is mortally wounded.
- d. He dies (probably on the trip back to Jerusalem), and Jeremiah leads the nation in lamentation over him.

#### COMMENTS

With the death of Josiah we move into the end-years of Judah before its Babylonian Captivity. In summary of these years "Smith" says, "The twenty-three years following the death of Josiah were the 'dying time' of the kingdom of Judah. These were tragic days when petty politicians repeated foolish mistakes which drug the nation down to oblivion. In spite of the heroic preaching of Jeremiah, the nation sank ever deeper into apostasy and rebellion. The final scenes unfold like those in a Shakespearian tragedy: (1) the death and burial of Josiah...; (2) the reign and removal of Jehoahaz...; (3) the reign and rebellion of Jehoiakim...; (4) the reign and deportation of Jehoiachin...; (5) the revolt and punishment of Zedekiah...; (6) the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem...."

Josiah is thirty-eight, and the thirty-one-year reign of this good king of Judah is about to come to an unexpected, abrupt end. A glance at what is happening in history will help us see what happens.

In very recent times the rising Babylon has overthrown Nineveh and taken over the Assyrian-held territories. Nabopolassar, its conqueror, even considered himself to be "king of Assyria". It is against this king of Assyria that the Egyptian Pharaoh-Necho is marching, attempting to halt the further build-up of Babylon. As he is on his way to do battle at Carchemish up north, he is passing along Judah. But Josiah opposes Necho's passage, maybe wanting to ally himself with the rising Babylon, for civil treatment down the line. The Egyptian tries to discourage Josiah's attempt to keep him from proceeding, and a battle breaks out near the important mountain-pass city Megiddo in which Josiah is

mortally wounded. He is put into his "second chariot", a lighter chariot for the hurried trip back to Jerusalem. But it is all to no avail as he dies (probably on the way home). Oh, it is a sad time for Judah, for it has held Josiah in the highest respect. And the good people themselves grieve. God's prophet Jeremiah is in the beginning of his many years as a prophet in the Jerusalem area, and he leads the nation in a national lamentation. And well might Judah mourn, for it will not have another good king, and well might the prophet mourn, for he will never get to work with another good king of Judah. Josiah's son Jehoahaz is his successor.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. How old is Josiah when Pharaoh-Necho is passing by?
3. How long has he reigned?
4. Where is Necho going and why?
5. Does Necho want to engage Josiah in a battle?
6. When Josiah foolishly persists, what happens?
7. Where does the skirmish take place?
8. Who leads the nation in a lamentation?
9. What about the future for Judah and for Jeremiah?

### 132. Jehoahaz is King for Only Three Months

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 23:31-34; II Chron. 36:1-4; Jer. 22:1-12.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehoahaz (called "Shallum" in Jer. 22) is twenty-three.
  - b. God makes a great promise to him through His prophet Jeremiah concerning the possible future of Jerusalem.
  - c. But Jehoahaz does not listen, choosing rather to be idolatrous.
  - d. He is on the throne only three months when Pharaoh-Necho summons him, deposes him, replaces him with his brother, and puts Judah to tribute.
  - e. Jehoahaz is taken to Egypt where he lives the rest of his days.

## COMMENTS

**J**ehoahaz is twenty-three, meaning his father Josiah was sixteen when

Jehoahaz was born. Immediately does the prophet Jeremiah enter the scene, promising him if he will be a godly king, following the good example of his father, Jerusalem will be blessed with good kings occupying the famous throne of David. But that is not the way the new king wishes to go even though Jeremiah has told him of the coming desolation of Jerusalem if he goes the ungodly route. It is likely because of his refusal to hearken to God's message that the tide turns against him, and he is summoned before Pharaoh-Necho at Riblah, two hundred miles north of Jerusalem. It is likely at this time that Jeremiah utters the rest of his prophecy in Jer. 22: "Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away; for he shall return no more, nor see his native country...He shall not return thither any more; but he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more" (vs. 10-12). At Riblah he is removed from being king, his brother Eliakim will be made king instead, he is bound with chains to be taken to Egypt, and Judah is assessed with a tribute of silver and gold. And as Jeremiah prophesied, he did not return to Jerusalem but died in Egypt. When the Kings' account says Necho makes Eliakim king in the place of his father Josiah, it shows that Necho never really recognizes Jehoahaz as king.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 5 memory-facts for this event.
2. What promise does Jeremiah make to Jehoahaz?
3. What does he predict if Jehoahaz is not a godly king?
4. Which route does Jehoahaz take?
5. What does God bring on him as a result?
6. What special prediction does Jeremiah make about Jehoahaz?
7. Who becomes king instead of Jehoahaz?
8. What further sign of Egypt's supremacy over Judah takes place?
9. Eliakim's name is changed to what?

### 133. Jehoiakim's Wicked Reign

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 23:35-24:7; II Chron. 36:5-8; Jer. 26:1-24; Jer. 25:1-38; Jer. 36:1-32; Jer. 22:13-19.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehoiakim is twenty-five as he begins his eleven-year reign.
  - b. He raises the tribute money for Egypt.
  - c. He proves to be a very wicked king.
  - d. A temple speech by Jeremiah in the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign almost costs him his life.
  - e. Babylon's first invasion of Judah.
  - f. As early as Jehoiakim's fourth year Jeremiah predicts a seventy-year captivity for Judah as the king of Babylon subdues many nations.
  - g. Because he is locked up, Jeremiah sends Baruch to the temple with a message to be read to the people.
  - h. Jeremiah foretells Jehoiakim's sad end.

## COMMENTS

**F**or some reason there is more about Jehoiakim in the book of Jer. than in Kings and Chron. That is probably because of the various messages God gave Jeremiah during Jehoiakim's terrible reign.

Jehoiakim's first recorded act is one of necessity—exacting of his people the tribute of silver and gold demanded by Necho of Egypt. After this event it is admittedly difficult to arrange chronologically what we know about the events of his reign from the brief coverage in Kings and Chron. supplemented with longer but dated material in Jer. along with secular history's own contributions.

Jer. 26 is related to the beginning of his reign when Jeremiah is divinely sent to the temple with a message to the people coming there to worship. The message shows Solomon's beautiful temple is doomed to destruction unless Judah repents. The message does not go over well with either the princes, prophets (false prophets), or the people, for they say to Jeremiah, "Thou shalt surely die." Jeremiah warns them of the definite doom they will bring by killing him, and his life

is spared by the wisdom of those who remember that Micah prophesied the same things, and Hezekiah did not kill him. Jehoiakim does kill Urijah, a fellow-prophet of Jeremiah.

Now that Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army have decisively defeated Pharaoh-Necho at the Battle of Carchemish, he comes south and begins subjecting countries to himself. It is 606 B.C., (the third year of Jehoiakim) when he comes against Jerusalem and subdues it, taking Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and likely others along with some of the temple-vessels to Babylon. This turns out to be an important date, and the date from which the seventy years of Judah's Babylonian Captivity will be dated. Since Jehoiakim will rule for eleven years, it is obvious he is left on the throne. In the next year of Jehoiakim's reign (his fourth) Jeremiah is sent to the temple again with a reminder of Judah's historic disobedience, and that God will again bring Nebuchadnezzar against Judah and all its neighboring countries. In the message he also tells Judah its time in Babylon will involve seventy long years! A study of Lev. 26:31-35 and II Chron. 36:20,21 indicates the seventy-year length was determined by the number of sabbatical years they had not let the land rest in obedience to God's specific commandment to do so.

