



PT Butler

Bible Study Notebooks

Study of 2nd Kings

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2nd Kings

Introduction

The saddest of all books of Jewish history is 2 Kings; it records the carrying away into captivity of Israel by Assyria in 721 B.C. and the carrying away into captivity of Judah by Babylon in 606-586 B.C. In the three centuries covered, the “Elizabethan Era” of Jewish literature, lived nearly all of the great prophets who lived and loved, declared and demonstrated, pleaded and prayed for Israel and Judah. Elijah, Elisha, Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah all ministered in this period; but Isaiah summarized the attitude of the populace by pithily asking, “Who has believed our report?”

It should be entitled, *The Book of Captivity*; maybe, *The Incurably Idolatrous Israelites*. It has 25 chapters, 719 verses and takes about one and a half hours to read. It was written about 586 B.C. or shortly thereafter, to the Jewish nation, by Jeremiah or his “secretary” Baruch. It covers the period of Jewish history from king Ahab to the Captivity—about 310 years. The central theme is the record of Israel’s and Judah’s corruption and captivity. The recurring theme of the book is, “And he (such and such a king) did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.”

Several facts are interesting to note. 1 Kings begins with King David and 2 Kings ends with the King of Babylon. 1 Kings opens with the temple built and 2 Kings closes with the temple destroyed. 1 Kings commences with David’s first successor on the throne of his kingdom and 2 Kings concludes with David’s last successor released from the house of his captivity in a heathen land. The two books were in the original Hebrew text, one book, as is also true of 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Chronicles. They were divided by the Septuagint (a.k.a. “LXX”) translators when the books were translated from the briefer Hebrew language into the bulkier Greek language.

The first half of the book of 2 Kings deals largely with an account of Elisha’s ministry of 66 years during which he, with a double portion of the Spirit Elijah had, performed 16 miracles compared to the 8 performed by Elijah. These were almost all deeds of beneficence (2:14,21,24; 3:20; 4:1-6,16,17,35,42,43; 5:10,27; 6:6,17,18,20; 13:21). The second half of the book deals with events leading to the fall of Samaria (the capital city of the northern kingdom Israel), with the exile of Israel and the fall of Jerusalem with the exile of Judah. Israel had 19 kings, not one being good; Judah had 19 kings and one queen, eight of whom were good. God’s purposes prevailed. Mercy forsaken, wrath fallen. The ten tribes of Israel never returned as a nation, except for a few individuals (according to Ezra). But a remnant of some 50,000 faithful souls (including a few descendants of the 10 northern tribes) did return to Judah and rebuilt Jerusalem, re-instituted the Jewish nation, rebuilt the Jewish temple, and carried forward the coming and enthronement of Israel’s true King and Savior, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who infinitely exceeds every ideal of kingship so miserably lacking in even the best of Judah’s kings (David, Hezekiah, and Josiah).

2 Kings teaches us how power can be used in such extremely wicked ways when linked with idolatry, how widely pervasive it can become when rulers are wicked, and how difficult it becomes to rid a society of such powerful wickedness. It also teaches us that God's spokesmen (e.g. the few good prophets) with courage born of faith and obedience in the word of God can "leaven" a wicked society enough to save a "remnant" who can carry on God's redemptive plan in the earth.

A suggested outline of 1 Kings:

I The contamination of the Israelites, 1:1—8:15)

The mean condition illustrated by Ahaziah, 1:1-2

The mission of Elijah, 1:3—2:11

The ministry of Elisha, 2:12—8:15

II The corruption of the Israelites, 8:16—25:7

The sovereigns in earlier days (note the earlier kings in 1 Kings)

The succession of kings until the captivity of Israel, 8:16—18:12

The succession of kings until the captivity of Judah, 18:13—25:30

III The captivity of the Israelites, 23:31—25:30

Israel

Judah

2 Kings 1:1—4:44

It depends on who the king is as to whether it is out-of-character for a king to reject the instructions of a God-sent prophet or not. A few kings **did give heed** to the prophets whom God sent—David, Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, Josiah—all kings of Judah—but **none** of the kings of Israel paid heed to the prophets sent to them (i.e., Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah). Ahaziah was a king over Israel. One needs to read 1 Kings 22:51-53 to be aware of the wickedness of Ahaziah and the background as to why he rejected the instructions of Elijah the prophets. Although lying on a bed of affliction and under the divine sentence of death, Ahaziah was so hardened, unrepentant and defiant that he ordered a unit of 50 soldiers to immediately arrest Elijah—undoubtedly to carry through on the threats his mother, Jezebel, made about killing Elijah. Ahaziah was the son of Ahab and Jezebel! Enough said right there! He was reared in a palace where God, his word and his prophets were mocked and persecuted. He was reared in a home that was totally idolatrous. He was reared in a lineage of rebellion, idolatry, assassination and depravity all the way back to Jeroboam I. Reading the history of the kings of Israel who contemptuously defied the word of God and the messengers of God should not astound us. We have seen it happen in the history of our own time and country (as well as countries all over the world today). We have had presidents of the U.S. who have stated their belief in the theory of evolution (Woodrow Wilson for only one). We have had president assassinated and made victims of attempted assassination. We had a president carry his Bible and attend church and then lie under oath about his crimes and sins. We have had other presidents commit illicit sexual liaisons while in office and “sell” their influence for money and votes. **Power** of public office is extremely dangerous when held by those who are not surrendered to God’s sovereignty in their lives! “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely” said Lord Acton. Political and economic power are two of the greatest temptations known to man to corrupt his soul if he is not a **sincere believer in Almighty God!** The pages of the Bible and all secular history are filled, one after another, with the evidence proving this to be true. Abigail Adams (wife of John Adams, 2nd U.S. president) said, “I am more and more convinced that man is a dangerous creature; and that power, whether vested in many or a few, is ever grasping, and like the grave, cries ‘Give, give!’” James Russell Lowell wrote, “From the summit of power men no longer turn their eyes upward, but begin to look about them.” The same temptation to corruption of the soul applies when any man or group of men **in the church of the Lord Jesus** have positions of authority and “no longer turn their eyes upward” to the fact that they are merely servants of the King of kings!

The captain of 50 approached Elijah, addressed him by his customary title (“man of God”) and ordered him by the authority of the king to come down from the hilltop and surrender (1:9-15). Elijah prayed that God would vindicate his prophetic power and authority by destroying this band of soldiers. God heard that prayer, and fire came down from heaven (lightning?) and consumed the captain and his fifty men. Ahaziah sent another 50 and they, too, were consumed. The third company of 50 soldiers begged for their lives to be spared, and God told Elijah to go with them to the king and deliver the king’s death sentence to him. Because of his gross apostasy and denial of the power and deity of Jehovah God, by sending to “inquire” of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, about his destiny, Ahaziah was going to die from his injuries (falling through the lattice work of the

palace 1:2). And he died according to the word of the Lord which Elijah had spoken. When Ahaziah died, a man named Jehoram ruled in Israel—and at the same time, a man named Jehoram ruled in Judah—quite a coincidence—don't get them confused! **GOD IS DEADLY SERIOUS ABOUT ANYONE SEEKING THE TRUTH FROM ANY SOURCE OTHER THAN GOD'S SPOKESMEN!** **Since God's spokesmen have left ONLY THE BIBLE as a record of their "speaking," that is where human beings must go to seek the truth of God!** It is the BIBLE, and only the Bible, that interprets for us what history, creation, and humanness mean—where they came from, why they're here and where they're headed (i.e., their destiny). Seeking guidance and direction from God's revealed truth (the Bible) for every aspect of human endeavor and experience is especially crucial for those in positions of human leadership—whether secular or in the church! God will not be mocked by those who do otherwise—HE IS SERIOUS ABOUT IT!

After Elisha's call to be a prophet of God (1 Kings 19:15-21) to step into the place of Elijah, he became the constant companion and faithful attendant of Elijah. Elijah had no fixed place of residence. He wandered from place to place as the Spirit of God led him. Arriving at Gilgal (near Shechem), Elijah asked Elisha three times to remain behind while he went elsewhere. Elijah knew the Lord was about to replace him and his days were numbered on the earth. In addition to probably wishing to spend his final days alone, praying and worshiping the Lord who had seen him through many frightful experiences, Elijah was putting Elisha to the test of the rigors of being a prophet of God. Elisha, undoubtedly had a revelation from the Lord through Elijah himself, that Elijah would shortly be departing from the earth and he desperately wanted to stay at Elijah's side for instruction and encouragement for the fearful task that lay before him. The "sons of the prophets" tried to dissuade Elisha, but Elisha told them to "keep still" because he knew what the Lord was doing and what he was supposed to do—and so did Elijah. **One of the wisest programs the church of Christ has instituted in recent years is that of *intern periods for young Bible college students as missionaries and "ministers" under the guidance, direction and encouragement of those who have already "been-through-the-mill."*** The church and the Bible colleges must get behind these *intern programs* financially, educationally and in all other respects. To dispense with these programs would do much damage to the ministry for the Lord in the 21st century!

The "falling mantle" (which mantle had just been used in a miraculous way), the "chariots of fire" and the "whirlwind" were **signs** that God had granted an abundance of miraculous signs through these two men to **substantiate their authority to speak for Almighty God about "unseen" and "divine" matters!** When Elijah rolled up his mantle until it was like a rod and smote the Jordan River so that the waters parted and the two prophets passed over on dry land, it was probably signifying that Israel should regard Elijah and Elisha as a "second Moses and Joshua" and that Israel should give them the same credence and obedience their ancestors had given to Moses and Joshua. When Elijah was about to leave the earth he impulsively wished to grant his young "under-study" a gift. Elisha requested "a double portion" of Elijah's "spirit" which, in essence, is asking to become the "heir" to Elijah's prophetic office. That, of course, was not Elijah's to give but Elijah said, "If you see me taken from you, it shall be to you thus..." If God should grant to Elisha the power to see the invisible (see 2 Kings 6:17) "chariots of fire" of the Lord's host then Elisha could be assured of his request. Elisha saw the fiery chariots whisk Elijah away

in the midst of a whirlwind and cried out in awe and wonder, “My father, My father! The chariot of Israel and its horses!” Then in grief at being parted from his courageous and godly mentor, Elisha tore his clothes. **The Bible is a proven, accurate, historically trustworthy record of sufficient miracles and signs at the mouth and hands of Jesus Christ of Nazareth IN SUFFICIENT AMOUNT AND SWORN TO AND WITNESSED BY SUFFICIENT WITNESSES that any honest-minded person can surrender life and property to the revealed wishes of Jesus (see John 20:30-31; 1 John 1:1-4, etc.). CHRIST IS GREATER THAN EITHER MOSES OR ELIJAH (Matt. 17:1-8) AND ALL AUTHORITY RESTS IN HIS WORD (Matt. 28:1–20).**

Elisha was bald-headed. That was an unusual sight among the Hebrews, and usually considered a sign of punishment for some great sin (Isa. 3::24; 15:2; 22:12; Jer. 47:5; 48:37; Ezek. 7:18). It was often a sign that the person had leprosy (Lev. 13:41-43). On the outskirts of the city of Bethel (Bethel means, “House of God”), a gang of teen-aged men, or older, (Hebrew *n’adyim* young lads, not “children” as in the KJV) began harassing (and probably mocking and shaming) Elisha for his baldness. They cried, over and over, “Go up” (probably meaning, “Get yourself out of here and go up to the priests with your leprosy or sin”). They followed him, hooting and jeering the **spokesman of God** who was God’s **representative** to Israel. They should have been begging Elisha for some instruction from God’s law, but they lived in Israel where idolatry was the state religion, so they were not merely mocking Elisha—they were mocking God! **WHAT THEY WERE DOING WAS SERIOUS BLASPHEMY!** Under God’s law (Deut. 27:11-26) those who were “ministers” of God’s word were commanded to “curse” those who blasphemed or were idolaters. Elisha was simply obeying God’s law given to Moses. Elisha had no way of knowing what God would do to these mockers—he did what he was supposed to do and waited for God to do whatever God wanted to do! It was God who stirred up the bears—Elisha had no power over the bears to make them do what they did! We note that the bears did not kill the young ruffians—merely mauled them to teach them a severe lesson about disrespect for those who speak with the authority of God. Bears are referred to 14 times in the Bible. *Ursus syriacus*, the brown bear of Syria is the “bear” of the OT. Isaiah, Daniel (OT) and John (NT) all had visions in which the bear figured prominently. **The NT is unequivocal that true apostles, prophets, elders, evangelists and teachers of God’s word are not to be disrespected—they are to be honored and obeyed (Acts 5:1-6; 13:4-12; 1 Thess. 3:14; 1 Tim. 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-26; Heb. 13:7, 17, etc.).** Those who reject God’s messengers, reject God (Matt. 20:24-25)—those who receive God’s messengers receive God (Matt. 10:40-42). **IT IS A SERIOUS MATTER TO MOCK THOSE WHO SERVE GOD AND CHRIST IN THE WORLD—LET ALONE TO DO THEM BODILY HARM!**

The Lord does as he pleases—with whom he pleases! Who are we to question how the Lord carries out his redemptive program! That said, I believe the Lord was merciful to the two unbelievers, Jehoram, king of Israel, and the king of Edom (we don’t know his name) because Jehoshaphat, king of Judah was insistent that they seek the counsel of the Lord through the Lord’s prophet, Elisha, before they undertook to bring down the uprising and rebellion of Moab (2 Kings 3:11-14). Secondly, God’s deliverance of this unholy alliance from their desperate straits by miracles at the mouth of Elisha was an excellent opportunity for the Lord to demonstrate he had anointed Elisha as his true

spokesman for mankind. For the first time before the leadership of both kings of the “divided-nation,” God demonstrated his divine power through Elisha so that there could be no mistaking to whom these “leaders” should go for divine instruction! Why, after such miracles shown these two leaders, would all the subsequent kings of Israel and most of those of Judah not turn whole-heartedly to giving heed to the word of the Lord in their administration of his “kingdom.?” That’s the \$64 billion question! Miracles do not overpower people’s God-given freedom to think or choose. Miracles merely give evidence that what God is saying through his spokesmen is directly from God and thus authoritative. But God will not violate or usurp the awesome power of any human being to make a choice once the evidence has been within his/her cognizance. In other words, miracles do not *automatically* cause people to be converted—they merely nudge, urge, persuade, or signal that the person **should** choose to be converted! The divinely inspired and supervised records of both the OT and NT contain *more than enough* documentation that what is written there is God’s truth. “The ball is now in the court” of all who have access to a Bible (or a preacher of the Bible) in their own language. They must make the choice of their eternal destiny!