In the same fourth year Jeremiah summons his scribe Baruch to take his dictated message and read it in the temple, for he says, "I am shut up; I cannot go to the house of the Lord;" which Baruch does (Jer. 36:1-8). The next year a national fast is proclaimed (Jer. 36:9), possibly brought on by what we read in II Kings 24:2—unless this verse covers various harassments God sends during Jehoiakim's reign. Anyway, during the national fast Baruch again reads in the temple Jeremiah's dictated message, which a man Michaiah tells to the princes, who think the scroll should be read to the king (Jer. 36:10-19). But when the king hears the early part of it, he takes the copy, cuts it up, and throws it into the fire, and commands both

Baruch and Jeremiah to be taken (vs. 20-26). Jeremiah replaces the burned scroll with one carrying the same message plus some personal words of punishment for the wicked king ("his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost"). It may be at this time that Jeremiah pronounces a woe on Jehoiakim for his extravagant living in such dark days for the nation (Jer. 22:13-17) for which he goes on to talk about his tragic end—nobody to lament for him and to have "the burial of an ass" (no burial at all). Though at one time he is bound in chains to be taken to Babylon (II Chron. 36:6), that is not what happens to him. Some think he is ultimately assassinated and his body left in the field to rot while Josephus has Nebuchadnezzar returning, having him killed, and throwing his dead body over the wall.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 9 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where does Jehoiakim obtain the tribute money for Pharaoh-Necho?
3. When do they tell Jeremiah, "Thou shalt surely die"?
4. What saves him from death?
5. What happens to Daniel and his three friends?
6. What is significant about the date 606 B.C.?
7. Why does God set their captivity at seventy years?
8. Tell about the scroll written by Baruch at Jeremiah's dictation?
9. What end does Jeremiah predict for Jehoiakim?

### 134. Another Deportation to Babylon

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 24:8-16; II Chron. 36:9,10; Jer. 22:24-30.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jehoiachin succeeds his dead brother Jehoiakim.
  - b. He is eighteen years old.
  - c. His wickedness causes Nebuchadnezzar to affect his surrender.
  - d. He, thousands of Judah, and more temple-vessels and treasure are taken to Babylon. Ezekiel is included among the captives.
  - e. No child of his will rule in Jerusalem.

#### COMMENTS

Jehoiakim's death elevates his brother Jehoiachin to power at the age of eighteen. Nebuchadnezzar continues his campaign begun under Jehoiakim. The outcome is obvious from the report of Jehoiachin's surrender after only three months on the throne. He, along with thousands of others including Ezekiel (see Eze. 1:1-3), as well as many more temple-vessels and much treasure, are deported to Babylon, just as God had foretold to Hezekiah earlier (II Kings 20:17). This second captivity comes in 597 B.C. Jehoiachin has no son to be made king after him, and being confined to a prison in Babylon for many years he likely does not marry and hence remains "childless". It is surprising to read in II Kings 25:27-30 that a later Babylonian monarch releases him after he was imprisoned for thirty-seven years and befriends him.

#### QUESTIONS

1. How old is Jehoiachin when he becomes king?
2. How long does he get to be king?
3. What is the date of this second deportation?
4. What all go to Babylon?
5. What man who later became a prophet is also included?
6. What about Jehoiachin's offspring?
7. How long is he imprisoned before being released by a later ruler?

### 135. Jeremiah Sends a Letter to the Captives

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study Jer. 29:1-32.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. He reminds them that God says the Babylonian Captivity will be seventy years.
  - b. Since it will be that long, they should settle down in Babylon and make that their home for those years.
  - c. He assures them of Judah's ultimate return if they seek God with all their heart.
  - d. A curse is pronounced on two false prophets among them in Babylon.
  - e. A curse is also pronounced on a false letter writer.

#### COMMENTS

The prophet Jeremiah does not want those who have gone into captivity to have any false illusions as to its length. It was going to involve seventy years, which would encompass the lifetime of all but the very youngest. So they should settle in and make Babylon their home. Nor does he want to see them diminished in number, for in time God will return them to their land—provided they seek Him with their whole heart. No wonder, then, that when the righteous Daniel later figured out in the sixty-eighth year of their captivity that they would soon be able to return to Palestine, he set his "face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth and ashes" (Dan. 9:1-3). But the captives are plagued with two false prophets who are speaking otherwise about their captivity. They are an Ahab and a Zedekiah who will ultimately be burned to death in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. Among the captives is also a man Shemaiah who has sent letters back to Jerusalem against Jeremiah for which Jeremiah tells him all his offspring will be cut off, none getting to return when Judah comes back.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 5 memory-facts for this event.
2. What does Jeremiah instruct them to do since the captivity will be seventy years long?
3. On what basis will Judah get to return at the end of those seventy years?
4. When those seventy years are almost up, what will the prophet Daniel do?
5. What does Jeremiah say will befall their two false prophets, Ahab and Zedekiah?
6. What captive in Babylon wrote letters back to Jerusalem opposing Jeremiah?
7. What curse does Jeremiah say will befall him for this?

### 136. Zedekiah Becomes Judah's Last King

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 24:17-19; II Chron. 36:11,12; Jer. 37:1,2; Jer. 52:1,2.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Zedekiah is twenty-one as he becomes king.
  - b. He will reign eleven years.

- c. He will be Judah's last king.

## COMMENTS

As we come to this last king of either the Southern or Northern kingdoms, we will see the ultimate end of Solomon's once glorious kingdom, brought down because of idolatry, the sin of which he himself was guilty and for which his kingdom was divided. We are also reminded of how foolish it was for the people in the days of Samuel to request (demand) a king so they could be like other nations. Their kings have cost them their kingdom.

As is so often the case, the new king is given a different name—Zedekiah (by which we shall know him) instead of Mattaniah. He is twenty-one and will survive for eleven years before the final captivity of his people.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What mistake did the people make in the days of Samuel?
3. What sin did Solomon commit that caused his kingdom to be divided?
4. What sin has brought ruin to both segments?

### 137. Jeremiah and His Wooden Yoke

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study Jer. 28:1-17.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Evidently Jeremiah has just told the temple crowd again that the captivity will last seventy years and is wearing a wooden yoke on his neck to symbolize that captivity.
  - b. Hananiah, a false prophet claiming God has spoken to him, tells Jeremiah in the presence of the priests and people that the captivity will last only two more years before Judah is brought back. He then takes the yoke off Jeremiah's neck and breaks it to symbolize what he is saying.
  - c. God sends Jeremiah back to the temple with a yoke of iron (unbreakable) where he foretold Hananiah's death that very year.