The king of Moab, Mesha, was unwilling to surrender to the coalition of Israel, Judah and Edom! He was defiant and would find some way to extricate himself and his people from what appeared to be certain defeat and plunder. No matter how drastic the measure, the king of Moab was willing to take it to call upon his “gods” and the “god” of Edom to defeat the “God” of Israel (there seems to be archaeological evidence that the Edomites had no “altars” to any “gods”). Remember, the Moabites were descendants of Lot, but they had become idolaters. They worshiped Chemosh (according to the Moabite Stone and Num. 21:29; Jer. 48:7,13,46). Solomon introduced the worship of Chemosh into Jerusalem to please a foreign wife (1 Kings 11:7,33)—Josiah put an end to the worship of Chemosh by the people of Judah (2 Kings 23:13). Evidently, Mesha, king of Moab, thought his close genetic relation to the Jews and his close religious (Chemosh) relation to what Solomon, himself, had introduced, might bring some favor to his cause. Mesha must have thought that one supreme act of devotion to Chemosh would bring miraculous deliverance to him. With this thought in mind, Mesha took the crown prince, his son, and offered him up as a burnt offering to Chemosh upon the city wall in full view of both those who defended the city and those who were attacking it! The sight of their king sacrificing his own firstborn son so stirred up the fury of the remaining Moabites against Israel that they fought with almost superhuman strength and determination. In the face of the determined opposition the Israeli coalition began to weaken. Finally, the campaign was called off and each of the confederates returned to his own land (3:27). Perhaps God was angry with Israel because of what they had driven the king of Moab to do, or, one or more of the members of the coalition were so angry and disgusted with what the king of Moab had done they simply refused to press the attack further. **Before we become too aghast at what the king of Moab did, we must remember that American fathers and mothers have “sacrificed” their sons and daughters in wars in defense of their liberties—perhaps not in a religious or an idolatrous sense, but have done so nevertheless (and so have fathers and mothers of many other countries, in many other times).** It was Barry Goldwater who said “I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue.” OF COURSE, WE DO NOT ADVOCATE IDOLATRY, BUT MUST RECOGNIZE THAT HUMAN BEINGS WILL

TAKE “EXTREME” MEASURES TO PROCURE THEIR FREEDOM!

Shunem was a place belonging to the tribe of Issachar (Josh. 19:18). The Philistines encamped at Shunem before they fought at Gilboa (1 Sam. 28:4). David’s “nurse,” Abishag (1 Kings 1:3) came from Shunem. It lies in a very rich section of Palestine, about 10 miles north of Jezreel and 9 miles south of Endor (slightly s.w. of the mouth of the Sea of Galilee) at the foot of “Little Hermon” mountain. A “great lady” of Shunem befriended Elisha and fed him whenever he was in that area. She was a woman of “substance” and she let her heart be entered by the Lord which made her very hospitable. She even suggested to her husband that a special room be built for the prophet “on the wall” of their home—a small addition to the upper chamber of the house—to furnish the “man of God” (Elisha) a private apartment in which to sleep and study. Elisha was very grateful and wished to give something to her in return. Elisha had his servant, Gehazi, bring the woman to him that he might return her gracious hospitality. Gehazi told Elisha that the woman was barren and her husband was old (4:14). To be barren was regarded by all Hebrew women as an unbearable reproach—although the woman had made no complaint. When the woman finally came to Elisha he announced to her that “about this season when the time comes around” (i.e., about this time next year) she would be embracing a son! The Shunammite woman was incredulous (like Sarah)—she thought Elisha was jesting with her and begged him not to deceive her. But, just as Elisha said, next year, she miraculously gave birth to a son! **About 4 or 5 years later, the son (probably from heat stroke) died in his mother’s lap.** She undoubtedly knew of the fact that Elijah, Elisha’s predecessor, had raised a young lad from the dead, so, in her desperation, she rode 15 miles on a donkey to find Elisha. Elisha sent Gehazi ahead of himself and the woman toward her home where Gehazi’s attempt to resurrect the boy failed. Elisha came and saw the child lying **dead** (not fainted), laid himself upon the child and **RESURRECTED HIM FROM THE DEAD!** Why did the Lord give her a son and then about 5 years later take him away in death? To be honest, we do not know all the facts or reason behind the Lord’s doing here. Even Elisha said, “Let her alone, for she is in better distress, and the Lord has hidden it from me, and has not told me” (4:27). All we can speculate about the Lord’s reason behind this incident is from what we know the Bible teaches about the Lord’s “testing” of those who claim to believe— (a) the Lord wished to test the woman’s faith in God (or reward her faith) and in the prophetic office of Elisha; (b) the Lord wished to give that area another miraculous demonstration of Elisha’s authority to be God’s spokesman. That was an area very far north of the main population of the Hebrews in Palestine. We know the NT tells us that God allows such things to occur so that we will “learn to rely on him God who raises the dead” (2 Cor. 1:8-11) and that “for the moment **all** discipline seems painful rather pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Heb. 12:11) and that we all “have need of endurance, so that we may do the will of God and receive what is promised” (Heb. 10:36). **THIS IS HOW THE LORD TRIES TO WORK HIS REDEMPTION IN OUR LIVES! IT DOES NOT SEEM AT THE MOMENT VERY PLEASANT—BUT BY FAITH AND ENDURANCE WE ARE TRANSFORMED THROUGH IT INTO THE LIKENESS OF HIS PRECIOUS SON—JESUS CHRIST, “who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2).**

2 Kings 5:1—7:20

Here is a Hebrew young woman taken from her home as a prisoner of war and forced to become a servant in the home of a Syrian (Aramean—Aram is the same as Syria) army captain, Naaman, with leprosy, who was instrumental in her capture (and who knows what had happened to her parents). She has probably been separated from her family, humiliated by some in the household of Naaman, and with no hope of ever returning home to Palestine. How could she be so very kind as to suggest to Naaman's wife that he might be cured if he could go to the prophet of God, Elisha, in Samaria? She had to have a heart of forgiveness—of compassion—of righteousness—of caring. She had to have the Holy Spirit of God in her implanted in her young heart through the teaching of the word of God by her parents! No one gets compassion on their own—no one learns that kind of forgiveness on their own. *Take for example the attitude and actions of most modern Israelis and Syrians toward one another—VENGEANCE, RETALIATION!* **This (and numerous other passages in both OT and NT) proves to me that there were people of the Old Testament times who had the indwelling Holy Spirit of God in their hearts (e.g. Psa. 51:11; Isa. 63:10-11; Rom. 4:22; 8:9-11, etc.).** Only the possession of the Holy Spirit of God can prompt a human being to “love their enemies and pray for those that persecute them” (Matt. 5:44-45; Rom. 12:14-21).

When Elisha told Naaman to go and “wash” (Heb. *rokhats*, **bathe**) himself seven times in the Jordan River, Naaman was angry and went away, saying, “I thought that he would surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure the leper.” Naaman thought the “clean” rivers of his own country were better suited in which to **bathe** if that was all that was necessary. Naaman was looking for some “hocus-pocus” kind of magic like the pagan soothsayers of his own idolatrous gods might perform—some “great show.” But when Naaman finally obeyed the word of God's prophet and “**dipped**” himself 7 times in the Jordan River, behold, his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean. Let us digress here for a moment---The Hebrew word translated “**dipped**” is **toval** (2 Kings 5:14) and in all major English versions (KJV, RSV, NIV, ASV, ESV) is translated “dipped, immersed, submerged.” There are four or five other Hebrew words that mean “wash” and do not mean “dip.” Only the Hebrew word **toval** is translated by the Greek version of the OT (the Septuagint) with the Greek word, **ebaptisato**—the same word that is *transliterated* in all English versions of the NT as the English word “baptized.” QUESTION: Why did the English translators of the OT **translate** the word **toval/ebaptisato** as “dipped” in 2 Kings 5:14, and **transliterate** the same Greek word, **ebaptisato**, as “baptize” instead of “immerse, plunge, dip, submerge?” Surely, the only answer is that those who translated our English versions had some *pedo-baptism* (i.e., “infant-baptism”) bias! **THE ONLY NEW TESTAMENT WORD FOR “BAPTISM” MEANS “IMMERSE, DIP, PLUNGE.”** There is a Greek word *hrantizo* which means, “sprinkle” and a Greek word *cheo* which means “pour.” Neither of those words are ever used in the NT to mean “baptize.” What did “immersing” himself 7 times in the Jordan have to do with Naaman's cure for leprosy?—IT WAS IN THE FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF GOD BY GOD'S SPOKESMAN, ELISHA, THAT PRODUCED THE CURE! It certainly was the water—it certainly was the “goodness”

of Naaman—and he wasn't cured until he had “dipped” himself 7 times, so he wasn't “saved before dipping.” That same principle is true of “baptism” (immersion) to become a Christian (1 Pet. 3:15). There's nothing in the waters of the baptistry that washes away sin—there's nothing in the “goodness” of the candidate for becoming a Christian that takes away his/her sin—the penitent, believing sinner does not have his/her sins forgiven until, by faith, they have completed the command of Christ and his apostles to be “immersed in the name of (by the authority of) Jesus Christ” (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:12-13; 16:15,33;18:8; 22:16; Rom. 6:1-6; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12, *et al.*). Immersion in water is the only act of faith in the scriptures where a believer is said to be **united** with the vicarious death of Christ (Rom. 6:1-6; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12). It is only through **obeying** Christ that his Holy Spirit comes to dwell in a person (John 14:21-23; 15:6-11; 1 John 2:24-25; 3:24; 5:3, etc.).

Remember, the Syrian captain, Naaman, was not a worshiper of the One True God when he first went to Elisha. He was probably a worshiper of some idol of the Syrians. He had seen no miracles (so far as we know)—especially at the hands of Elisha the Hebrew! There were **two** factors which undoubtedly persuaded Naaman to go to Elisha. *First*, there was the “**witness**” of his Hebrew girl-slave. He undoubtedly observed her **faith** being expressed in his household in many ways. He probably often pondered what made her act and react as she did in view of the fact that he had been accustomed to a spirit of retaliation and rebellion by those who had been conquered and indentured as slaves! Perhaps the Hebrew-slave-girl had told her mistress accounts of Jehovah-God's workings among her people and the mistress relayed them to her husband. Whatever the case, when Naaman's wife told him of the slave-girl's suggestion, he went to the king of Syria for permission to go find Elisha. *Second*, after having found Elisha and become disappointed with Elisha's directions, he had to be convinced by the **logic of his servants (5:13)** that he would have done (and ought to do) **anything** God's spokesman told him to do to be cleansed of his leprosy. Naaman had no miracles to go on—only the “witness” of his Hebrew-slave-girl, and the logic of his other servants. Once the miracle had occurred in Naaman's flesh, he certainly would have gone back to Syria and borne “witness” to what Jehovah-God had done for him through Elisha. The Lord accomplished a number of redemptive things through this miracle. It *should* have given proof to any Hebrews who witnessed it that Jehovah-God was the God of the Gentiles, too! The Bible appeals to human reason and logic on the basis of whatever evidence one has that God's spokesmen ought to be obeyed. Paul wrote, “I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your **reasonable** (i.e., in Greek, the word is *logikon*) service. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your **mind** (i.e., the Greek word is *noos*), that you may **prove** (and the Greek word is *dokimazein*, “determine, certify, authenticate”) what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:1-2). Paul told the philosophers at Athens, “we ought **not to think** (and the Greek word is *nomizein*, “use the mind” that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device” (Acts 17:29). You see, the Bible demands that human beings use their minds (logic) reasoning from the “things that have been made” to conclude there is a Divine Creator and Judge (Psa. 19:1-14; Acts 14: 15-18; Rom. 1:18-23, etc.), **and to reason from the New Testament record that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God!**

Why did Naaman want to take “two mules” loaded with earth from Palestine back to Syria with him after his cleansing? (5:17). Most commentators think that Naaman intended to spread it on the surface of a plot in Syria so as to consecrate that ground and make it a suitable place upon which to worship the Lord. In the naive mind of a newly converted pagan, the ground of Israel would be more holy for the worship of the God of Israel than that of Syria. Naaman vows henceforth to cease offering sacrifices to any god other than Jehovah-God (5:17). There was just one catch! He knew that as an officer in the army of the king of Syria he would be required to attend the temple of Rimmon (the Syrian Baal) with his king and compelled to bow before the image of that god (or probably lose his head). While he was not willing to offend his king by refusing these formalities, he realized that this would be inconsistent with the solemn declaration he had just made to worship Jehovah-God only. He asked Elisha’s pardon for having to do so! James Smith says in his commentary on 2 Kings, “Elisha did not declare that God would or would not overlook this departure from strict monotheism. He was not called upon to give an answer since Naaman had not asked a question but had only expressed a wish. Elisha’s ‘Go in peace’ should be taken simply as wishing the peace of God to be on the departing Aramean (v. 19).” Personally, I think Elisha **did** give a concession to Naaman, simply by Elisha’s silence. Clearly, both Elijah and Elisha “made no bones” about condemning idolatry anywhere they found it! Naaman might go into the temple of Rimmon and bow down with all good conscience. One might apply here the principles taught by the apostle Paul about his having a clear conscience in eating meat sacrificed to an idol, since he knew that an idol was not a god (if in doing so he did not cause a “brother” to stumble)—1 Cor. 8:4-6; 9:19-23; 10:23-30) or the principles taught in Romans 14:1-23. Is it asking too much to expect such mature faith in the Syrian captain? No! The same kind of mature faith was to be found in Abraham while he was still a Gentile living in Ur of Chaldea—it was found in many an OT saint. Jesus found such faith in a Gentile (Roman) centurion (Mt. 5:8-13) and a Canaanite woman (Mt. 15:21-31; Mk. 7:24-30).

The king of Syria became incensed at Elisha for warning the king of Israel so that he might evade war with Syria. The king of Syria sent an army of warriors and chariots to Dothan (10 miles north of the capital city, Samaria) to surround the city so that he might seize Elisha (and apparently kill him or bring him back to Syria as a prisoner). When Elisha’s servant (Gehazi?) rose early in the morning and went out, behold an army with horses and chariots was round about the city. The servant said to Elisha, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” *What has happened to the servant’s faith?* It is weak—just like ours in times of desperation! Elisha gave the oft quoted reply, “Fear not, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Then Elisha prayed the Lord would “open the eyes” of his servant that he might see “those that were with them.” The servant saw the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. Were these the same “chariots of fire” that swooped down and took Elijah out of the earth to heaven? Or, was it merely an *illusion*, born of hypnotism or “suggestion” that Elisha had “worked” on his servant? Does God really have invisible (to the human eye) an army upon which he may call to protect his saints? And does God do it? Even in the 21st century? Paul wrote to the Hebrew-Christians, “Of the angels he (God) says, “Who makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire!” (Heb. 1:7). Then Paul continues, “Are they (angels) not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?” (Heb. 1:14). YES! GOD HAS INVISIBLE FORCES AND PERSONS (ANGELS) UPON

WHOM HE MAY CALL TO SEND FORTH TO “MINISTER” (DEFEND, SUPPORT, SUSTAIN) THOSE WHO ARE TO OBTAIN SALVATION! Both the OT and the NT record incidents where God sent these **invisible** “servants” of his into time and space, in differing forms (wind, flame, wasting sickness, human form, etc.) to “protect and serve” (just like our visible police forces) the righteous. It was the *invisible* angels that came to earth and carried the poor beggar to Abraham’s bosom in Paradise (Luke 16:22). It was invisible angels that came and ministered food and sustenance to Jesus after his 40 days of temptation by the devil (Matt. 4:11). It was the invisible “armies of God” all through the book of Revelation that fought against the “beast” for the church (e.g. Rev. 19:14). **God is the same yesterday, today, and forever—why should we think he would not avail himself of *invisible* services of angels on our behalf in the 21st century!**

Elisha prayed the Lord would strike with blindness the army surrounding Samaria. The Lord did so, and Elisha led them all captive into the city of Samaria. The king of Israel wanted to kill all the Syrians but Elisha not only commanded the king of Israel to spare their lives, but he was to feed them and give them to drink and send them on their way back to Syria and their homes and their king. Did the king of Syria have any compassion on Elisha and Israel because of Elisha’s goodness toward his army? NO! He mustered his entire army and went up and besieged Samaria until there was such a great famine the people within the city began to eat the flesh of their own children (2 Kings 6:24-29). **WHAT WOULD CAUSE THE KING OF SYRIA TO BE SO DESPICABLE AS TO RETURN MALICE AND MAYHEM FOR THE GRACIOUSNESS OF ELISHA AND ISRAEL?** The scriptures do not tell us what was in the king of Syria’s heart at this moment! But the scriptures do tell us what causes other men to act so wickedly. **Pride, vindictiveness, hatred, and heathenism!** People become like the “gods” they worship (Psa. 115:1-8; Hosea 9:10). The so-called “gods” of the Aramaic world of that time were “gods” to whom their worshipers performed all kinds of lewd, exploitative sexual indecencies; to whom their worshipers sacrificed their own children as burnt offerings. Human life was counted as worthless relative to one’s pride and fleshly desires! “Ben-hadad” is a title for a ruler. It means, “son of the god Hadad.” The Syrians believed their rulers were lineal descendants of the Syrian god Hadad, the deity of storm and thunder, to be identified with Rimmon (2 Kings 5:18). There are three individuals in the OT called Ben-hadad (the first in 1 Kings 15:18; the second in 1 Kings 20:26ff; and the third in 2 Kings 13:7,25). When human rulers believe themselves to be “god” everything and everyone becomes **relative** to whatever the “god” wishes! He is under no law—he *is* the law unto himself! That kind of power turns humans into beastly tyrants!