## COMMENTS

Jeremiah is not called to an easy life as a prophet of God. At the time of his call God said, "I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee" (Jer. 1:18,19).

In our event he is in the temple using an object (a wooden yoke) to show the long servitude of their people over in Babylon. When Peter wrote that there had been false prophets among the people (II Pet. 2:1), he must have had in mind such persons as Hananiah of the city Gibeon, for he falsely prophesies in the name of the Lord, saying, "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts...I, have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels...and...Jeconiah...with all the captives." It is probably in sarcasm that Jeremiah says, "Amen: the Lord do so." And then to symbolize what he said, Hananiah takes Jeremiah's wooden yoke and breaks it before all the people. God has Jeremiah take an iron yoke and predict his death within the current year for teaching rebellion against the Lord's word. It is the fifth month when this temple skirmish takes place (v.1), and Hananiah is dead within two months (v.17).

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What object is Jeremiah using with which to teach his lesson?
3. What lesson is he teaching?
4. What does a false prophet do and say?
5. What is the false prophet's name?
6. What kind of yoke does Jeremiah next take?
7. What does he prophesy about the false prophet?
8. What happens to the false prophet?

### 138. Nebuchadnezzar Lays Siege to Jerusalem

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 25:1,2; II Chron. 36:13; Jer.21:1-12.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Zedekiah revolts from under the Babylonians.
  - b. Consequently Nebuchadnezzar marches an army against Jerusalem in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign.
  - c. Zedekiah sends to Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord for him.
  - d. Jeremiah tells him God is going to deliver the city into Nebuchadnezzar's hand.

## COMMENTS

**A**s we continue studying the reign of Judah's last king, it is noticeable there is much material in the book of Jer.—actually more than in II Kings and II Chron. This is because the prophet Jeremiah is personally connected with so much that takes place during his reign.

Conquering kings such as Nebuchadnezzar like to put their conquered countries to tribute. The conquered pay it because they have to, but they do not like it. Occasionally they will revolt from under that financial burden, often depending on some foreign power to assist them in their rebellion (in this case, Egypt). His rebellion brings Nebuchadnezzar and his army back to Jerusalem. To "lay siege" is to surround Jerusalem so there is no coming in or going out, hoping after a few years to starve them out when existing food supplies give out. Then they can conquer at will without loss of their own soldiers. Quite a few times in the book of Jer. does Zedekiah send to Jeremiah to have him inquire of God or to have him pray. In all of them Jeremiah will give him the same message: God is going to deliver Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, urging them to surrender and at least save their lives and the destruction of their city and telling them if they don't surrender, Nebuchadnezzar will destroy their land and remove them from it. This is not good news to Zedekiah, but it is God's

message, and Jeremiah is faithfully delivering it.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why will Zedekiah rebel against Babylon?
3. In what year of Zedekiah's reign does Nebuchadnezzar and his army come against Jerusalem?
4. What is meant by "laying siege"?
5. Why does the king send messengers to Jeremiah?
6. What message does he send to the king?

### 139. Another Message for Zedekiah

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read Jer. 34:1-7.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Nebuchadnezzar has soldiers attacking Judah's defense cities as well as Jerusalem.
  - b. Jeremiah repeats God's intentions to deliver Jerusalem and Zedekiah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, who will burn the city even though he will not kill Zedekiah.

## COMMENTS

**G**od has been patient with Judah and its continued wickedness for many years. He was ready to destroy it earlier, but the prayers of king Hezekiah spared it. And God promised the godly Josiah it would not happen in his lifetime. But God will be patient no longer--Jerusalem is going to be destroyed and the rest of Judah taken captive. The day will come when Zedekiah will personally be brought before the great Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The only grain of comfort for Zedekiah in the whole message is that he will not die in the war nor as a consequence of it and will be honored when he does die.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. During the reigns of what two righteous kings did God delay Jerusalem's destruction?
3. What is the only bit of comfort for Zedekiah in God's message through Jeremiah?

### 140. Egypt Sends Help

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read Jer. 37:5-10.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Babylon withdraws from Jerusalem when learning that help is coming from Egypt.
  - b. Jeremiah assures Judah it is still God's settled intention to destroy Judah, and that Egypt will have to retreat.

## COMMENTS

**E**gypt is not the uncontested power it used to be, yet it is still stronger than the lesser countries Nebuchadnezzar holds sway over. It is the hope of Judah that Egypt's help will make the difference, and its false prophets are probably encouraging them with a false hope. But Jeremiah remains adamant: Egypt's help will not be enough, it will return into Egypt, and Jerusalem will fall and be burned. In this grave time Zedekiah is depending on the help of a man whereas Hezekiah depended on the great help of God. So the outcome will be different.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. How can Zedekiah get a false hope out of Egypt's coming to help?
3. Why will that not change what is going to happen?

### 141. Jeremiah Rebukes the People's Action

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read Jer. 34:8-22.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Judah releases all its slaves.
  - b. Later it put them back into bondage.
  - c. Jeremiah is sent to pronounce a curse on them for doing this.

## COMMENTS

**Y**ou might ask why Judah would have slaves and be slave-owners.

In those days when a person got so much in debt that he was hopeless to get out, he would be sold as a slave to get the money (see Matt. 18:23-25; II Kings 4:1). Every seventh year, though, every slave was freed, and he was his own once more. Even though God had redeemed Israel from Egyptian bondage, it is evident Judah has not been freeing its slaves after six years of bondage and servitude. But during the siege of Jerusalem, the king orders it to be done, and the people comply with the order. It is probably after the Babylonian siege is lifted because of the approach of the Egyptian army that Judah's slave-owners cancel the order and regather their slaves. This but further shows Judah's disobedience to God's civil enactments, and He is highly displeased with its action and sends Jeremiah on another unwelcome job of rebuking their action and reiterating what is going to befall the sinning nation.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. In what way does Judah have slaves?
3. What are they supposed to do to their slaves every seventh year?
4. Have they been doing this?
5. Why do they free them now?
6. Why do they take them back?
7. With what message does God send Jeremiah to them at this time?

## 142. Jeremiah is Arrested and Imprisoned

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read Jer. 37:1--38:28; Jer. 39:15-18.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. Jeremiah takes the opportunity of going to his hometown Anathoth.
  - b. They suspect and accuse him of defecting to the Babylonians.
  - c. Though Jeremiah disclaims the accusation, they put him in a dungeon prison.
  - d. Zedekiah inquires of Jeremiah again and removes him to a more favorable prison.
  - e. A pressure-group causes the king to put him into a abandoned cistern.
  - f. An Ethiopian servant persuades Zedekiah to get Jeremiah out of the

cistern, and he is returned to the prison court for the duration of the war.

- g. God will take care of the good Ethiopian.

## COMMENTS

The temporary withdrawal of the Babylonians from Jerusalem affords Jeremiah an opportunity to leave Jerusalem, for he too has been shut up, unable to go to his neighboring home in Anathoth (just northeast of Jerusalem). But he is interrupted at the gate where he is accused of defecting to the Babylonians. Of course, this is not true, as he explains, but it does him no good--he is a hated man and is put into a dungeon prison. In time the king takes him from there, inquires of him again and is told the same sad message, and assigns him to a more favorable prison quarter. We might wonder why he doesn't release him altogether, but a study of Zedekiah's character shows him not to be the strong ruling type but the kind who bows to pressure-groups, which he does by detaining him in prison. But this doesn't set with four leaders who remind the king of the adverse message of Jeremiah, and they get him put down into a cistern where there is no water but mire into which Jeremiah sinks a ways. "Smith" says, "The pitiless princes wished this spokesman for God to die a slow, torturous, and frightful death...This experience is without question the lowest point in the life of Jeremiah. He was now aged and perhaps infirm. The siege and famine in Jerusalem had doubtless taken its toll...Through the long bitter years of his ministry Jeremiah had learned the way of patient endurance. He had learned to cast himself upon the Lord and trust Him for deliverance." And God does not forget his faithful prophet. When an Ethiopian eunuch who serves in Zedekiah's house hears what they have done to Jeremiah, he pleads for the privilege of rescuing him out of there before he dies. And so they lower cords and old rags made into cords and pull him up out of that terrible place.

When Zedekiah asks divine information again from the prophet, Jeremiah begs him to obey what he tells him and not deliver him back into the cistern. The king actually makes an oath concerning Jeremiah's future safety, so Jeremiah tells him once more the same message as before. And the king keeps his word: Jeremiah will abide in the court of the prison until the day Jerusalem is taken. Jeremiah assures the Ethiopian that God will take care of him when Jerusalem falls.

## QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 7 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where is Jeremiah going when he is stopped?
3. With what do they charge him?
4. What do they do with him?
5. To where does the king move him?
6. Where does a pressure-group get Jeremiah put?
7. Who rescues him out of there?
8. What oath does the king make concerning Jeremiah?

## 143. Jerusalem Falls to the Babylonians

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 25:2-22; II Chron. 36:18-20; Jer. 39:2-14; Jer. 40:1-6; Lam. 1:1-8,12.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
  - a. In Zedekiah's eleventh year the Babylonians break through and take the city.
  - b. Zedekiah tries to escape, but they overtake him, kill his sons before his eyes, put out his eyes, and take him to Babylon.
  - c. The Babylonians plunder Jerusalem and burn it, including the temple and palace.
  - d. They then batter down the walls.
  - e. The people are taken to nearby Ramah in preparation for the long journey to Babylon.
  - f. Jeremiah, being released from prison, is given the choice of going to Babylon and receiving good or staying in the land with the few peasants left to till the land.
  - g. Jeremiah chooses to remain, and he writes the sorrowful words found in the book of Lam.

## COMMENTS

After plaguing Jerusalem with its presence for three years the Babylonian army breaks through the guards' resistance and begins its slaughter. The day Jeremiah has been forecasting has come in contrast to what the false prophets have said. King Zedekiah and some of the leaders flee Jerusalem by night, heading east. But they are pursued and overtaken near Jericho. Zedekiah and his leaders are taken north to Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar is, and the leaders are slain, Zedekiah sees his sons slain just before they put out his eyes, and he is put in chains to be taken to Babylon. Oh, how much better off he would be and Jerusalem if they had believed and heeded what Jeremiah had told them from God! Back at Jerusalem the Babylonians release Jeremiah, whom they have heard about, and he is treated with great kindness. He, along with the many captives, are removed to nearby Ramah north of Jerusalem where the group is readied for the long walk to Babylon. From Ramah they can see the fire and smoke arising from the burning

Jerusalem, including the temple and palace and all its buildings. And the wrecking crew also lays Jerusalem's mighty walls to the ground. All this is in the year 586 B.C.

Babylon's decision is to leave only the poor to till the land for the king of Babylon, and Jeremiah is given the privilege either of going to Babylon as a guest or remaining with the poor of his people. He chooses the latter. After all the excitement is quieted down, he looks his ruined Jerusalem over and writes, "How doth the city lie solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies. Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits. The ways of Zion do mourn,

because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness. Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper; for the LORD hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy. And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed: her princes are become like harts that find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer" (Lam. 1:1-6). And Jeremiah personifies the destroyed Jerusalem and speaks for her, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger?" (Lam. 1:12).

#### QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 8 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why do the Babylonians treat Jeremiah so well?
3. Recall the vivid words that open the sorrowful book of Lam.



## FINAL ASSIGNMENTS

Now that you have made a study of the material, here are several assignments for you to do.

## ASSIGNMENT I

Study the following materials in preparation for quizzes at their ends.

### THE KINGS OF JUDAH (Southern Kingdom)

1. Rehoboam...17 years...Bad...10 tribes revolted from under him
2. Abijah...3 years...Mostly bad...Trusted in God in battle with Jeroboam
3. Asa...41 years...Good...Reformer, but stubborn when rebuked by a prophet
4. Jehoshaphat...25 years...Good...Reformer
5. Jehoram...8 years...Bad...Kingdom disintegrated, had no royal burial
6. Ahaziah...1 year...Bad...was killed by Jehu
7. Athaliah...6 years...Very bad...A usurper, was executed by Jehoiada
8. Joash...40 years...Mostly good...Was good as long as Jehoiada lived
9. Amaziah...6 years...Mostly good...Defeated Edom, then worshiped some of its idols
10. Uzziah...52 years...Mostly good...Prosperous, became leprous for burning incense
11. Jotham...16 years...Good...Prosperous
12. Ahaz...16 years...Bad...Defeated by both Syria and Israel
13. Hezekiah...29 years...Good...Jerusalem spared from Sennacherib's army
14. Manasseh...55 years...Bad at first...Very idolatrous, repented under punishment
15. Amon...2 years...Bad...Was assassinated by his servants
16. Josiah...31 years...Good...Reformer, died a foolish death
17. Jehoahaz...3 months...Bad...Deposed by Egypt
18. Jehoiakim...11 years...Bad...1st Babylonian Captivity in his reign
19. Jehoiachin...3 months...Bad...Deposed by Babylon
20. Zedekiah...11 years...Bad...Temple and kingdom were destroyed by Babylon

### QUIZ OVER "THE KINGS OF JUDAH"

1. Say the 20 rulers in order.
2. Which ruler was a usurper?
3. Name the 8 rulers who were either good or mostly good.
4. M \_\_\_\_\_ reigned 55 years, U \_\_\_\_\_ reigned 52 years, A \_\_\_\_\_ reigned 41 years, J \_\_\_\_\_ reigned 40 years, J \_\_\_\_\_ reigned 31 years, H \_\_\_\_\_ reigned 29 years, and J \_\_\_\_\_ reigned 25 years.
5. J \_\_\_\_\_ and J \_\_\_\_\_ reigned only 3 months each.
6. A \_\_\_\_\_ was executed by Jehoiada.
7. The following kings were killed: A \_\_\_\_\_ and A \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The 10 Northern tribes revolted from under \_\_\_\_\_.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ became leprous for burning incense.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ died a foolish death.
11. The temple and Southern Kingdom were destroyed during \_\_\_\_\_'s reign.