The king of Israel wanted to cut Elisha’s head off because he **blamed Elisha** for the terrible things that were going on inside the city of Samaria at the siege of Ben-hadad (6:30-33). The siege resulted in such scarcity of food Israelites were “boiling” their children to eat their flesh (6:24-31). How could Elisha, who had done a very magnanimous and gracious thing in allowing the captured Syrian soldiers to return to their king, be at fault for the siege of Samaria? Elisha had been telling the king of Israel to “wait upon a word from the Lord” about lifting the siege, but the king of Israel was not in any mood to wait upon the Lord (6:33). Eventually, the Lord “made the army of the Syrians hear the sound of chariots, and of horses, the sound of a great army so that they said to one another, Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Egypt to come upon

us.” (6:6-7). So they (the Syrians) fled away in the twilight leaving behind their tents, their horses, their beasts of burden, their supplies, and the whole camp and fled for their lives. We have seen in our own lifetime people in high places in our own government want to blame and punish others for their own sins—others, who were in no way responsible for the circumstances that befell them or the consequences of their sins! It is “human-nature” but not **godly-nature** to do that! Aaron tried to blame the people for making a golden calf to worship; king Saul tried to blame his mutinous soldiers for his disobedience of Samuel’s instructions; Peter tried to blame the “circumcision party” for his dissimulation; there were those in almost every church who tried to blame the apostle Paul for some of the consequences of their own sins. **It is a result of human sinful nature to reject responsibility for one’s own sins and try to blame others—Adam, our first father, tried to lay the blame totally on Eve for his own sin (Gen. 3:12).**

Two lepers approaching the city of Samaria decided they would go inside the city (although forbidden to do so by the law of Moses) because they could die with their own people in the famine just as well as die by the hands of the Syrians. In the meantime, the Syrians had fled their siege-camp outside the city of Samaria leaving behind their tents, much of their food, silver and gold, and many of their garments. When the two lepers came to the abandoned camp and found the food and valuables, they began to gorge themselves on the food and grab every valuable they could carry. Suddenly, their **consciences** began to condemn them. Their countrymen and relatives inside the besieged city of Samaria were starving to death and suffering much anguish and pain—mothers eating their own children—while these two lepers were spending hour after hour enjoying their good fortune! Their **consciences** judged them for such immoral behavior and they knew from the Bible that God would punish them for their greed and lack of compassion. So, they got the message to a few soldiers of Israel that the Syrians had fled and there was food and valuables left in the abandoned camp. Some people can **callous (1 Tim. 4:2) or corrupt (Titus 1:15) their consciences by “layering” them with sin, indifference, worldly-mindedness, or self-righteousness.** They can **almost** ignore sin and evil. Even the great apostle Paul said of himself, that he had “lived in all good conscience” while he was persecuting Christians (Acts 23:1; 1 Tim. 1:12-17) and the only thing that saved him was the grace and mercy of Christ. **BUT NO ONE CAN EVER COMPLETELY RID ONESELF OF CONSCIENCE!** Paul said of the Gentiles who did not have the written law of God, they still did “by nature” (i.e. **conscience**) what the law required while their **consciences** bore witness to them and their conflicting thoughts sometimes accused them and sometimes excused them (Rom. 2:14-15). **THE ONLY WAY FOR A HUMAN BEING TO HAVE A PERFECTLY “CLEAR (i.e., non-condemning) CONSCIENCE” IS TO HAVE IT PURGED AND CLEANSED BY THE GRACE AND MERCY OF GOD AND BY FAITH AND OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST’S NEW COVENANT TERMS (1 Tim. 1:5,19; Heb. 9:11-14; 10:19-25; 1 Pet. 3:21; 1 John 3:19-24).**

By the time the patrol of Israel soldiers got back into the city of Samaria, morning had arrived. The news of all that food and valuables just outside the city in the former Syrian camp spread through the besieged city like wild-fire. The whole population, *en masse*, converged on the Syrian army camp to feast and plunder (7:16). The “captain” who on the previous day had scoffed at the predictions of Elisha (7:2,16) was **trampled to death by the mob in the city gate (7:17).** The author of 2 Kings explains: “...so that he

died, as the man of God had said when the king came down to him...and so it happened to him" (7:18-20). The king had not scoffed at Elisha's prophecy—the "captain" was the one who had **doubted the word of God's spokesman!** **YOU SEE, GOD IS EXTREMELY, DEADLY SERIOUS ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS HEARING, BELIEVING AND ACTING IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS WORD AS HE HAS DELIVERED IT TO THE HUMAN RACE THROUGH HIS SPOKESPERSONS (PROPHETS AND APOSTLES)—LOCATED TODAY ONLY IN THE BIBLE!!!** (See Matt. 13:9-16; 13:43; Mark 4:9,23; 8:14-21; Luke 8:8; **9:44**; 24:35; Rom. 11:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:3,4; **1 John 4:1-6**; Rev. 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9). The "captain" of the army of Israel **heard** Elisha's prophecy, but he **scoffed and said what Elisha had predicted was IMPOSSIBLE EVEN FOR THE LORD HIMSELF!** Any and every thing IS POSSIBLE WITH THE LORD—as the "captain" found out!

2 Kings 8:1—10:36

Elisha did **not** lie to Ben-hadad. Elisha instructed Hazael to tell Ben-hadad that he would recover from his present illness, **but that Ben-hadad would die from another cause** (8:10). Elisha **stared** at Hazael, Ben-hadad's "right-hand-man," signaling to Hazael that he was going to assassinate Ben-hadad—ELISHA WANTED HAZAEL TO KNOW THAT HIS MURDEROUS PLOT WAS KNOWN BY ALMIGHTY GOD AND GOD'S PROPHET! **Elisha also knew that when Hazael became king (denied by Hazael) that the Syrians would once again cause great suffering upon Israel (8:12).** CIVIL CORRUPTION, ANARCHY, REVOLUTION **ALWAYS** PRODUCES GREAT SUFFERING UPON "INNOCENT" PEOPLE! That is why God stands in his word for **civil law and order!** God is beneficent toward those societies that discipline and control themselves by what is right, just, true and pure! We know from history (foreign as well as our own) that "civil upheaval" produces great desperation, deprivation, destruction and suffering. Countries where the "seat of power" (ruler) is changed *often* abruptly, and violently such anarchy invariably causes great calamity and catastrophic social and economic affliction upon the citizens. Someone has said, "A bad government is better than no government at all"—AND IT'S TRUE! That is why almost all the letters of the New Testament, written when their recipients were under the rule of oppressive Roman emperors and governments, still advocated that Christians must stand for civil order (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 1L8-11; 2:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:13-17; Heb. 13:7, etc.). **It is a commandment for Christians to pray for social and civil justice and righteousness and order, not only in their own rulers, but in all rulers and nations!** NOT ONLY TO PRAY FOR IT, BUT TO DO ALL THAT IS LEGAL WITHIN THEIR POWER TO BRING IT ABOUT! **"JUST DO IT!"** Write your Congressmen; write your newspaper "op.ed." page, talk politics and the Bible to your neighbors and family, vote—every election!

"Why do some children of some "good" parents "go wrong?" THAT IS A QUESTION THAT HAS PLAGUED MANKIND EVER SINCE THE GARDEN OF EDEN! Surely, Adam & Eve repented of their sin—so why did Cain rise up and slay his brother Abel? Why did a number of David's sons, (i.e., Amnon, Absalom, even Solomon) fall into terrible sins of incest, murder and marrying idolatrous wives? Why did the prophet Samuel's sons (priests) blaspheme God's commandments—and the sons of Eli (another priest)? Why did Manasseh the son of Hezekiah (one of the best of Judah's kings) become such a "devil?" Why did Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah (the best king of Judah since David), "do evil in the sight of the Lord?" WE JUST DON'T KNOW ALL THE ANSWER TO OUR FIRST QUESTION! There are many circumstances and affiliations—in the parental relationships, in educational experiences, in environments and influences outside the home—that have a bearing on the choices children make. Even some genetic "make-up" may play some part in the way a child responds to circumstances and influences! **But all these are extraneous matters. Every human being has a will and has the freedom of choice!** AND AT A CERTAIN AGE OR LEVEL OF MATURATION, EVERY CHILD MAKES DECISIONS IN HIS/HER MIND AND FORMS CONVICTIONS (WHETHER VERBALIZED TO THEIR PARENTS OR NOT)! Some people make those "wrong" choices early in life and are able, through proper guidance, to change them to "good" choices. Some may even

make “good” choices later in life—every human being certainly has the freedom to do so until they die. But it is appointed once for man to die, then comes the judgment—no changing choices after death! **It is God’s will that every human being born into this world be born under circumstances and influences of the truth, of goodness, of love—so they may form their convictions on the basis of what is right rather than what is wrong! THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THAT LIES DIRECTLY AT THE FEET OF PARENTS WHO BRING THESE CHILDREN INTO THE WORLD!** If, then, the child makes “wrong” decisions later in life, there is little a parent can do about it. One human being cannot FORCE another human being to “think” or “choose” what is right—humans can only try to persuade others to think correctly and make right choices! When a human being begins to know **what** is right and **what** is wrong that human being is individually responsible for choosing what is right! Dr. M. R. de Haan once quoted these startling figures: “After the age of 35 only one person in 50,000 receives Christ; after 45 only one in 300,000; and after 75 only one in 700,000 is converted.” **IT ALL BEGINS IN THE HOME, IN THE MIND, AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE AGE!**

Jehoram was a truly wicked descendant of David! He murdered all his brothers; set up idolatry in Judah, and died a horrible death as Elijah the prophet predicted, and was dishonored at his death by the people of Judah. God’s promise to David was to be ultimately fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. And this statement in 2 Kings 8:19 is simply a reiteration of all the promises God had made from the time of Abraham until Jesus Christ. The holy “seed-singular” (Isa. 6:13; Gal. 3:15-18; 3:23-29) of Abraham through which God blessed the whole world was Jesus Christ, the New Covenant and the New Testament Church (Jesus’ kingdom)—not in the Jewish nation, *per se*! **GOD KEEPS HIS WORD! God was so absolutely in control of history and circumstances that wicked and evil men could do what they wished, but God was going to overcome all the power and schemes of opposition to his redemption of the world, that even wicked descendants of David could not stop God’s program from fulfillment!** Read the genealogies of Jesus—there is in it an adulteress (Bathsheba); a Canaanite harlot (Rahab); and a Moabitess (born into idolatry) along with all the wicked kings in the nations of Israel and Judah! God allows Satan and wicked helpers of Satan to do the **absolute worst** they can do to stop his redemptive program—just to demonstrate to those who will pay attention that **NOTHING CAN STOP THE PROMISES (ALL THE PROMISES) OF GOD TO COME TO PASS!** “So have no fear of them...And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him (God) who can destroy soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:26,28). Martin Luther wrote these words 500 years ago: “A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing; Our helper He, amid the flood Of mortal ills prevailing: For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe; His craft and power are great, And, armed with cruel hate, On earth is not his equal. And tho’ this world, with devils filled, Should threaten to undo us, We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us: The Prince of Darkness grim—We tremble not for him; His rage we can endure, For lo, his doom is sure, One little word shall fell him. That word above all earthly powers, No thanks to them, abideth; The Spirit and the gifts are ours Thro’ Him who with us sideth; Let goods and kindred go, This mortal life also; The Body they may kill: God’s truth abideth still, His kingdom is forever! Amen.” Wouldn’t it be refreshing to sing this anthem once a month in our church services in the 21st century?!

How can it be unseemly to feed the dogs with the flesh and blood of Ahab and Jezebel when they treated other human beings like dogs (especially Naboth)? **God is merely executing divine (absolutely righteous) judgment upon Ahab and Jezebel!** The late, great preacher, Robert G. Lee, of the huge Baptist church in Memphis, TN, once preached a sermon about Ahab and Jezebel and Jehu—he called his sermon, “PAY-DAY, SOME-DAY!” It is a tremendous sermon and was at one time recorded on an LP stereo record album. If you ever get a chance to listen to it, do so! Ahab and Jezebel were “riding high”—they could take any one’s property or life whenever the whim struck them—they were “King and Queen.” They had “revised” the religion of Israel until they controlled even the religion—idolatry. They controlled all the army, the courts, the religion, and everything else—physically, that is! **BUT THEY COULDN’T CONTROL ELIJAH, THE SPIRITUAL “GIANT” OF A SPOKESMAN FOR GOD!** They treated Naboth like “dirt” and tried to treat Elijah that way—but **GOD WAS ALWAYS IN CONTROL!** The time would come when they would “reap what they had sown”—they would get the “big pay-off” from God! Then all the people of Israel who had any honesty and common sense at all would see that God kept his word, executed his justice, and vindicated his prophet Elijah! Time after time after time, even in this world, God has demonstrated that people who do depraved things “receive in their own persons the due penalty for their error” (**Rom. 1:27**). Over-indulge in alcoholic beverages and you get cirrhosis of the liver, or ulcers of the stomach or cancer or heart disease—inhale tars and nicotine into your lungs and you get lung cancer and heart disease—over indulge in food and you get heart disease and a multitude of other debilitating diseases; engage in illicit sexual intercourse (both heterosexual and homosexual) and you get terrible, death-dealing “sexually transmitted diseases” like syphilis, AIDS, etc., drive like a maniac and you will kill or maim yourself in an automobile accident! **THAT’S GOD’S JUSTICE IN THIS WORLD! AND WHAT’S GOD’S JUSTICE LIKE IN THE NEXT WORLD? Read Luke 16:19-31; Revelation 14:9-12). PAY-DAY.....SOME-DAY!**

Jehu slew Joram because the prophet Elijah had said it was the will of God that the whole house of Ahab should be “cut off” (1 Kings 21:20-29). Jehu gave orders that the corpse of Joram was to be thrown into the portion of ground which had formerly belonged to Naboth as Jehu said the Lord had uttered such an “oracle” (prophecy of Elijah) to give justice to Naboth and his sons. Jehu sent his soldiers to also run down the king of Judah, Ahaziah, the grandson of Ahab and Jezebel and they shot him full of arrows as he fled toward the south and his home in Judah (2 Kings 9:27-29). The account of Naboth’s murder (1 Kings 21) does not say that the sons of Naboth were also murdered—but apparently they were so that Ahab and Jezebel could take Naboth’s vineyards without the possibility of any “heirs” laying claim to it! It is interesting that Ahab’s body was not thrown into Naboth’s ground when he was slain (1 Kings 22:34-38) but was buried at Samaria—probably because Ahab “humbled himself before the Lord” after Elijah pronounced his “death sentence” (1 Kings 21:27-29). Ahab’s blood was “licked up by the dogs” and “harlots washed themselves in it” from the pool of Samaria into which it had run (1 Kings 22:37-38). **PAY-DAY, SOME-DAY!** Joram and all the other sons of Ahab must have aided and abetted the crime of murdering Naboth and his sons—and **God put an *exclamation point* on his judgment of them by having the body of Joram thrown out (without burial) on the grounds of Naboth’s vineyard—there for the birds of carrion and wild animals to devour!** **GOD WILL MAKE ALL THINGS COME OUT EVEN AT THE DAY OF**

JUDGMENT! THAT'S JUSTICE! ALL THOSE WHO HAVE WREAKED IMPENITENT WICKEDNESS, SUFFERING AND WOE UPON MANKIND WILL SOMEDAY HAVE A PAYDAY—AN ETERNAL PAYDAY! The smoke of their torment will go up forever and ever! (Rev. 14:9-11). None shall escape *except* by *repentance* in *this* life—all the Hitlers, Stalins, Pol-Phots, Mao Tse-tungs, Saddam Husseins, and their underlings will have God's justice!