### THE KINGS OF ISRAEL (Northern Kingdom)

1. Jeroboam...22 years...Bad...Set up the golden calves
2. Nadab...2 Years...Bad...Was assassinated by Baasha

3. Baasha...24 years...Bad...Was condemned by the prophet Jehu
4. Elah...2 years...Bad...Was assassinated by Zimri
5. Zimri...7 days...Bad...Burned himself to escape being killed
6. Omri...12 years...Very bad...Moved the capital to Samaria
7. Ahab...22 years...The worst...Husband of Jezebel, hated the prophets Elijah and Micaiah
8. Ahaziah...2 years...Bad...Sent bands of soldiers to take Elijah
9. Jehoram...12 years...Bad...Was killed by Jehu
10. Jehu...28 years...Bad...Destroyed Baalism and the house of Ahab
11. Jehoahaz...17 years...Bad...Was oppressed by both Hazael and Benhadad of Syria
12. Jehoash...16 years...Paid respect to Elisha in the prophet's final illness
13. Jeroboam II...41 years...Bad...Had a reign of prosperity in the days of Amos
14. Zachariah...6 months...Bad...Was assassinated by Shallum
15. Shallum...1 month...Bad...Was assassinated by Menahem
16. Menahem...10 years...Bad...Was invaded by Assyria
17. Pekahiah...2 years...Bad...Was assassinated by Pekah
18. Pekah...20 years...Bad...Was invaded by Assyria, was assassinated by Hoshea
19. Hoshea...9 years...Bad...The fall of the North came during his reign

### QUIZ OVER "THE KINGS OF ISRAEL"

1. Say the 19 rulers in order.
2. How many were bad?
3. Who was the worst?
4. J \_\_\_\_\_ reigned 41 years, J \_\_\_\_\_ reigned 28 years, B \_\_\_\_\_ reigned 24 years, J \_\_\_\_\_ and A \_\_\_\_\_ reigned 22 years, and P \_\_\_\_\_ reigned 20 years.
5. Z \_\_\_\_\_ reigned only 7 days, S \_\_\_\_\_ reigned only 1 month, and Z \_\_\_\_\_ reigned only 6 months.
6. Baasha assassinated \_\_\_\_\_, Zimri Assassinated \_\_\_\_\_, Jehu killed \_\_\_\_\_, Shallum assassinated \_\_\_\_\_, Menahem assassinated \_\_\_\_\_, Pekah assassinated \_\_\_\_\_, and Hoshea assassinated \_\_\_\_\_.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ set up the golden calves.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ moved the capital to Samaria.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ destroyed Baalism and the house of Ahab.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ reigned in the days of Amos.
11. The fall of the North came during \_\_\_\_\_'s reign.

**ASSIGNMENT II**

Study the following material in preparation for quizzes at their ends.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE KINGS OF ISRAEL****JEROBOAM**

- 1st king of the North
- Was formerly a servant of Solomon
- Fled to Egypt to escape Solomon
- Returned after Solomon's death to lead the people's appeal to Rehoboam
- Set up calf-worship at Dan and Bethel
- Reacted against the young prophet's rebuke
- Sought the prophet Ahijah's counsel concerning his sick son
- Had constant hostilities with Rehoboam
- Ruled 22 years

**NADAB**

- 2nd king of the North
- Son of Jeroboam
- Began in the 2nd year of Asa of the South
- Had hostilities with Asa
- Ruled 2 years

**BAASHA**

- 3rd king of the North
- Assassinated Nadab, ending the Jeroboam dynasty
- Began in the 3rd year of Asa of the South
- Had hostilities with Asa
- Ruled 24 years

**ELAH**

- 4th king of the North
- Son of Baasha
- Began in the 26th year of Asa of the South
- Was assassinated while drunk by Zimri
- Ruled 2 years

**ZIMRI**

- Assassinated Elah, ending Baasha dynasty
- Began in the 27th year of Asa of the South
- Burned the palace down over himself rather than surrender to Omri
- Ruled only 7 days

**OMRI**

- 6th king of the North
- Defeated Zimri and outlasted Tibni to become king
- Began in the 27th year of Asa of the South

- The most wicked king up to his time
- Bought Shemer's hill and made it the new capital (Samaria)
- Ruled 12 years

#### AHAB

- 7th king of the North
- Son of Omri
- Began in the 38th year of Asa of the South
- The most wicked of all the kings
- Married Jezebel, the Baal-worshiper
- Was plagued with 3 years of drought
- His prophets lost contest with Elijah on Mt. Carmel
- Took Naboth's vineyard
- Had several battles with Syria
- Hated the prophets Elijah and Micaiah
- Was killed by a divinely directed arrow
- Ruled 22 years

#### AHAZIAH

- 8th king of the North
- Son of Ahab
- Began in the 17th year of Jehoshaphat of the South
- God destroyed his and Jehoshaphat's ships
- Sent 3 bands of soldiers to take Elijah
- Died from a fall through lattice for inquiring of Baalzebul
- Ruled 2 years

#### JEHORAM

- 9th king of the North
- Son of Ahab
- Also called Joram
- Began in the 18th year of Jehoshaphat of the South
- Put down a Moabite revolt with the help of Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom
- Elisha delivered the Syrian army into his hand
- Was king when Naaman was cured
- Was king when Elijah prophesied incredible plenty during a Syrian siege
- Was wounded in a battle with Syria
- Was killed by Jehu
- Reigned 12 years

#### JEHU

- 10th king of the North
- Became king by killing Jehoram, ending the Omri dynasty
- Also killed Ahaziah, king of the South
- Began in the 1st year of Athaliah of the South
- Killed Jezebel
- Wiped out the house of Ahab and Baal-worshippers
- Received special promise for his dynasty for destroying Baal-worship

- Lost land east of the Jordan to Syria
- Ruled 28 Years

#### JEHOAHAZ

- 11th king of the North
- Son of Jehu
- Began in the 23rd year of Joash of the South
- Was defeated by both Hazael and Ben-hadad of Syria
- For his seeking Jehovah the North was spared complete destruction
- Ruled 17 years

#### JEHOASH

- 12th king of the North
- Son of Jehoahaz
- Also called Joash
- Began in the 37th year of Joash of the South
- Visited the dying Elisha
- Elisha told him he would smite Syria 3 times but not destroy it
- Was king when a dead soldier cast into Elisha's sepulchre arose
- Defeated Amaziah who dared him to fight
- Ruled 17 years

#### JEROBOAM II

- 13th king of the North
- Son of Jehoash
- Began in the 15th year of Amaziah of the South
- Recovered the country east of the Jordan from Syria according to Jonah's prophecy
- Was king when Amos predicted the ultimate downfall of the Northern Kingdom
- Ruled 41 years

#### ZACHARIAH

- 14th king of the North
- Son of Jeroboam II
- Began in the 38th year of Uzziah of the South
- Was 5th and last king of the Jehu dynasty
- Was assassinated by Shallum