Jezebel had probably witnessed the death of Joram, her son, from the walls of one of her "ivory" palaces at Jezreel and knew she was about to have a confrontation with Jehu! When she heard he was coming she ran into her boudoir and began to put on her eye-makeup (probably some lip rouge) and adorned her head (probably with a queen's tiara). Even though she was a grandmother at least 50 years of age, she was probably still a "striking" woman and hoped to be able to allure Jehu with her beauty. The question she asked Jehu, "Is it peace (from) you 'Zimri,' murderer of your master?" may have been a flattering ploy to conciliate Jehu. "Zimri" had been an earlier Israelite general who had revolted and slain his master and become "king." In other words, she was ready to accede to Jehu as being king if she could just be sure everything was *shalom* ("well, peaceable, hunky-dory) between them. Jezebel was a schemer who would do anything to further her own causes. "Jezebel" was used by Christ as a malediction to describe some woman in the church at Thyatira who was a false prophetess teaching and "beguiling" the Lord's servants to practice immorality and idolatry (Rev. 2:19-23). IT DIDN'T WORK! **Jehu was not about to be deterred by the wiles of Jezebel.** He was deaf to her flatteries and seductions. He challenged her servants to come over to his side of the rebellion and throw her down from her palace balcony. She probably bounced off a few stone projections on the way down, showering her blood on the walls of the palace and the horses that pulled Jehu's chariot. Jehu then had his chariot driven back and forth over her crumpled corpse. Many a tyrant has died such a violent death—we can think of one such in our own generation—Benito Mussolini who was clubbed to death by some of his own countrymen (along with his mistress) and their bodies were hanged feet-first in a public square in Italy for all to throw rocks at and spit upon! **Elijah had predicted four things about Jezebel: (a) the dogs would devour her; (b) this would take place in a portion of the Valley of Jezreel; (c) the carcass of Jezebel would be as dung upon the face of the ground; and, (d) the fragments of her body would be so scattered that it would be impossible to bury all her remains in one tomb (9:36-37).** AND SO IT WAS WITH THIS WICKED, WICKED WOMAN, WHOSE IDOLATROUS, MURDEROUS INFLUENCE HAD REACHED INTO BOTH ISRAEL AND JUDAH—THE WHOLE OF GOD'S PEOPLE!

Ahab had seventy (70) sons (actually, what we would call male descendants) who lived in the capital of Israel, the city of Samaria. Jehu, sarcastically, offered to fight all of them and the army they could muster. Jehu knew he had a greater army than they could get together, but whether they did or not, Jehu was ready to fight for the throne of Israel! **Ambition ruled the heart of Jehu!** All of Ahab's remaining dynasty knew what had happened to Joram, Ahaziah and Jezebel. They were cowed! Jehu sent a letter to the officials of the city of Samaria demanding surrender—they obliged, saying, "We are your servants and will do all that you ask." This was an opportunity the ambitious Jehu could not let pass! He sent them another letter demanding they bring to Jezreel within 24 hours (10:6) the heads of all **seventy** of Ahab's remaining male descendants! THAT WOULD TOTALLY WIPE OUT ANY "ROYALTY" WHO MIGHT LAY CLAIM TO THE THRONE OF

ISRAEL! **Remember, the Lord had already told Elijah, that the entire “house” of Ahab was to be “cut off” (1 Kings 21:21-22).** Jehu had this “work” yet to do! Besides, it gave him an opportunity to wipe out Ahab’s dynasty and claim he had not murdered these 70 “sons” of Ahab at his own hand—he could get the “officials” of Samaria to do it for him! Without hesitation these “officials” of Samaria slew the 70 princes of Ahab’s house, put their decapitated heads in baskets, and sent them to Jezreel by messenger (10:7). When these 70 heads arrived at Jezreel, Jehu ordered they be put on public display in two heaps at the city gate (10:8). **THAT WOULD GIVE THE CITIZENS OF ISRAEL PAUSE FOR REFLECTION AND ASSURE THEIR “LOYALTY” TO JEHU! Is God serious about purging his covenant people of idolatry—OR WHAT?** There are many forms of idolatry. It doesn’t take the making of a statue to become an idolater! The worship of humanness, the worship of human political or philosophical ideologies, the worship of “nature,” the worship of self, the worship of money, even the worship of family—is idolatry. **GOD MUST HAVE FIRST PLACE IN EVERY INDIVIDUAL’S THOUGHTS, VALUES, ACTIONS, EMOTIONS OR ONE IS AN IDOLATER!**

Having eliminated all the potential “royal” opposition in Israel to the throne, Jehu set out to go from Jezreel to the city of Samaria and claim the throne. At some place en route to Samaria Jehu happened upon a group of 42 relatives of the deceased king of Ahaziah of Judah (Ahaziah was a grandson of Ahab and Jezebel, by Athaliah, the former queen of Judah). They said they were on their way to Jezreel to visit their Northern cousins, the children of king Joram and also the queen mother Jezebel (10:13). That 42 “cousins” would all head toward Jezreel at once, and that they had undoubtedly heard of the slaughter of their “cousins” in Samaria and Jezreel, and that king Ahaziah had already been brought to Jerusalem and buried, made Jehu suspicious of their intentions! At first Jehu ordered them taken as prisoners, but then he had second thoughts and had all 42 slain. Let’s see, now, that’s at least Ahab & Jezebel, Joram, Ahaziah, 70 princes of Ahab’s “house” and 42 of the house of Ahaziah—all 116 executed by Jehu’s hand or order! That’s quite a few “notches” on the old “bow” isn’t it—a lot more than all the Earps, Doc Holiday, and Wild Bill Hickok put together. **WE ASK AGAIN—IS GOD SERIOUS ABOUT IDOLATROUS APOSTASY WITHIN HIS COVENANT PEOPLE? NOTHING BUT A RESOUNDING YES! IS HONEST!** While there is no admonition in the New Testament that those who were once Christians and fell away into idolatry and apostasy should be physically slain—there is the admonition that apostates and impenitent sinners should be “delivered unto Satan” or “let them be unto the church as Gentiles (without God and without hope in the world)—see Matt. 18:15-20; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 5:5,13; 2 Thess. 3:14; Titus 1:10-16; 3:10; Rev. 2:13-20, etc.). **JESUS GAVE STRONG THREATS TO THE CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR ABOUT “CLEANING UP” THEIR HOUSES BEFORE HE CAME AND MADE WAR UPON THOSE GUILTY OF IDOLATRY AND WICKEDNESS! Remember—what was written in former days (i.e., the Old Testament) was written for our instruction and admonition (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).** **GOD IS DEADLY-SERIOUS ABOUT IDOLATRY AND APOSTASY IN ANY SHAPE OR FORM! I’m not sure the church of Christ in the 21st century is convinced of the seriousness of idolatry (i.e., “covetousness” Col. 3:15, and its attendant sins, “fornication, impurity, hedonism, evil desire”). HAS THERE BEEN ENOUGH PREACHING ABOUT “PAY-DAY, SOME-DAY” IN MODERN CHURCH OF CHRIST PULPITS—OR IS IT ALL “FEEL-GOOD” STUFF—I’M SAYING THAT **CHURCH****

MEMBERS, COVENANT PEOPLE OF GOD, NEED SOME MORE “HELL-FIRE-AND-BRIMSTONE” PREACHING ABOUT IDOLATRY AND APOSTASY!

While Jehu was zealous for Jehovah-God versus Baal-worship, he did not intend to lead a reformation and install Jehovah-worship in the northern kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam I had installed “golden-calf-worship” in the northern kingdom of Israel at the inception of the “kingdom” (when the nation of Israel was divided at the death of Solomon, ca. 930 B.C.). All the kings of Israel (northern kingdom) believed “calf-worship” was essential to the perpetuation and continued cohesion of the kingdom of Israel as it tried to stand by itself against Judah and Syria and other bordering nations (see Amos 7:10-17 where Amos was threatened and ordered to leave the nation of Israel and go home because he was preaching against Israel’s apostasy and idolatry). The kings of Israel believed that if “calf-worship” was abandoned and the worship of Jehovah-God re-instituted, all Israel would “return to the house of David” (1 Kings 12:26-31). **POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY TRUMPS TRUTH, AGAIN! And it has continued to be so with most politicians and/or government leaders, even in our own beloved United States of America, ever since!** It is certainly true of the radical-liberal educational system and press in our country and all over the world! While Jehu had “done well” in wiping out Baal worship in the nation of Israel (10:30), and God allowed his “dynasty” to rule to the 4th generation (just over 100 years, Jehu—Jehoahaz, Joram and Jeroboam II, and Zechariah—2 Kings 14:29), he was not careful to walk in the law of the Lord the God of Israel with all his heart; he did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam, which he made Israel to sin (10:31). Because Israel continued to maintain the apostate “calf-worship,” the Lord began to “cut off parts of Israel, i.e., giving over to the Syrians the occupation and control of territories beyond the Jordan which had formerly been under the rule of the nation of Israel. Israel, at Jehu’s point in the history of the northern kingdom, began a 100-year slide down the slope toward exile from which she never recovered! In 721 B.C. the Assyrians, who “skinned people alive” and impaled them on sharpened posts, and enslaved them, came into Israel and depopulated it by taking the people of Israel into Mesopotamia and emigrating “foreigners” into the depopulated land who later intermarried with the people of Judah after their return from Babylonian captivity and became the despised (by the Jews) Samaritans! It may seem to some out of character for God to use Jehu to “wipe out” the house of Ahab and then commend him for it when he re-instituted “calf-worship” in Israel. Remember how often God used Gentile, heathen, wicked, cruel, vicious, rulers and nations (Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, to purge his covenant people in both OT and NT and purify them for his purposes. That is a teaching of both the OT and the NT!

2 Kings 11:1—13:25

Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. She was married to Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, one of the “good” kings of Judah (see 2 Chronicles 17:1—21:1). It was Athaliah’s son, Ahaziah, who was killed by Jehu. Athaliah was totally influenced by her mother’s (Jezebel’s) evil character. Through Athaliah’s influence Jehoram introduced the worship of the Phoenician Baal into Judah (2 Kings 8;18; 2 Chron. 21:5,11). When Ahaziah was slain, the powerful position of Athaliah as “queen mother” was jeopardized. The regular line of succession would require that one of her grandsons, the eldest son of Ahaziah, would now become king of Judah and this would mean the position of queen mother would pass on to the widow of Ahaziah, Athaliah’s daughter-in-law. Athaliah would only be “queen grandmother” in which position she could wield no power! Thus, Athaliah ordered all the members of the house of David put to death. The royal house of David had already been decimated by Jehoram’s murder of his brothers—2 Chron. 21:4—by Arab marauders—2 Chron. 21:17—and Jehu’s murder of the brothers of Ahaziah—2 Kings 10:14). **We’re talking about a grandmother having all her grandsons murdered (probably along with their wives and children, cousins, aunts and uncles, if they had any).** Athaliah’s plan to completely wipe out the house of David was thwarted, however, by the determined efforts of Jehosheba, a sister (probably by another wife of Jehoram) of Ahaziah. Jehosheba “kidnapped” the infant son of Ahaziah, Joash, from the royal nursery. She hid the infant prince away in the “chamber of mattresses” (i.e., the room where the mattresses and blankets were stored in the palace) and there, they escaped the attention of Athaliah’s executioners (11:2). Jehosheba was married to Jehoiada, the high priest (2 Chron. 22:11) and after a few days Jehosheba found an opportunity to transfer the prince to one of the numerous chambers in the temple where he would remain for six years under the tutelage of Jehoiada and Jehosheba. For six years Athaliah ruled the land of Judah. During that period, Baalism (and all its attendant depravity) was triumphant! The temple of the Lord was allowed to fall into disrepair (12:5-6), and a temple of Baal was erected in Jerusalem to rival and supersede God’s holy temple (11:18). Athaliah was held in check somewhat by those who still worshiped Jehovah. She was apparently afraid to openly challenge the position of Jehoiada, and he was left in charge of the temple with its treasures and armories (11:10). She allowed the temple services to continue (2 Chron. 23:4-7), and permitted the priests and Levites to serve in their regular courses (2 Chron. 23:8). Those zealous for the worship of Jehovah chafed under the arrogant and oppressive rule of “the Jezebel (Athaliah) of Judah.” **It seems incredulous that God would allow such a woman to rule in Judah! BUT NO HUMAN KNOWS THE WAYS OF THE LORD (UNLESS HE REVEALS THEM TO US)—GOD’S WAYS ARE NOT OUR WAYS AND OUR THOUGHTS (ISA. 55:8-9).** Why did the Lord allow Cain to kill Abel? Why did the Lord allow Job to suffer? Why did the Lord allow the heathen nations (Assyria, Babylon, Persian, Greece and Rome) to conquer and oppress his covenant people for century after century? “Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” (Isa. 40:13; Rom. 11:34; 1 Cor. 2:16). Human beings have all they can handle just to understand what God has revealed in the Bible and in nature—let alone to try to speculate about his secret (Deut. 29:29) omnipotent and omniscient workings (either direct, indirect or otherwise).