#### SHALLUM

- 15th king of the North
- Began in the 39th year of Uzziah of the South
- Was assassinated by Menahem
- Ruled only 1 month

#### MENAHEM

- 16th king of the North
- Began in the 39th year of Uzziah of the South
- Was king during Assyria's 1st invasion (predicted by Amos's vision of the locusts)
- Ruled 10 years

**PEKAHIAH**

- 7th king of the North
- Son of Menahem
- Began in the 50th year of Uzziah of the South
- Was assassinated by his captain Pekah
- Ruled 2 years

**PEKAH**

- 18th king of the North
- Began in the 52nd year of Uzziah of the South
- Defeated Judah in Ahaz's reign
- Obeyed God's order to return the war-captives to Judah
- Was king during Assyria's 2nd invasion (predicted by Amos's vision of fire)
- Was assassinated by Hoshea
- Ruled 20 years

**HOSHEA**

- 19th king of the North
- Began in the 20th year of Jotham of the South
- At first submitted to Assyria
- Was king during Assyria's 3rd invasion (predicted by Amos's vision of the plumbline) that brought the final end to the Northern Kingdom

**QUIZ OVER "INFORMATION ABOUT THE KINGS OF ISRAEL"**

1. To what country did Jeroboam flee from Solomon?
2. At what 2 cities did Jeroboam set up golden calves?
3. Who took Naboth's vineyard?
4. What 2 prophets did Ahab hate?
5. What prophet delivered the Syrian army into Ahab's hand?
6. Who killed the kings of both North and South?
7. How many times did Joash defeat Syria?
8. Who was ruling during Assyria's 1st invasion?
9. Who was ruling during Assyria's 2nd invasion?
10. Who was ruling during Assyria's 3rd invasion?

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE KINGS OF JUDAH****REHOBAM**

- 1st king of the South
- Son of Solomon
- Solomon's kingdom divided at Rehoboam's coronation
- Walked with God his first 3 years
- Became idolatrous
- Shishak carried his treasures to Egypt
- Had 18 wives, 60 concubines, 28 sons, and 60 daughters
- Ruled 17 years



**ABIJAH**

- 2nd king of the South
- Son of Rehoboam
- Also called Abijam
- Began in the 18th year of Jeroboam of the North
- Defeated Jeroboam
- Had 14 wives, 22 sons, and 16 daughters
- Ruled 3 years

**ASA**

- 3rd king of the South
- Son of Abijah
- Began in the 20th year of Jeroboam of the North
- Conducted religious reforms
- Built and prospered through 10 years of peace
- Defeated a million Ethiopians
- God encouraged him with special promises
- Stopped Baasha from fortifying Ramah
- Was rebuked for hiring Syrian help
- Was diseased in his feet his last 2 years
- Ruled 41 years

**JEHOSHAPHAT**

- 4th king of the South
- Son of Asa
- Began in the 4th year of Ahab of the North
- Conducted religious reforms
- Had God's law taught throughout his kingdom
- Philistines and Arabs brought him tribute
- Made peace with Ahab and Israel
- Joined Ahab in battle for Ramoth-gilead
- Appointed judges throughout the land
- Was victor over Moab, and Ammon
- His and Ahaziah's ships were destroyed
- His son Jehoram ruled with him in his final years
- He, Israel, and Edom were victors over Edom
- Ruled 25 years

**JEHORAM**

- 5th king of the South
- Son of Jehoshaphat
- Killed his brothers and some priests
- Married Athaliah
- Edom and Libnah revolted from him
- God predicted his violent death and other calamities
- Was defeated by Philistia, Arabia, and Ethiopia
- His diseased bowels ultimately dropped out
- Ruled 8 years

**AHAZIAH**

- 6th king of the South
- Son of Jehoram
- His mother Athaliah was his counselor
- Helped Jehoram of the North in battle for Ramoth-gilead
- Was killed by Jehu while visiting the recovering Jehoram
- Ruled 1 year

**ATHALIAH**

- 7th ruler of the South
- Daughter of Ahab and Jezebel
- Destroyed the royal seed and usurped the throne
- Was killed at the order of the priest Jehoiada
- Ruled 6 years

**JOASH**

- 8th king of the South
- Son of Ahaziah
- Was secretly rescued from Athaliah and reared by the priest Jehoiada and his wife
- Jehoiada led in his coronation and influenced his reign
- Conducted religious reforms
- Departed from God after Jehoiada's death
- Was defeated by Syria
- Bought off Syria
- Was killed by his servants
- Ruled 40 years

**AMAZIAH**

- 9th king of the South
- Son of Joash
- Killed his father's assassins
- God told him not to hire Israelite soldiers for war with Edom
- Defeated Edom
- Began worshiping some of Edom's idols
- Challenged Jehoash of the North and lost
- Was killed by his servants
- Ruled 29 years

**UZZIAH**

- 10th king of the South
- Son of Amaziah
- Served Jehovah
- Regained Elath
- Defeated Philistia, Arabia, and Ammon
- Built military machines
- Built, planted, and had much cattle
- Was known all over the world
- Became leprous over burning incense in the temple

- Jotham reigned for him afterwards
- Ruled 52 years

#### JOTHAM

- 11th king of the South
- Son of Uzziah
- Subdued Ammon
- Fought with Israel and Syria
- Ruled 16 years

#### AHAZ

- 12th king of the South
- Son of Jotham
- The worst king Judah had had for some time
- Lost Elath to Syria
- Was defeated by Edom and Philistia
- Hired Assyria against Israel and Syria
- Became tributary to Assyria
- Built an altar like one he saw at Damascus
- Ruled 16 years

#### HEZEKIAH

- 13th king of the South
- Son of Ahaz
- Conducted religious reforms
- Invited the North to a great Passover
- Conducted even greater reforms
- Defeated Philistia
- Brought the water of Gihon Spring into the city by tunnel
- Was healed and promised 15 more years of life
- Was delivered from Sennacherib
- Showed his treasures to Babylonian visitors
- Isaiah prophesied in his days
- Ruled 29 years

#### MANASSEH

- 14th king of the South
- Son of Hezekiah
- The worst king of Judah
- Shed much innocent blood
- Was taken captive to Babylon
- Repented and was returned to his throne in Jerusalem
- Conducted religious reforms
- Ruled 52 years

#### AMON

- 15th king of the South
- Son of Manasseh

- Revived idol worship
- Was killed by his servants
- Ruled 2 years

#### JOSIAH

- 16th king of the South
- Son of Amon
- One of Judah's best kings
- Conducted religious reforms
- The book of the law was found amid temple rubble
- Destroyed the Bethel altar and burned priests' bones on it
- Held the greatest passover since Samuel
- Was Judah's last good king
- Was killed by Pharaoh-Necho
- Jeremiah conducted a national lamentation for him
- Ruled 31 years

#### JEHOAHAZ

- 17th king of the South
- Son of Josiah
- Was deposed by Pharaoh-Necho
- Ruled 3 months
- Died a captive in Egypt

#### JEHOIAKIM

- 18th king of the South
- Son of Josiah
- Was tributary to Egypt
- Burned some of Jeremiah's writings
- Went to Babylon in the 1st captivity
- Ruled 11 years
- Died a captive in Babylon

#### JEHOIACHIN

- 19th king of the South
- Son of Jehoiakim
- Fell to Babylon in the 2nd Captivity
- Ruled 3 months and 10 days
- Was captive in Babylon for 37 years before being freed

#### ZEDEKIAH

- 20th and last king of the South
- Son of Jehoiakim
- Often consulted Jeremiah but did not obey his counsel
- Judah's end came under him
- Babylon killed his sons before his eyes, put out his own eyes, and he was taken to Babylon.