Of course Jehoiada should have involved himself in saving the infant “king’s” life! Everyone should be willing to lay their life on the line to save another’s life—that is what Jesus did and told us to follow his example (1 Pet. 2:21). And, inasmuch as Judah was a “theocracy” (i.e., a nation where religion and politics were inseparably intertwined) he was obligated to involve himself in the political difficulties of his nation! **This was especially true because Athaliah, the wicked queen-mother, had brought Baalism into the political arena! CHRISTIANS TODAY HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO DO EVERYTHING, SAY EVERYTHING, PRAY EVERYTHING, LEGALLY POSSIBLE TO INFLUENCE THE OPERATION OF THEIR GOVERNMENTS! Christians should never let an election go by without voting! Christians should campaign (individually and in blocs—so long as they do not do so as “representatives” of their church) for godly men and women in their governments. Christians should donate whatever resources (money, time, expertise) they can to bring godly influence into their governments! YOU CAN REST ASSURED THE UNGODLY AND UNPRINCIPLED AND WICKED OF THIS WORLD WILL DO ALL IN THEIR POWER TO BRING THEIR UNGODLY INFLUENCE INTO CIVIL GOVERNMENT—that is a fact of history! In his book, *They Preached Liberty*, Franklin P. Cole in his “Introduction” quotes numerous early colonial preachers in America who preached “Election Sermons” twice annually in their churches—“On these occasions political subjects are deemed very proper; but it is expected that they be treated in a decent, serious, and instructive manner...The sermon is styled the *Election Sermon* and is printed. Every representative has a copy for himself, and generally one or more for the minister or ministers of his town. As the patriots have prevailed, the preachers of each sermon have been the zealous friends of liberty; and the passages most adapted to promote the spread and love of it have been selected and circulated far and wide by means of newspapers.” Mr. Cole found in his research of these “Elections Sermons” that the ministers’ “belief in liberty was grounded in the Scriptures and their understanding of both human and divine law. Therefore they were prepared in season and out of season to proclaim that belief as watchmen on the walls.” In his “Election Sermon” of 1772 before the Massachusetts Council and House of Representatives, the Rev. Moses Parsons, of Newbury Falls, stated his conception of the duty of ministers: “Watchmen upon the walls must not hold their peace—they must cry and not spare, must reprove for what is amiss, and warn when danger is approaching.” For the Puritan ministers the cornerstone of Liberty’s Wall was the Bible. The apostle Paul had no reservations about speaking publicly to rulers of their moral obligations—the Philippian jailor & the magistrates (Acts 16:25-40); before Felix a governor (Acts 24:24-27); before Festus a governor (Acts 25:7-12); before king Agrippa (Acts 26:1-29); to the whole “praetorian guard” (Phil. 1:12-13); before the philosophers at Athens (Acts 17:22-34), etc.**

It is rather preposterous, when you think about it, that a 7 year old boy, Joash (a.k.a. Jehoash), could rule a nation! BUT FROM THE TIME HE WAS AN INFANT HE HAD BEEN UNDER THE MORAL AND EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE OF JEHOIADA, THE HIGH PRIEST OF GOD, AND HIS WIFE JEHOSHEBA! **It is a well established principle that the first 7 years of a child’s life are the most significant as to indoctrinating him/her with morality (i.e., what is right and wrong)!** Benjamin S. Bloom, late professor of education at the University of Chicago, made this startling statement: “By the age of four, a child has formed half the intelligence he will have at maturity.” Here are some captions in certain magazines of a few years back, written by leading educators, psychiatrists, and

psychologists: “The First five Years Shape All of Life”; “Behavior Is Set by Five”; “Baby’s First Year Is the Growingest”; “Train Citizens in the Cradle”; “Don’t Wait for the School Bell”; “Age Five Is Old Psychologically”; “Combat Crime In Infancy.” Of course, the 7 year old king was constantly under the supervision of Jehoiada in his early years (see 2 Chron. 24:1-19), but when Jehoiada died, the adult king Joash began to fall away from the Lord—even to killing the son of the high priest who had been so loving as to save his life (2 Chron. 24:17-22)—all because Joash paid heed to the idolatrous “princes of Judah.” This takes us back to question #2 in the lesson on 2 Kings chs. 8-10! Once a child becomes old enough to be free of parental guidance, and once a “good” child falls under the influence of “bad” companions, they will usually throw away all the godly instruction and way of life they knew as a child! IT HAS TO DO WITH THE DEVIL’S TEMPTATIONS TO REBELLION AGAINST ALL AUTHORITY AND EMBRACING OF ANARCHY! That was the original temptation by which the devil seduced Eve in the Garden of Eden—“Has God said?” “Eat of this forbidden ‘fruit’ and you will become as gods” the devil promised. Jesus’ promise, on the other hand, is, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Joash was probably urged by his contemporaries, “Joash, you are king—you can do as you please—you don’t have old Jehoiada around to tell you what to do anymore—come join us in rebellion against the law of God and be *free!*” WRONG!

Yes, it was proper, from God’s perspective, for a religious leader (Jehoiada, the high priest) to have early and significant Biblical influence upon Joash the head of the state of Judah! The OT law and the OT prophets demanded that they have **priority-word-of-God-influence** upon heads of state—even heathen heads of state (see for example the book of Daniel). When Jehoiada was “crowning” Joash as “king” of Judah (2 Kings 11:12) he put the “crown” on his head, **and then Jehoiada *laid on the head of Joash a copy of the law of Moses (“the testimony”) or some portion of it in a symbolic act designed to demonstrate that the king must rule in subjection to and in accordance with the word of God!*** This is what was commanded in the law of Almighty God (Deut. 17:18-20)! AMERICANS SHOULD THANK THE MERCIFUL GOD OF HEAVEN THAT MOST OF THEIR LEADERS (PRESIDENTS, CONGRESSMEN, EVEN MILITARY LEADERS, ETC.) HAVE HAD SOME BIBLICAL INFLUENCE IN THEIR LIVES! All one has to do to be so thankful is study the history of other countries and peoples whose leaders scoffed at and disobeyed and tried to obliterate the Bible! **You and I would not want to live there!** Neither would any of the so-called atheists and unbelievers who *do* live in America and spout their vitriol against the Bible, the church, and against Christians! IF THEY ARE SO FOND OF CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE THE BIBLE WOULD BE BANNED, LET THEM GO LIVE IN A COUNTRY WHERE IT IS SO! All one has to do is look to the history of Israel and Judah in the Bible to see what happens to a nation when it rejects God and his word as having *first place in its governance!*

The Hebrew word *makkar* (12:5) is translated “acquaintance” in RSV and KJV and apparently translated “one of the treasurers” in the NIV; in the English Standard Version the word is translated, “his donor.” The Hebrew word *makkar* means “a well and intimately known friend.” When the census was taken, all Israelites were required (Exodus 30:12) to pay a half-shekel “ransom” for themselves to the Lord. It was to be used for the “service of the tent (tabernacle). Apparently, some Israelites **also gave** money to the priests (thinking it would be used for holy purposes) because they were “close friends” with

particular priests. This money given “to acquaintances” was in addition to the census tax, personal vows, and free-will offerings. Evidently the priests were “skimming” off the top of the money given to them from “acquaintances” and not using it to repair the temple, but using it for themselves or some other “project” besides repairing the temple. Joash the king ordered the priests to stop taking this money and Jehoiada the high priest set up a “money chest” into which the people brought their tithes and offerings, and the money was then safe to be dispensed to those who were actually repairing the temple (the workmen). We know from the OT prophets that most of the priesthood of this era was corrupt, taking bribes, taking monies given in tithes and offerings for themselves, etc. **Offerings from God’s people must be properly used and accounted for. Money given to the work of producing fruit in the kingdom of Christ must be wisely, faithfully, and conscientiously dispensed by those to whom the responsibility falls.** CHRISTIANITY HAS TAKEN SOME HARD “RAPS” IN THE LAST 25 YEARS BECAUSE OF “TV EVANGELISTS” CLAIMING TO BE “FRIENDS” OF CHRIST WHO “BILKED” HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS FROM CREDULOUS AND GULLIBLE PEOPLE! When an **apostle** goes **publicly** out of his way to make sure the money entrusted to him for the Lord’s work is handled in a trustworthy manner, it well behooves other Christians with such responsibilities to do the same! (2 Cor. 8:16-24).

Joash **began** well as a ruler, but after Jehoiada the high priest who had made such godly influence in his life had died, Joash began to listen to and live like the idolatrous “high society” of his court. Influenced to idolatry and wickedness by the Jewish aristocracy, Joash allowed the reintroduction of idolatry (2 Chron. 24:17-19) in the “high places” and “altars.” **Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada (late high priest) vigorously protested but was slain by order of the king right in the temple court! (2 Chron. 24:20-22).** When the Syrian Hazael besieged Jerusalem, Joash paid bribes to him with the treasures from the temple of the Lord (2 Chron. 24:14). God sent prophets (as well as a priest) to bring Joash and the people back to the Lord but they would not listen (2 Chron. 24:19). The writer of Chronicles states: “At the end of the year the army of the Syrians came up against Joash. They came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people, and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus. Though the army of the Syrians had come with *few men*, the Lord delivered into their hand a very great army, because they had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers. Thus they executed judgment on Joash.” (2 Chron. 24:23-24). The “Chronicler” also states of Joash that “thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness which Jehoiada, Zechariah’s father, had shown him, but killed his (Jehoiada’s) son,” and, “his servants conspired against him because of the blood of the son of Jehoiada the priest, and slew him on his bed” (2 Chron. 24:25). Evidently Jehoiada, and his son, Zechariah, were loved by the people, especially the king’s servants, and out of revenge, they assassinated Joash when he lay on his bed, ill from a wound in battle. **JOASH, WHO BEGAN SO WELL, REPAIRING THE TEMPLE, “AND WHO DID WHAT WAS RIGHT IN THE EYES OF THE LORD...” TURNED OUT TO BE AN IDOLATROUS, UNGRATEFUL, REBELLIOUS, MURDEROUS KING WHO LED MOST OF HIS PEOPLE TO SIN!** And those who served him in his palace could not stand this wretched man and assassinated him! **It isn’t how you begin—it’s how you finish, that counts with the Lord.** “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life”—so says Christ to the members of his church (Rev. 2:10).

Primarily, the sin(s) of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat (1 Kings 12:1ff) was IDOLATRY! Jeroboam I set up the “golden calf” and altars at Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:28-29) and “appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites (1 Kings 12:30-31). He offered sacrifices to the calves that he had “devised in his own heart” (1 Kings 12:33). Idolatry which is a violation of the very first of the Ten Commandments, is the “mother of all evils.” It results in all manner of wickedness (see Rom. 1:18-32). **People actually become like that which they worship (Hosea 9:10; Hosea 4:17-18; Ezek. 20:8).** If you worship that which is of the animal nature (even if it be humanness), you will live like an animal—for the animal-flesh only! When that happens, everything becomes *relative* to sustaining and adoring and exalting the flesh! Before Jesus came and conquered sin in the flesh and conquered death by resurrection in the flesh, the devil was able to keep the whole world in bondage to **the fear of death** (Heb. 2:14-18). Those who worship “the flesh” believe they must keep the flesh alive at all costs—even at the cost of forfeiting what is true, right, moral, good and holy! Idolaters will lie, cheat, steal, and kill (often, even those nearest and dearest) just to sustain their animal life—just like the beasts of the fields and jungles! The apostle Peter warned that this is what happens when people become false teachers or pay heed to false (un-Biblical) teachers (2 Pet. 2:1ff). **IT IS EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED TO GOD’S COVENANT PEOPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT—JUST READ THE PROPHETS! It seems incredible that in Israel’s (i.e., the northern kingdom) 200 years of existence EVERY ONE OF THE 19 KINGS OF ISRAEL and EVERY ONE OF THE 20 KINGS OF JUDAH in its 300 years of existence (except one, Hezekiah) WOULD NOT COMPLETELY RID THEIR NATION OF THE “HIGH PLACES” AND ILLICIT “ALTARS” AND IDOLS! And it all started with Solomon who, while building the most ornate temple to Almighty God ever erected, also built pagan temples for the gods of his many “foreign” wives! BUT THEN WE TAKE A LOOK AT THE HISTORY OF “CHRISTENDOM” AND SEE THAT SO-CALLED CHRISTIANS OVER THE CENTURIES HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO RID CHRIST’S KINGDOM OF ALL KINDS OF IDOLATRIES—FROM “RELICS OF THE SAINTS” TO UNGODLY PHILOSOPHIES AND APOSTATE THEOLOGIES!**

An interesting coincidence occurred in the history of the divided kingdom—both Israel (northern kingdom) and Judah (southern kingdom) were both ruled for a space of 3 years (2 Kings 13:10) by separate kings both of whom were named “Joash.” Elisha’s ministry to Israel and Judah spanned over 50 years and came to a close in the early years of Joash of Israel. Both of these “Joashes” perpetuated idolatry! This section of our text (13:1-25) deals with **Joash of Israel**. Elisha’s death-bed prophecy (13:14) predicted the recovery of Israelite territories from the hands of the Syrians (Arameans). Elisha ordered Joash, king of Israel, to perform certain symbolic acts to express his faith in the word of God through the prophet. The first symbolic act was that the king should shoot an arrow from his bow toward the east (east of the Jordan River), and Elisha predicted: “The Lord’s arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Syria—you shall fight the Syrians until you have made an end of them.” The second symbolic act was that the king should take his remaining arrows and strike the ground with them. The king struck the ground three times. Elisha was angry with the king and said, “You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck down Syria until you had made an end of it, but now you will strike down Syria only three times.” (13:19). **WHAT JOASH OF ISRAEL HAD DISPLAYED, IN ELISHA’S EVALUATION, WAS A LACK OF FAITH IN THE PROPHET’S PREDICTION!**

Had Joash believed that what Elisha predicted (“make an end” of Syria) would come to pass, he would have saved his people who lived beyond the Jordan River (Israel) from fifteen or twenty years of Syrian oppression. It would remain for Jeroboam II, Joash’s son, to recover completely the territory lost to the Syrians. Joash of Israel would only enjoy partial success against the enemies. He would defeat them only three times—just as Elisha predicted (13:19). **“It’s not nice to try to fool-around with God’s spokesmen!”** The apostle Paul said in 1 Cor. 15:1-3: “Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you **stand**, by which you are **saved**, if you **hold it fast**—unless you believed in vain. **For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received...**” —of ***first importance*** are the **facts of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ!** THE CHURCH MUST NOT “FOOL-AROUND” WITH WHAT IS IRRELEVANT! The apostle John wrote: “We (apostles) are of God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and he who is not of God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” (1 John 4:6). THE CHURCH MUST NOT “FOOL-AROUND” WITH ANY OTHER DOCTRINE EXCEPT THAT OF THE APOSTLES!

2 Kings 14:1—16:20

Yes and No! Wilbur Fields says in his commentary on *Exodus*, College Press, concerning Ex. 20:5: “The best way to understand the threat of (Exodus) 20:5 is to see how God carried it out. From later history we learn that God often endured the wrongdoing of people with great longsuffering. However, His patience had a definite limit. And when God finally brought down punishment upon the later generations, He inflicted upon those generations the punishment for their own sins and also those of their fathers. But—and this is very important—God only did this to the descendants who continued to walk in the wicked ways of their fathers. To those who loved Him and kept His commandments He showed great loving kindness....The histories of the biblical kings illustrate Ex. 20:5-6....The children ‘fill up the sins of their fathers’ so that when they are punished for doing as their fathers did, the consequences of both their sins and those of their fathers fall on them at once. Compare Lev. 26:39; Amos 7:17; Jer. 16:1ff; Dan. 9:16. If the children would only keep God’s covenant, they would receive mercy from God, regardless of what their fathers had done.” **God is the same today as he was in the OT! (Heb. 13:8)—he does not change!** GOD STILL VISITS THE SINS OF THE FATHERS UPON IMPENITENT GENERATIONS WHO COME AFTER THEM! It is verified by history—just look at the sufferings of generations of those whose national leaders has led them into aggressive wars against humanity—or those who continue to follow their “fathers” in worshiping idols! Children of succeeding generations will not be held responsible for their “father’s” sins unless the children keep on doing the sins their fathers committed. When a “son” or “grandson” repents and turns away from the sins of his ancestors, he will be blessed by the Lord (**Ezek. 18:1-32**).