## QUIZ OVER "INFORMATION ABOUT THE KINGS OF JUDAH"

1. How many years did Rehoboam walk with God?
2. Who carried Rehoboam's treasures to Egypt?
3. Rehoboam had \_\_\_ wives, \_\_\_ concubines, \_\_\_ sons, and \_\_\_ daughters.
4. Abijah defeated \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Abijah had \_\_\_ wives, \_\_\_ sons, and \_\_\_ daughters.
6. How many Ethiopians did Asa defeat?
7. Asa stopped \_\_\_\_\_ from fortifying Ramah.
8. In Asa's latter years, where was he diseased?
9. With what wicked king of the North did Jehoshaphat make peace?
10. Who killed his brothers when he became the king?
11. How did Jehoram die?
12. When was Ahaziah killed?
13. Who usurped the throne of Judah?
14. Who ordered her killed?
15. Who reared Joash?
16. Who worshiped some of Edom's idols after defeating Edom?
17. Who became leprous?
18. Who built an altar like one he saw at Damascus?
19. Who brought the water of Gihon Spring into Jerusalem by a tunnel?
20. How many more years of life was Hezekiah promised?
21. Where was the book of the law found?
22. On what altar did Josiah burn priests' bones?
23. Who killed Josiah?
24. Who conducted a national lamentation for Josiah?
25. Who died a captive in Egypt?
26. Who burned some of Jeremiah's writings?
27. Who was a captive in Babylon for 37 years?
28. What prophet did Zedekiah frequently consult?
29. Tell 2 of the 3 hardships Babylon brought on Zedekiah.

# Index

- Abednego 88  
Abel-Bethmaachah 73  
Abijah 11, 17-20, 22, 76, 94, 100, 104  
Abraham 9, 28, 41, 45, 52, 67, 77  
Adoraim 18  
Adoram 10  
Ahab 10, 24-36, 39, 42, 43, 51, 54-56, 58-60, 62, 70, 73, 82, 89, 95, 97, 99-101  
Ahaz 11, 72-74, 76, 84, 94, 102  
Ahaziah 10, 11, 24, 33, 36, 38, 39, 42-44, 53-56, 58-60, 94, 95, 97, 101, 104  
Ahijah 9, 14, 17  
Aijalon 18  
Amariah 36, 37  
Amaziah 11, 35, 62, 65-69, 94, 98, 101  
Ammon 37, 72, 100-102  
Ammonites 37, 72  
Amos 10, 11, 35, 36, 53, 63, 65, 68, 71, 73, 76, 77, 95, 98  
Anglo-Israel theory 76  
Aphek 31, 66  
Arabia 54, 100, 101  
Argob 72  
Arieh 72  
Arza 23  
Asa 11, 20-26, 33, 54, 94, 96, 97, 100, 104  
Ashkelon 80  
Athaliah 11, 24, 25, 33, 54, 55, 60-63, 65, 94, 97, 100, 101  
Azariah 21, 22, 54, 61, 69, 71  
Azekah 18  
Baal 22, 25-29, 34, 36, 39, 59-63, 70, 73, 82, 97  
Baalism 25-27, 55, 59, 61, 62, 95  
Baalzebub 38, 39, 97  
Baasha 10, 11, 17, 20-25, 33, 36, 55, 94-96, 100  
Baruch 87, 88  
Bathsheba 32  
Bay of Acre 28  
Beersheba 8, 29, 36  
Benjamin 10, 12, 18, 85  
Ben-hadad 22, 23, 30-32, 34, 35, 63, 64, 67, 98  
Bethel 14-16, 19, 20, 25, 39-42, 60, 64, 68, 85, 86, 96, 103  
Bethlehem 18  
Black Obelisk 24  
British-Israel 76  
British Museum 79  
Brook Kishon 28  
Carchemish 86, 88  
Chemosh 42, 44  
Damascus 29, 31, 33, 48, 50, 52, 53, 63, 73, 74, 102, 104  
Dan 8, 12, 14, 15, 20, 48, 60, 64, 68, 70, 75, 76, 89, 96  
David -5--7, 9, 14-18, 20, 21, 25, 31, 32, 53, 54, 56, 61, 62, 65, 72-77, 84-87  
Dead Sea 7, 37, 38, 42, 43, 68  
Dibon 24  
Ecclesiastes 8  
Edom 37, 38, 43, 44, 54, 67, 68, 94, 97, 100-102, 104  
Egypt 7, 9, 14, 18, 19, 22, 29, 37, 52, 58, 76, 81, 87, 90, 94, 96, 99, 103, 104  
Ekron 23, 38, 39, 80  
Elah 10, 22-25, 58, 95, 96  
Elath 69, 73, 101, 102  
Eliakim 87  
Eliezer 38  
Elijah 22, 26-30, 32-35, 38-43, 45, 46, 52, 54, 55, 58-60, 66, 95, 97  
Elisha 29, 30, 39-53, 55, 59, 63, 66, 67, 95, 97, 98  
Elishaphat 61  
Engedi 37  
Essarhaddon 83  
Ethiopian 21, 91  
Euphrates 7  
Ezion-geber 7, 8, 33  
Galilee 31, 54, 73  
Gath 18  
Gehazi 30, 45-49, 51, 52  
Gershon 76  
Gezer 23, 25  
Gibbethon 21, 23  
Gibeon 7, 89  
Gihon Spring 7, 80, 102, 104  
Gilgal 39, 41, 46, 47  
Glueck 7  
Goliath 31  
Gur 56  
Hadad 9, 22, 23, 30-32, 34, 35, 63, 64, 67, 98  
Hanani 22, 35, 36, 53  
Hananiah 35, 89  
Hazeal 52-55, 59, 63-65, 67, 95, 98  
Hazor 73  
Hebron 18  
Hezekiah 11, 25, 62, 74-76, 78-84, 86, 88, 90, 94, 102, 104  
Hiel 25, 26  
Hoshea 10-12, 74, 76, 95, 99  
Ibleam 56, 58  
Isaac 28, 41, 52, 67  
Isaiah 72, 73, 79-83, 102  
Ishmael 61  
Israel -5-, 7-12, 15, 16, 18-32, 34-37, 39, 40, 42-45, 47-51, 53-56, 58-60, 63, 64, 66-77, 82-86, 91, 94-96, 99, 100, 102  
Istanbul 80  
Janoah 73  
Jeconiah 89  
Jehoahaz 10, 11, 54, 60, 63, 64, 66-68, 70, 86, 87, 94, 95, 98, 103  
Jehoiachin 11, 12, 86, 88, 94, 103  
Jehoiada 60-65, 94, 101  
Jehoram 10, 11, 24, 25, 33, 39, 42, 43, 51-56, 58-61, 67, 94, 95, 97, 100, 101, 104  
Jehoshaphat 11, 25, 26, 33-38, 42, 43, 53-56, 94, 97, 100, 104  
Jehosheba 60, 61  
Jehozabad 65  
Jehu 10, 11, 21, 23, 24, 33, 36, 39, 53, 55, 56, 58-61, 63, 70, 94, 95, 97, 98, 101  
Jeremiah 74, 86-92, 103  
Jericho 20, 25, 26, 40-42, 47, 52, 92  
Jeroboam -5-, 9-11, 14-21, 23-25, 33, 35, 55, 60, 63, 68-71, 75, 76, 85, 94-96, 98-100  
Jeroboam II 10, 60, 68-70, 95, 98  
Jerusalem 7-12, 14, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 34-37, 53-56, 61, 64, 65, 68, 69, 72-75, 79-92, 94, 102, 104  
Jezebel 24-29, 32, 33, 35, 36, 39, 41, 54-56, 58-62, 73, 82, 95, 97, 101  
Jezreel 27-29, 31-33, 35, 54-56, 58, 60, 61  
Joash 10, 11, 60-67, 85, 94, 98, 99, 101, 104  
John the Baptist 27, 41  
Jonadab 59  
Joppa 38  
Jordan Valley 7, 29  
Josephus 61, 66, 83, 88  
Joshua 9, 11, 25, 30, 34, 62, 83  
Josiah 11, 15, 78, 82, 84-87, 90, 94, 103, 104  
Jotham 11, 70-73, 94, 99, 102