You have to read 2 Chronicles, chapter 25, to get the whole story of Amaziah. Amaziah, king of Judah, had great success in subduing Edom (14:7). To do this he had hired mercenaries from Israel (2 Chron. 25:6). “A man of God” came to Amaziah and told him not to let these mercenaries from Israel to go with him against the Edomites because the Lord was not with the soldiers of Israel (2 Chron. 25:7-8) and if he did God would cast him down before the enemy. **Amaziah paid no heed to the “man of God.”** He took the Israelite mercenaries with him to fight Edom, but when he dismissed them to go back north to their own country, they went through Judah rampaging through cities and villages killing 3000 people and plundered others (2 Chron. 25:13). To get revenge for this killing and plundering, Amaziah challenged Joash, the king of Israel to meet him “face to face” with their armies and have a “showdown” battle. Joash of Israel responded to the challenge with a fable about the “thistle and the cedar.” The “thistle” was, of course Judah, and the “cedar” was Israel. Israel was much more powerful than Judah and Joash tried to convince Amaziah that it would be foolhardy for Judah to enter into battle with Israel. Amaziah should stay home in Judah and glory in his past triumphs in Edom—if he insisted on a “showdown” he would find himself as easily crushed as the thistle beneath the feet of a wild animal (1 Kings 14:10). Amaziah was not deterred by Joash’s reply and the two armies met at Beth-shemesh. Judah was defeated by Israel, and every man fled to his home (1 Kings 14:11-14)—and the king of Israel, Joash, took Amaziah captive, took him back to his capital, Jerusalem, tore down much of the walls of Jerusalem and plundered the gold and

silver in the temple of God. The writer of 2 Chronicles summarizes it: **“But Amaziah would not listen: for it was of God, in order that he might give them into the hand of their enemies, because they had sought the gods of Edom” (2 Chron. 25:20).** ONCE AGAIN, GOD VIVIDLY AND PHYSICALLY DEMONSTRATES HIS HATRED OF IDOLATRY!

Azariah is known better as Uzziah (see Isa. 6). He was descended from the royal family of David (Matt. 2:6-9) but he was the first king of Judah selected “by the people” (14:21). The name “Uzziah” means “he whose strength is Jehovah.” The name “Azariah” means “he whose help is Jehovah.” He probably didn’t change his name, he was just known by two names! When the “people took Azariah and made him king” it was undoubtedly during the lifetime of his father, Amaziah, king of Judah, so that Azariah (Uzziah) was **co-regent** with his father when he was 16 years of age, and did not become king “on his own” until the death of his father—probably not long after Amaziah’s ignominious defeat at the hands of Joash of Israel. Uzziah (Azariah) was 16 years old in 790 B.C. when he became co-regent, and 39 when he became sole king of Judah. **So Uzziah (Azariah) was not “ruling” Judah as a teen-ager!** We’ve seen in our own nation what happens when those who come to power have “teen-aged” mentality! It should be a Christian’s obligation in America to determine, as well as possible, the maturity, wisdom, and godly character of those they elect to offices of power! When the “people” took Uzziah and “made him king” they found one of the best (although he did have his sins). Uzziah reigned **52** years in Judah and was on the throne when Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Zechariah and Micah were prophets. Only Manasseh reigned longer (55 years).

It is perplexing that God would give the rule of his covenant people (i.e., the northern “nation” of Israel) into the hands of such an utterly wicked ruler as Jeroboam II. Both nations of the divided kingdom, Israel and Judah, achieved their greatest imperial glory under the reigns of Jeroboam II in the north (14:23-29) and Azariah (Uzziah) in the south (15:1-7). This unexpected turn of events resulted from two factors: **(a)** about 800 B.C. the Assyrians withdrew to their own territory (modern northern Iraq) and was politically dormant until 745 B.C. For more information on the state of the two Jewish kingdoms read Isaiah & Micah (for Judah), Jonah, Amos and Hosea (for Israel); **(b)** Jeroboam II was perhaps the most *successful* (but not righteous) king of the northern kingdom, and yet his reign is passed over with great brevity by the author of Kings. He, like all the kings of the Jehu dynasty, continued to follow the apostate calf worship, and hence Jeroboam II is said to have done evil in the eyes of the Lord (14:24). The success of Jeroboam II is attributed to the guidance of **Jonah** the prophet (14:25). This is the same prophet famous for what happened to him as he tried first, to flee his call to go and preach to Nineveh, and then when Nineveh repented, to bring down God’s destruction of Nineveh (the capital of Assyria). God, in his unfathomable compassion, saw the extreme suffering of his people (the northern kingdom) under the Arameans (Syrians) and raised up his prophet (Jonah) to give inspired advice and encouragement to Jeroboam in his efforts to finally free Israel from that oppression (2 Kings 14:26) **It is even more perplexing, and significant, that when Jonah preached to Nineveh, the whole city, from the king on down, repented—yet he could not get Jeroboam, God’s ruler over God’s covenant people, to repent of idolatry!** It is much like the enigmatic “conversion” of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:34-37) when many of the Jews he had taken captive from Judah had been blatant idolaters and

continued to be when down in Babylonian captivity! **Perhaps God gave “success” to Jeroboam II in order that Jonah might be able to travel to Nineveh and bring that city to repentance in his day!** COULD GOD BE GIVING AMERICA “SUCCESS” AND “POWER” IN THE WORLD OF TODAY SO THAT WE MIGHT SEND MISSIONARIES TO “HEATHEN” COUNTRIES WHERE THEIR “RULERS” MIGHT BE CONVERTED? IF THAT BE THE CASE, SHOULDN’T WE BE SENDING **MORE MISSIONARIES** THAN WE ARE?

The **constitutional** government of the USA (federal, state, county and municipality) *is not perfect, but it’s the next best thing to “ideal” this world has, or ever shall, see!* Because it is a government in which the “turn over” of leadership is “of the people, by the people and for the people.” In other words, the “turn over” of leadership in the U.S. government (and others similar to it) is done by a vote of the majority (hopefully, unless there is some shenanigan and illegal “stuffing” of the ballot boxes—which has happened in isolated cases). “Turn over” of government occurs every 2 years in the House of Representatives, every 4 years in the White House, and every 6 years in the Senate. And while often slanderous and spiteful in the campaigns—the “turn overs” are peaceful! There are no *violent military coup d’etats*. NO ONE RULES IN THE USA BY “ROYAL SUCCESSION.” Monarchical rule (unless it is by the Divine and Perfect Monarch, Jesus Christ) is subject to much temptation for the “monarch” to become dictatorial and corrupt—as would be rule by an elite oligarchy. “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” That is what happened in Israel and Judah with her earthly kings. It was what Samuel warned the people about when they “cried for a king like the nations” (1 Sam. 8:4-22). Most other forms of government (even parliamentary) in the world are **unstable**, and many are **violent** in their “turn-overs.” WE SHOULD THANK GOD EVERY DAY FOR OUR FOUNDING FATHERS AND THE GUIDANCE OF ALMIGHTY GOD GAVE THEM THROUGH HIS WORD, THE BIBLE, IN THE FOUNDING OF OUR GOVERNMENT! And if you think taxes are exorbitant in America, you should live in some of the other countries of the world where dictatorial, socialistic and communistic forms of government have produced economic inflation, lack of industrial production and trade, which have made taxes 50% and higher of the citizen’s incomes! THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED IN ISRAEL AND JUDAH DUE TO UNGODLY IDOLATRY AND INTERNATIONAL “TRIBUTE” WHICH OPPRESSED AND BURDENED THE CITIZENRY WITHOUT MERCY! **If Israel and Judah had only adhered to the Law of Moses their countries would have produced a free enterprise system, led by godly rulers who ruled by God’s word, and they would have had security from their enemies!** FOLLOWING GOD’S WORD IN MATTERS OF GOVERNMENT IS NOT ONLY RIGHT—IT WORKS!

God finally had enough of Israel’s idolatry and wickedness and the anarchy caused by assassination of one king after another and brought the Assyrians from Mesopotamia to depopulate the northern ten tribes. **However**, the Assyrians did **not** carry away into captivity all the people of the 10 northern tribes! The Assyrian king Sargon claims in 721 B.C., to have carried away only 27,290 Israelites into Assyrian captivity (on a wall-inscription on his royal palace at Dur-Sarraku, i.e., Khorsabad, found by archaeologists). Hezekiah, who came to the throne of Judah ca. 725 B.C. could still appeal to the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, Asher and Zebulun (2 Chron. 30:5,10,11,18ff), and these tribes existing in the northern territories of the former Israel is implied in the narrative of Josiah’s reformation (2 Chron. 304:6ff). Jeremaih 41:5 seems to

imply that a remnant of true Israelites remained in Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria a century later—so a substratum, or admixture of Hebrew stock in the later composite population may be assumed. **Those Israelites of the northern kingdom, left behind in the land of Israel, later intermarried with the Mesopotamian “stock” which the Assyrian kings “imported” into the land of Israel and the consequent generations came to be known even to the days of Jesus and the 20th century as “Samaritans.”** IT APPEARS FROM EZRA’S DOCUMENTATION (Ezra chs. 1-2) THAT SOME OF THE PEOPLE OF THE TEN NORTHERN TRIBES (I.E., ISRAEL) CAME BACK WITH THE BABYLONIAN EXILES WHEN CYRUS, KING OF PERSIA, LET THE JEWS RETURN TO THE LAND OF CANAAN AND RE-INSTITUTE THEIR “COMMONWEALTH.” Only some 50,000 (total) of the Jews came back from exile—the remainder of the hundreds of thousands that were taken in both captivities (721 B.C. and 606-586 B.C.) stayed in Mesopotamia and intermarried with the Gentiles. Ezra determined that those “Jews” who were to be priests and Levites serving in the temple could trace their ancestry. But after Ezra, successive conquests of the Jews by the Seleucids (Greek-Syrians) and the Romans, and the destruction of Jewish documents as well as their temple and their cities, makes it legally impossible for any Jew to accurately trace his ancestry to Abraham! No Jew today can trace his ancestry with documentation any farther back than about 400 years—and that statement was made by a Jew! That’s what makes the notion ridiculous that “God has something yet to do with the Jews,” as Jews, in the dispensationalist’s *alleged* tribulation and millennium yet to come. WHO KNOWS WHO IS A TRUE JEW TODAY? Jewish genealogy, religion, and social structure of the 21st century bears no resemblance to the scriptures.

Ahaz usurped the reins of government in Judah from his father Jotham in 735 B.C. Ahaz was the most wicked king, to this point in time, who had reigned in Judah. Of all the kings of Judah only Manasseh and Amon receive greater condemnation in the Scriptures. Ahaz re-introduced and personally participated in the worship of Canannite deities. Like the kings of Israel, he made molten images for Baal (2 Chron. 28:2), and even worse made his son to pass through the fire. The **irony** of his actions is pointed out by the writer of 2 Kings that it was because of such abominable practices as these that God had driven the Canannites out of the land Israel under Joshua (16:3). “Passing one’s son through the fire” was an actual burning alive of one’s male children (2 Chron. 28:3). The sacrificial burning of children was a practice particularly associated with Moloch the god of Moab. The theory was that a man should offer to his deity what was nearest and dearest to himself. The sacrifice as it was performed at the Phoenician colony of Carthage (n. Africa) is described by the Roman writer Diodorus Siculus (XX, 14). In the heathen temple there was an image of Moloch, a human figure with a bull’s head and outstretched arms. This image of metal was made glowing hot by a fire kindled within it; and the children laid in its arms, rolled from thence into the fiery lap below. If the children cried, the parents stopped their noise by fondling and kissing them; for the victim was not supposed to weep, and the sound of complaint was drowned in the din of flutes and drums. **Whether that is worse than modern American “partial-birth abortion” where the child is half way out of the birth canal and its skull pierced and its brains “sucked” out, or not, you be the judge —no, on second thought, God will be the Judge!** Ahaz also had the ***brazen audacity*** (as if to spit in the face of Almighty God) to order the high priest, Urijah, to make a copy of a “heathen” (Assyrian) altar made, put it in the very inner court of the temple of God, shove

the real Jewish altar into the background, and order the high priest, Urijah, offer the regular (Mosaic) sacrifices upon that heathen altar! Ahaz also disfigured and tore down parts of the Hebrew temple that had been put there by Solomon salvaging the gold to pay tribute to Assyria! **AHAZ WAS TERRIFIED OF THE ASSYRIANS AND “KOW-TOWED” TO THEIR EVERY DEMAND—TRIBUTE, IDOLATRY, WICKEDNESS! And he was the father of Hezekiah—one of the best kings of Judah! Once again, we are faced with the dilemma—“how can children grow up to be ‘good’ when under the influence of such wicked parents!”** (Hezekiah had a godly **grandfather**, Jotham). “Wicked” parents produce “good” children because the “good” children make “good choices” in spite of their wicked parents if they are given the evidence that God’s word is true! **If there is one thing the church of Christ must do, today, it is IMBUE ITS YOUNG GENERATION (FROM PRE-SCHOOLERS TO COLLEGE AGE) WITH EVIDENCES, APOLOGETICS, PROOF THAT THE BIBLE IS GOD’S INSPIRED WORD! That’s really the most significant thing the church can do for its young people—and about the ONLY thing it can do that counts!** Make them ready, always, to give an “apologetics” (answer of defense) to everyone who asks them concerning the hope that is in them (1 Pet. 3:15).

Ahaz is also *infamous* for rejecting the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa. 7:1-25) and because of it, bringing down upon Judah about 120 years later the wrath of Almighty God destroying their temple, their city and taking Judah into exile in Babylon for two generations—70 years. Ahaz was so paranoid for his throne that the slightest threat from Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel he refused Isaiah’s admonition to seek a sign from the Lord that the Lord God would keep his throne safe for him. Instead he went straightway to Assyria for assistance. That opened the “door” for Assyria to come into Judah and devastate numerous cities of Judah. Isaiah prophesied that the coalition between Syria and Israel to throw Ahaz off the throne of Judah and make Judah a “puppet” satellite nation would not be permitted by God. God would send deliverance. Isaiah told Ahaz to ask the prophet for a “sign” that his prophecy would come to pass. **Ahaz wouldn’t ask for a sign—he concluded that he had taken care of his enemies by making treaties with Assyria and paying them tribute (“black-mail”). Ahaz did not understand as Isaiah did that Assyria was a greater threat to his throne than Syria and Israel.** Isaiah then told Ahaz that the Lord would give Ahaz a sign whether he wanted one or not—whether he paid attention to it or not. The “sign” was that “a young woman” probably a virgin, although not necessarily a virgin in the Hebrew text—see our Sunday School notes on Isaiah ch. 7—probably of the king’s court, would become married and conceive and bear a son whose name would be called “Immanuel” (meaning, “God is with us”). **And**, before that particular child became of the age of accountability (knowing right from wrong, i.e., probably 10 or 12 years of age), the Lord make the lands of those two kings, Rezin and Pekah, deserted (Isa. 7:16). **GOD WOULD HAVE DELIVERED JUDAH IF AHAZ HAD REPENTED, BELIEVED AND OBEYED THE LORD AS ADVISED BY ISAIAH,. On the other hand, because Ahaz refused to ask for a “sign” from the Lord, the Lord was going to bring upon him and the people of Judah such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—i.e., the Lord was going to bring upon Judah the king of Assyria (the very one in whom Ahaz was putting his trust)! This prophecy of Isaiah had its ULTIMATE fulfillment some 700 years later when the Lord “gave a sign” to the whole world that he had sent the ULTIMATE DELIVERER, THE ULTIMATE “IMMANUEL”—JESUS CHRIST through the virgin who conceived by the power of the**

Holy Spirit without having “known” a man! (Matt. 1:18-25). Ahaz was very much “representative” of his descendants, the Jews, who for the most part, refused the “**Sign**” (Jesus Christ, as God in the flesh—“Immanuel”) and crucified him! That’s how the Jews of Jesus’ day “filled up the measure of their fathers” (see Dan. 9:24-27; and Matt. 23:29-39).

2 Kings 17:1—19:37

“And this was so because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God...and had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs which the kings of Israel had introduced” (2 Kings 14:7-8). THAT WAS THE BIBLICAL CAUSE OF ISRAEL’S DOWNFALL! The writer of 2 Kings goes on to say, “And the people of Israel did secretly (they thought) against the Lord their God things that were not right....And they did wicked things, provoking the Lord to anger, and they served idols...Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, ‘Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.’” There’s nothing confusing or hidden or inexplicable about it! ISRAEL BLATANTLY, WITH MALICE AFORETHOUGHT, DISOBEYED GOD! It wasn’t that they didn’t know what God wished of them—he sent them prophets from the very beginning of their nation-hood! **BUT THEY WOULD NOT LISTEN!** Again and again, history reveals that “that nation whose God is the Lord” is going to receive the Lord’s blessings. Jesus did not teach his principles in a political or civic vacuum. Not only did he come to reunite us with God, but he came to help us make this life’s relationships work right. Greedy and corrupt men in politics and business and every other vocation of life often say that the principles of Jesus are just fine for Sunday School, for old ladies and little children, but they “just won’t work in this dog-eat-dog world of ours.” **The fact is that faithfulness to God does work in this world.** After all, it is God’s world—he should know what will give it security and prosperity!

The Hebrew word *moas* in 17:15 is translated “despised” RSV and “left” KJV and “rejected” NIV. But it actually means, “**abhorred**” and is much stronger than merely “rejected.” ISRAEL DETESTED GOD’S COMMANDMENTS AND GOD’S COVENANT! The writer of 2 Kings said, “...they (Israel) used divination and sorcery, and sold (Heb. *mokhar*, “hawk, pawn, peddle”) **themselves** to do evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger.” ISRAEL WAS TOTALLY COMMITTED TO MATERIALISM! Israel wanted what she thought she saw in the nations round about her—power, sophistication, prosperity, sexual licentiousness, and freedom from what she thought was the inhibiting, stifling **commandments of God (in the law of Moses)**. SO ISRAEL “PAWNED” HER MESSIANIC HERITAGE FOR A “MESS OF POTTAGE”—just like Esau had done many centuries before! Israel hated the discipline, self-control, and righteous behavior demanded in the law of Moses. Israel was like her “sister” Judah—she would take no correction (Jer. 2:30; 5:3; 7:28; see Ezekiel chapters 16 and 23 where the prophet condemns both Judah and her “sister” Israel for **selling** themselves to spiritual whoredom in idolatry). Both Israel and Judah so **despised** the demands and obligations of covenant-relationship to God through the law of Moses, they prostituted themselves (i.e., “sold” themselves into illicit relationships with the “nations” round about them. Hosea the prophet uses his own experience with an unfaithful wife to portray what Israel (the northern kingdom) did (Hosea 1:1—3:5). They, like the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, took their “inheritance” and “went to a far country” and spent it all in riotous living until they wound up eating with the hogs (Gentile idolaters, perverts and child-murderers). When their cup of iniquity was full, God’s wrath,

long restrained, descended upon them. God removed them out of his sight. They were cast off, and declared no longer to be the people of God (Hosea 1:9). But the merciful God later allowed some of them to return to the Holy Land and become part of the “remnant” that would, 5 centuries later, produce the Messiah—Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:9-10)!

The Assyrians “imported” people from Asia Minor (Turkey today), Syria and Mesopotamia (Iraq today) into the land of the ten northern tribes of Israel which they had just “depopulated” by taking thousands and thousands of Jews into captivity and slavery. This was Assyrian “foreign policy.” They hoped to separate peoples they conquered from their native lands and thus keep “peace” throughout their conquered empire. These foreign “colonists” were ignorant of Jehovah and the worship of Jehovah and “imported” their depraved idolatries into the land. The Lord sent hundreds of lions into the land so numerous the people were not safe from them. The superstitious king of Assyria heard of the serious matter along with the suggestion from someone that the reason for the “lion-plague” was those heathen he had “imported” into Jewish lands did not know how to worship the “god of the land” (Jehovah). So the king of Assyria ordered one of the Jewish priests of Jehovah to instruct the “colonists” of the land in the ways of Jehovah. Even though there was a small “remnant” of Israelites left in the land of the ten northern tribes (2 Chron. 34:9) they would not have been familiar with the details of the religious rituals practiced in the temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem.

But the people of the land did not do as the Jewish priest advised them—get rid of the idolatry and practice a pure Jewish religion. The people of the land (including the Jews who had been left behind at the captivity in 721 B.C.) “still made gods of its own and put them in the shrines of the high places which the Samaritans had made...and appointed from among themselves all sorts of people as priests of the high places...to the day 2 Kings was written they did according to the former manner” (2 Kings 17:29-34). THEY WOULD NOT LISTEN, BUT THEY DID ACCORDING TO THEIR FORMER MANNER. THESE “HALF-BREEDS” (i.e., SAMARITANS) FEARED THE LORD AND ALSO SERVED THEIR GRAVEN IMAGES, THEIR CHILDREN LIKEWISE, AND THEIR CHILDREN’S CHILDREN—AS THEIR FATHERS DID! (2 Kings 17:40-41). They were very “ecumenical” and “eclectic” about religion! They became polytheistic! Outwardly they practiced some of the rituals of the true Hebrew religion—but they also practiced some of the idolatry of other “gods.” **Therefore, in the mind of the author of 2 Kings, “They do not fear the Lord, and they do not follow the statutes or the ordinances or the law or the commandment which the Lord commanded the children of Jacob whom he named Israel.” (2 Kings 17:34). TO THE AUTHOR OF 2 KINGS THIS WAS AN ABOMINATION AND BLASPHEMY! The New Testament is unequivocal that there must NOT be any “ecumenicity” or “syncretism” or “eclecticism” in the worship of Almighty God and the Lord Jesus Christ! Jesus said, “Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Lk. 13:24). Or, “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide (ecumenical) and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few” (Matt. 7:13-14). The apostle John said it plainly: “We (apostles) are of God. Whoever knows God listens to us (apostles). By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6). Jude wrote, “Beloved, being very eager to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write**

appealing to you to contend for the faith which was **once for all delivered to the saints**” (Jude 3). Jesus is the door for the sheep—anyone trying to enter the sheepfold by any other door is a thief and a robber (John 10). **Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no one comes to the Father but by him” (John 14:6).** THERE IS ONLY ONE TRUE RELIGION LEADING TO GOD, JESUS, SALVATION AND HEAVEN—THAT’S THE RELIGION SET FORTH IN HUMAN LANGUAGE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES! There can be no compromise, no watering-down, no adding to or taking away—no ecumenism, no eclecticism, no syncretism to it! If you think Christ is pleased with “ecumenism” in his church, just read the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor in Revelation chapters 2 & 3!

Hezekiah gained a momentary reprieve from the invasion of his kingdom of Judah, by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, by paying “tribute” (bribes) to the king of Assyria. He stripped the temple and palace of much of its silver and gold and taxed the people heavily to pay the bribes to Sennacherib (who was down on the border of Egypt attacking that country). Sennacherib sent his “chairman of the joint chiefs of staff”—the Rabshekah—with an army and laid siege to Jerusalem. The King of Assyria wasn’t satisfied with the bribe—he wanted nothing less than the total surrender of Jerusalem! **So what did Hezekiah really learn? He learned the lesson that humankind apparently has to re-learn in every generation—EVIL AGGRESSION CANNOT BE APPEASED BY BRIBERY—IT HAS TO BE OVERCOME BY “GOOD” FORCE (Rom. 13:1-7).** The same is true of “evil words”—they must be confronted and conquered by “good words” (2 Cor. 10:3-5)—they must be exposed (Eph. 5:11-12; Titus 1:9-16). Neville Chamberlain, late Prime Minister of Great Britain in the 1930s learned that Adolph Hitler’s “evil forces” could not be stopped with bribery by giving Hitler Austria, the Sudetenland, and Czechoslovakia—Hitler wanted all of Europe, including France and Russia! Had the British and the French stood up against Hitler, with armed forces, there would have been no WWII in Europe! Had America armed herself and intervened when Japan aggressively attacked China in the 1930s, there probably would have been no Pearl Harbor or Pacific war. These statements are **not** “hind-sight quarterbacking”—it is the wisdom learned from history and the Scriptures. American philosopher George Santayana said, those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it! Hezekiah, of course, did not have enough *physical* “good force” to overcome the surprise attack by the Assyrian “evil forces” so he had to depend on the Lord to supply what was needed. That is what the Lord told Israel to do (to depend on him for deliverance, by worshiping him according to his word) from the moment he delivered the law to Moses (Deut. 28). **AND THE LORD FULFILLED HIS PROMISES TO ISRAEL AND DELIVERED THEM FROM THEIR ENEMIES MANY TIMES, BY ARMED FORCES.** But the people of Israel refused to learn from their history and from their Scriptures—so they paid the price!

If one reads **Isaiah’s account** (Isaiah 36:1-22) of the Rabshekah’s verbal assault on Hezekiah and the Jews within the besieged city of Jerusalem one will find *more* than 4 aspects (actually, 7) of “psychological warfare” practiced by the Assyrian “general” against the besieged city: **(a)** the taunt that “mere words” (of Hezekiah’s representatives) were useless “strategy” and “powerless” for war (Isa. 36:5); **(b)** the lie that Hezekiah had removed the “altars” to the Jewish “gods” (Isa. 36:7—Hezekiah had removed the idolatrous altars); **(c)** the sarcastic dare that if the Jews were able to find 2000 “riders” (i.e., cavalrymen), the Rabshekah would give them 2000 horses so they could come out and

fight him (Isa. 36:8-9); **(d)** the lie that the Rabshekah came upon Jerusalem at the directed revelation to him by the Lord God of Israel (Isa. 36:10)—actually, the Assyrians did come against Jerusalem with the Lord’s permission (Isa. 10:5-27) but with that same prophecy Isaiah told those who dwelt in Zion not to be afraid of the Assyrians—but God **did not speak directly** to the Rabshekah; **(e)** the threat of unspeakable horrors to come upon the Jews if they did not surrender; **(f)** the use of the Hebrew language to make his threats to those under siege in Jerusalem (Isa. 36:13-15) when the emissaries of Hezekiah asked him not to do so (Isa. 36:11); **(g)** the promise of freedom and prosperity if the Jews would let the Rabshekah take them captive back to his land (Isa. 36:16-17); (h) the boast that none of the “gods” of other nations had been able to withstand the Assyrians so why did the Jews think their “God” would be able to withstand them (Isa. 36:18-20). **YES! THE CHURCH TODAY FACES THE SAME KIND OF “PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE” FROM THE DEVIL AND HIS HUMAN ACCOMPLICES!** The church is mocked, scoffed at, dared, lied to, promised freedom and prosperity and challenged to **compromise, surrender and give in to the falsehoods of Satan**. **BUT THAT HAS BEEN SO EVER SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH—JUST READ ACTS, THE EPISTLES AND REVELATION!** Be sure, however, to read the warnings and promises of Almighty God and our King, Jesus Christ, and know from history that those warnings and promises have come to pass for the church over and over and over!—just as they did in the case of Hezekiah!

Hezekiah responded in two ways to the threats of the heathen Rabshekah: **(a) Hezekiah repented before the Lord for his sins and the sins of the people;** **(b) Hezekiah sent for God’s spokesman, Isaiah the prophet, to seek the Lord’s will in what was happening (Isa. 36:1-7);** **(c) Hezekiah took the written threat of the Rabshekah and “spread it before the Lord” and prayed that the Lord save God’s people, IN ORDER THAT THE NAME OF THE LORD SHOULD BE KNOWN IN ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE EARTH!** Hezekiah’s actions were much like those of Daniel when he received the “visions” of what was going to happen to God’s people in the captivities (Dan. 9). What better “schematic” could today’s “kingdom of God” (the church) have to follow than Hezekiah’s when the church is verbally (and physically) assaulted by the “Rabshekah’s of this world” (i.e., the devil and his human helpers)? Perhaps the church is not being delivered as often as it should because it is being “selfish” in its responses to assaults upon it. Perhaps the church is praying that God will give it ease and deliverance for its sake, rather than for the Lord’s sake! Remember, if we ask anything **according to his will he hears us** (1 John 5:14-15). Read Ezekiel 20:9,14,22; Daniel 9:17-19).

The Lord kept his promise to Hezekiah and Isaiah to deliver Judah from the siege of the Assyrian braggart, Rabshekah, by sending the angel of the Lord the very night of Hezekiah’s prayer and that angel (by some method unrevealed to us) slew **185,000** Assyrian soldiers in one night! Can you imagine the scene that greeted the eyes of Hezekiah and his besieged people when they stood upon the walls of Jerusalem the next morning?! The Lord delivered an astounding, devastating blow to the king of Assyria and his army (the USA only lost some 50,000 troops in 4 years of fighting in Korea, and 65,000 in 10 years in Viet Nam)—**185,000 troops (that’s 18 divisions in the army of the USA) in one night all dead**). Needless to say Sennacherib gathered the troops he had left in Egypt and slunk back home to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. Back in Nineveh, Sennacherib was assassinated (**WHEN THE LORD DELIVERS, HE DELIVERS COMPLETELY**) by two

of his sons in 691 BC. (2 Kings 19:37). There is actually an Assyrian account of the Judean campaign printed in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, by A. Leo Oppenheim & J. B. Pritchard, 1955, p. 288: "As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts and to the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered (them) by means of well-stamped (earth) ramps, and battering-rams brought (thus) near (to the walls) (combined with) the attack by foot-soldiers, (using) mines, breeches (*sic*) as well as sapper work. I drove out (of them) 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, big and small cattle, beyond counting, and considered (them) booty. Himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him with earthwork in order to molest those who were leaving his city's gate....Hezekiah himself....did send me later, to Nineveh, my lordly city, together with 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver...his (own)daughters, concubines male and female musicians. In order to deliver the tribute and to do obeisance as a slave he sent his (personal) messenger."

2 Kings 20:1—22:20

The Lord delivered Hezekiah because the Lord had promised that he would perpetuate the “throne of David” until the Messiah came to be the ultimate “son of David” (see 2 Sam. 7:12-8-17; Psa. 89:1-4; 89:35-37; Isa. 11:1-10; Luk3 1:32-33; Matt. 22:41-46). Hezekiah was descended from David (Matt. 1:6-9). The Lord did not deliver Hezekiah for Hezekiah’s sake, **but for the Lord’s sake, that all the world might know that the Lord keeps his word!** Hezekiah was a man who prayed that the Lord should act for the Lord’s sake (2 Kings 19:19; Isaiah 37:20) and that is how the Lord answered his prayer for deliverance from immediate death! **Hezekiah was told he was to “set his house in order” because he was going to die of his sickness and not recover. HEZEKIAH HAD NO ROYAL MALE HEIR—how would God keep his promise to perpetuate the “house of David” until the Messiah came? THE LORD DID IT BY GIVING HEZEKIAH 15 MORE YEARS TO LIVE!** When we get to the history of Hezekiah’s son, Manasseh, one wonders what Hezekiah would have thought about his anxiety to have a male heir to the “throne of David” had he been alive during Manasseh’s reign! **But the Lord knows best—and the Lord had everything under control, even through Manasseh’s reign of religious and physical terror!** Out of the wickedness Manasseh’s influence had on Judah, the Lord still preserved a “remnant” (through Isaiah’s “disciples” Isa. 8:16—9;7, and those the prophets after Isaiah kept faithful, e.g., Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel) until the coming of the Messiah.