Judah -5-, 8, 10-12, 14-16, 18-26, 29, 33, 37, 38, 43, 44, 53, 54, 56, 59-61, 63-65, 67-76, 79-92, 94, 99, 102, 104  
 Kedesh 73  
 Kenites 59  
 Kidron Valley 7, 80  
 Kohath 76  
 Lachish 18, 69, 79, 82  
 Levi 14, 76  
 Levites 14, 19, 26, 34, 36, 37, 63, 75, 76, 85  
 Libnah 54, 79, 81, 82, 100  
 Lot 76  
 Maaseiah 61, 85  
 Manasseh 11, 12, 63, 82-85, 94, 102  
 Mareshah 18  
 Maritime plain 23, 28, 47  
 Mary 79  
 Mattan 61  
 Mattaniah 89  
 Matthew 30  
 Medes 76  
 Mediterranean Sea 28  
 Megiddo 25, 56, 86  
 Menahem 11, 12, 70, 71, 73, 95, 98, 99  
 Merari 76  
 Mesha 42-44  
 Meshach 88  
 Micah 24, 88  
 Micaiah 33-35, 95, 97  
 Moab 24, 33, 36-38, 42-45, 51, 100  
 Moabite Stone 24, 42  
 Moloch 73, 83  
 Moses 7, 9, 18, 21, 27, 29, 30, 34, 37, 41, 51, 61, 66, 70, 74, 77, 79, 80  
 Mt. Carmel 27-29, 32, 34, 39, 42, 45, 60, 97  
 Mt. Ephraim 36  
 Mt. Sinai 7, 29, 41, 55  
 Mt. Zemaraim 19  
 Naaman 45, 47-49, 52, 53, 97  
 Naboth 32, 33, 35, 51  
 Nadab 10, 20, 21, 24, 25, 94, 96  
 Nathan 75  
 Nebuchadnezzar 70, 83, 84, 88-90, 92  
 Nineveh 11, 68, 79, 82, 86  
 Nisroch 82  
 Obadiah 27-29  
 Omri 10, 11, 23-25, 35, 39, 42, 55, 57, 59, 95-97  
 Ophir 7, 8, 38  
 Palestine 16, 19, 76, 77, 89  
 Passover 7, 14, 41, 75, 86, 102, 103  
 Pekahiah 11, 71, 72, 95, 99  
 Peniel 10  
 Pentecost 7, 14, 59  
 Penuel 10, 12  
 Petra 67  
 Pharaoh-Necho 86-88, 103  
 Pharaoh 18, 34, 86-88, 103  
 Philistines 21, 23, 38, 69, 73, 74, 76, 100  
 Philistine Plain 22  
 Phoenicia 7, 25, 27  
 Pool of Siloam 80  
 Proverbs 8  
 Pul 71, 73  
 Rabshakeh 81, 82  
 Ramah 22, 91, 92, 100, 104  
 Ramoth-gilead 33-35, 100, 101  
 Red Sea 8, 37, 38, 69, 73  
 Rehoboam -5-, 9-11, 14, 17-20, 75, 94, 96, 99, 100, 104  
 Rezin 72-74  
 Riblah 87, 92  
 Samaria 10, 12, 16, 24, 25, 30, 32, 34, 35, 38, 42, 45, 48-52, 56, 59, 60, 63, 68, 72, 76, 77, 79, 95, 97  
 Samaritan people 77  
 Sargon 76, 79  
 Saul -5-, 7, 17, 30, 53, 83  
 Sea of Galilee 31  
 Sennacherib 79-82, 102  
 Shadrach 88  
 Shallum 11, 70, 71, 87, 95, 98  
 Shalmaneser 24, 74, 76  
 Sheba 8  
 Shechem 9, 10, 12  
 Shemaiah 10, 18, 89  
 Shoco 18  
 Shunammite 45, 51, 52  
 Siloam 80  
 Solomon -5--10, 17, 18, 20, 37, 38, 40, 75, 85, 86, 89, 96, 99  
 Song of Solomon 8  
 Spain 38  
 Syria 22, 30, 31, 33-36, 47, 48, 50, 52, 53, 55, 59, 63-67, 72-74, 94, 95, 97-99, 101, 102  
 Tabernacle 7, 29  
 Tarshish 7, 8, 38  
 Terah 37  
 Tibni 23, 24, 96  
 Tiglath-pileser 73, 74  
 Tiphshah 70  
 Tirzah 10, 12, 22, 23  
 Tishbeh 26, 28, 40  
 Tishbite 38, 40, 58  
 Tyre 80  
 Uriah 32  
 Urijah 88  
 Uzziah 11, 69-72, 94, 98, 99, 101, 102  
 Valley of Jezreel 31  
 Valley of Salt 67  
 Zabad 65  
 Zachariah 69, 95, 98  
 Zadok 7  
 Zarephath 27, 29, 45, 46  
 Zebadiah 36, 37  
 Zechariah 10, 60, 64, 65, 69, 70  
 Zedekiah 11, 12, 34, 35, 86, 89-92, 94, 103, 104  
 Zimri 10, 11, 23-25, 58, 95, 96  
 Ziph 18  
 Zorah 18



## Notes

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