The Lord had already **promised** Hezekiah he would live and be king for another 15 years—so the Lord would **not go back** on his **promise** to Hezekiah. But Hezekiah’s “sons” (i.e., all his descendants, especially grandsons) would suffer the wrath of God in the invasion of Judah by the Babylonians and the Babylonian captivities. Hezekiah was the king of Judah for 29 years from 724 to 695 B.C. Judah’s invasion and captivity began in 606 B.C. and Nebuchadnezzar attacked Judah and Jerusalem in 3 increments (606, 597, 586 B.C.) and finally, in 586 B.C. destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple until it was “leveled like a plowed field” (Jer. 26:18; Micah 3:12). Amon, the grandson of Hezekiah reigned only 2 years and was assassinated by officials of his household (2 Kings 21:19-26; 2 Chron. 33:21-25). Josiah, great-grandson of Hezekiah, although a very righteous king, was slain in a battle with Pharaoh-Necho when he was only 39 years of age (2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chron. 34-35). Jehoahaz, also called “Shallum,” (608 B.C.), great-great-grandson of Hezekiah reigned only 3 months, was deposed and taken in chains by Pharaoh-Necho into Egypt where he died. Jehoiakim, originally named “Eliakim,” was the elder half-brother of Jehoahaz (1 Chron. 3:15; 2 Chron. 36:1). When Jehoahaz was taken to Egypt, the king of Egypt took “Eliakim,” changed his name to Jehoiakim, and put him on the throne of Judah where he reigned some 10 years. Jehoiakim was very oppressive and ungodly (2 Kings 23:36—14:7; 2 Chron. 36:4-8, Jeremiah, chapters 22—36, see especially Jer. 22:1-23). Jehoiakim died in disgrace “buried with the burial of an ass” (Jer. 22:18-19). Jehoiachin, next to last king over Judah, followed in the wickedness and oppressions of his father. He reigned at Jerusalem 3 months and 10 days (597 B.C.). He is also known as “Coniah” (Jer. 22:24-28; 37:1) and he is also called “Jeconiah” seven times (e.g., Matt. 1:11-12). He is mentioned in Ezekiel 19:5-9 where the prophet predicted he would be taken to Babylon. In the year 597 Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him to Babylon (2 Kings 25:27; 2

Chron.36:10) where he remained a captive until the end of his life, though apparently in not too difficult conditions. Zedekiah was the last king of Judah. He was a son of Josiah (2 Kings 24:18). When Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin to Babylon he took “Mattaniah” and changed his name to “Zedekiah” and made him king of Judah. Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar who bound him and took him prisoner and made him watch the execution of his sons and then had Zedekiah’s eyes put out. He was then taken to Babylon where he died (2 Kings chs. 24-25). He reigned 11 years (see Jer. chs. 34-37). **Thus did the “sons” of Hezekiah suffer short lives and much trouble and torture as “vassals” of the Babylonians! PAY-DAY SOME DAY!**

Once again it is as perplexing as it was when we discussed it earlier—why do some “good” parents have “bad” offspring? Manasseh was 12 years old when he began to reign (2 Kings 21:1; 2 Chron. 33:1) and he reigned 55 years—longer than any other king of Judah or Israel! **And he was probably the most WICKED king to rule either kingdom.** He: **(a)** did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel (i.e., the Canaanites—and they were very wicked); **(b)** rebuilt the high places which his father Hezekiah had broken down; **(c)** erected altars to the Balls and made Asherahs, and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served them; **(d)** built pagan altars in the temple of the Lord; **(e)** burned his sons as offerings in the valley of the son of Hinnom; **(f)** practiced soothsaying, augury and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and wizards; **(g)** made an image of some idolatrous god and set it in the house of God; **(h)** he shed much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another (2 Kings 21:16; 2 Chron. 33:2-9). Tradition says that he had Isaiah sawn asunder (in half). The sacred text does not tell us what kind of parent Hezekiah was—whether he neglected his children (as David apparently did) so that he could carry on his duties as “king.” We do not know what kind of *outside-the-home* influences Manasseh might have had that made him turn out to be the most wicked king of the history of the nation of Israel from its beginning. Not even Saul was as wicked as Manasseh! Not even the Herods were as idolatrous as Manasseh! All we do know is that his father, Hezekiah, made great efforts to bring Judah back from the brink of idolatry—he prayed to God—he listened to the prophets—he was concerned about the Messianic destiny of his “family.” ALL WE KNOW IS, MANASSEH WAS AN ADULT, HE MADE HIS CHOICES BY HIS OWN FREE WILL—HE CERTAINLY HAD A GOOD ROLE-MODEL IN HIS FATHER—BUT MANASSEH DECIDED HE WANTED TO BE AS HEATHEN AS WERE THE HEATHEN NATIONS AROUND HIS COUNTRY.

Manasseh ***seduced*** (Hebrew, *tooh*, “led astray”) Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that they did more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the people of Israel (2 Kings 21:9; 2 Chron. 33:9). The Lord spoke to Manasseh (through prophets) and to his people but they gave no heed. Manasseh did not just practice wickedness himself—he had to advocate it, practice it, and flaunt it publicly with the deliberate intention of **seducing** the rest of the nation to practice wickedness. **We must affirm, as the Bible does many times, that rulers indeed have an impact on the moral fibre of the citizens over whom they rule! THAT IS PRECISELY WHY GOD COMMANDED MOSES THAT WHEN A “KING” SHOULD SIT ON A THRONE OVER ISRAEL, THAT “KING” SHOULD HAVE A COPY OF GOD’S REVEALED WORD AND RULE ACCORDING TO IT (Deut. 17:14-20)**. We have seen in the USA in the last 40

years (beginning about 1960) numerous presidents and congressmen and judges who have, by their dishonesty, sexual immorality, drunkenness, and other corruptions, had a deleterious impact on the social order in our country! Many naive and unregenerate people in a nation will say: "If the president and congressmen and judges are doing it, we might as well be doing it, too!" THE CORRUPTION OF POLITICAL LEADERS BECOMES AN "EXCUSE" FOR CITIZENS TO BELIEVE THEY CAN DESPISE THE WORD OF GOD AND "GET AWAY WITH IT!" Let's make sure in our churches that we have good Bible preaching and teaching and good role-modeling by our preachers, teachers and elders, so that they are not **seduced** by our political rulers into the wickedness that brings down the wrath of God upon nations!

I will long remember a sermon I heard brother Eldon Melton preach one year in Christian Service Camp at Halltown, MO. It was entitled, "Saved, But With Regrets" and based on 2 Chron. 33:10-25. The basic proposition of the sermon was that sinful people may repent of their sins at some point in their lives and be saved, but usually with regrets (and some people, like Manasseh, have **much** to regret). Evidently, Manasseh did have a guilty conscience at one point in his adult life about his blatant wickedness. But not until God allowed the king of Assyria take Manasseh bound in fetters of bronze to Babylon. **Then**, Manasseh, "when he was in **distress, entreated** the favor of the Lord his God and **humbled** himself **greatly** before the God of his fathers" (2 Chron. 33:11-12). The writer of 2 Kings goes on to say: "He (Manasseh) prayed to him, and God received his entreaty and heard his supplication and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God." (2 Chron. 33:13). Manasseh "took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the Lord and all the altars that he had built on the mountain of the house of the Lord and in Jerusalem, and he threw them outside of the city. He also restored the altar of the Lord and offered upon it sacrifices of peace offerings and of thanksgiving; and he commanded Judah to serve the Lord the God of Israel. **Nevertheless the people still sacrificed at the high places, but only to the Lord their God.**" (2 Chron. 33:14-17). **SAVED, BUT WITH REGRETS!** THAT COULD BE "POSTED" OVER THE LIVES OF QUITE A LOT OF CHRISTIANS WHO, LIKE THE "PRODIGAL SON...TOOK HIS INHERITANCE AND JOURNEYED INTO A FAR COUNTRY, AND THERE SQUANDERED HIS PROPERTY IN LOOSE LIVING" (Luke 15:11-24). **Manasseh's "saved, but with regrets" is a good "sermon" to preach to young people in any generation!!!**

Again, we have a "good" youngster being spawned in the palace of the "most wicked" king ever to rule Judah. Josiah was his name. His rule was similar, if not even better, than that of Hezekiah as to the "reformation" of godliness and Jewish religion in the palace! When Josiah was still a "boy" (about age 16) "he began to seek the God of David his father" (his 18th generation "father") (2 Chron. 34:2). Apparently some kind of "tradition" or "record" had been preserved about the godliness of David and handed down through 18 generations. Josiah became fascinated by David's story and wanted to be like him! YOU SEE, FAMILY GENEALOGICAL HISTORY PLAYS AN IMPORTANT PART IN MOST PEOPLE'S LIVES! In addition, he had seen his father, Manasseh **repenting and regretting** his wickedness and how it **infected** the people so that they could never "shake" off the wickedness into which Manasseh had *seduced* them. Furthermore, during Josiah's great "reformation" they "found the book of the law of Moses" which had been lost for a long

time and **read it to Josiah**. Even furthermore, in about the 12th year of Josiah's reign the great prophet **Jeremiah** began his ministry (ca. 627 B.C.) In view of the grave threats which Moses (and Jeremiah) had made against practitioners of idolatry and immorality king Josiah could not help but believe that the wrath of God had already been kindled against Judah because of the wickedness of so many of his royal ancestors and their generations! (2 Kings 22:13).

The “book of the law of Moses” must have been “lost” (or thrown aside into some closet or chest in the temple) for **decades!** It had been over 60 years since Manasseh had begun his wicked reign which certainly demonstrated no adherence to the law of Moses at all—in fact it demonstrated complete contempt for God’s law! ALL THE PROPHETS (FROM ELIJAH TO ISAIAH AND JEREMIAH) HAD ADAMANTLY WARNED THE NATION TO RETURN TO THE “ANCIENT PATHS WHERE THE GOOD WAY IS AND WALK IN IT...BUT THEY SAID, **WE WILL NOT WALK IN IT...WE WILL NOT GIVE HEED**” (**Jer. 6:16-19**) **AND THEY REJECTED THE LAW OF GOD!** *God have mercy upon all “Christian” churches or people and “religions of the world” who have demonstrated CONTEMPT for the Bible and had refused to “walk in the commandments of the New Testament in Jesus Christ!* THERE’S NO EXCUSE FOR ANY CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FOR NOT KNOWING GOD HAS A “BOOK” WHICH DEMANDS TO BE FOLLOWED! YOU CAN FIND ONE IN ANY MOTEL OR HOTEL IN THE USA (PUT THERE BY THE GIDEONS)—THERE ARE RELIGIOUS BOOK STORES IN EVERY SHOPPING MALL IN AMERICA WHERE BIBLES ARE FOR SALE—THE HISTORY OF THE USA CANNOT BE HONESTLY STUDIED WITHOUT KNOWING THAT OUR “FOUNDING FATHERS” FOUNDED THIS NATION ON THE PRINCIPLES OF THE BIBLE! THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF CHURCHES IN THE USA HOLD “GOD’S BOOK” IN THE HIGHEST ESTEEM, PREACH IT, LIVE IT, AND DISPENSE IT TO ANYONE WHO WANTS IT! **THE “BOOK OF GOD” CERTAINLY HASN’T BEEN “LOST” IN THE USA!** But there are still millions of people in America who are ignorant of it, not innocently, but from disinterest and laziness—while there are a few who hold it in contempt!

The Bible answer to this question reads like this: “But as to the king of Judah, who sent you (to Huldah, the prophetess) to inquire of the Lord, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Regarding the words which you have heard, because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the Lord....and you have rent your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, says the Lord. Therefore, behold I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place.” (2 Kings 22:18-20; 2 Chron. 34:26-28). IT’S AS PLAIN AS THE NOSES ON OUR FACES! **“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” (Psa. 33:12)—and “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14).** **Repentance is responded to with GRACE from the Lord!** Josiah was not “perfect,” of course, because no human being is! But he was **penitent and obedient to the word of the Lord when he knew it!** THAT WILL BRING THE LOVE AND MERCY AND GRACE OF GOD UPON ANYONE WHO BEHAVES LIKE JOSIAH! What will it take for America to “humble itself, pray, and seek God’s face, and turn from its wicked ways”? Is it going to take “affliction” (KJV) like that the Lord brought upon Manasseh (2

Chron. 33:12)? IT MAY BE COMING UNLESS A MAJORITY OF AMERICANS TURN AWAY FROM SOME OF THEIR "CESSPOOLS" OF INIQUITY AND SEEK THE LORD!

2 Kings 23:1—25:30

Idolatry secured its “foothold” in the land of Israel when the Israelites from Joshua to Saul to Solomon failed to ***totally rid the land of idolatrous people***. Josiah was determined to make a **thorough** “reformation” of the Hebrew religion. He called a great host of men of all classes of society (elders, priests to an assembly in “the house of the Lord” (i.e., the temple). He read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant which had been found in the temple (that may have included only the Pentateuch—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy—or it may have been *only* the book of Deuteronomy). Josiah then made a *solemn covenant* before the Lord, to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes, **with all his heart, and all his soul**, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in that book; and all the people joined in the covenant! (23:1-3). NOW, IF JOSIAH WAS THAT SERIOUS ABOUT KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD WRITTEN IN HIS “BOOK” HE HAD TO MAKE SOME VERY DRASTIC CHANGES IN THE RELIGION THE JEWS WERE THEN PRACTICING. This he did—you can read about all the destruction of idols, idolatrous altars and shrines which he did (with a vengeance) in 23:4-19. The statement in 23:9 may have significance as to why Josiah slew the “priests of the high places.” Those priests did not come down to Jerusalem to the temple and the altar there, to the assembly, as Josiah had ordered—they decided to stay where they were among their “high places.” Finally, in verses 19-20 we learn that Josiah went to Samaria and tore down their “high places” and slew all the priests of the “high places” upon their idolatrous “altars” and burned the bones of these renegade priests upon their “altars.” **Idolatry was an abomination to the Lord God, and he commanded the death penalty for ANYONE AND EVERYONE convicted of this “crime” (see Deut. 12:29 through 13:18; 17:2-7; 29:10-28).** ANYONE OBSERVING SOMEONE ELSE COMMITTING IDOLATRY WAS TO REPORT THE OFFENDER TO THE PRIESTHOOD, EVEN IF IT WAS ONE’S OWN FAMILY MEMBER, AND THEY WERE TO BE STONED TO DEATH—AND THE ONE REPORTING IT WAS TO CAST THE FIRST STONE! We have discussed before the fact that God’s word reveals HE WILL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE HIM (Exodus 20:3-6; Deut. 5:7-10). Anyone who worships any “thing” or “person” or “idea” or “statue”—including oneself—is condemning his/her soul to eternal hell! THAT’S HOW SERIOUS GOD IS ABOUT IDOLATRY! Idolatry (worshiping or obeying) any one besides Almighty God of the Bible is in rebellion against the Author of Life, Order, Peace, Righteousness, Goodness, and Mercy—and such rebellion merits DEATH!

With the defeat of Nineveh (Assyria) by the Medo-Babylonian warriors in 612 B.C. and the victory of the Babylonians at Haran in 610 B.C., it appeared that the “balance of power” in Mesopotamia was about to be upset. Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt (609-593 B.C.) decided to intervene in the struggle on behalf of the tottering Assyrian kingdom. Josiah decided to take his tiny army to Megiddo to stop the advance of Pharaoh-Necho. The Bible does not tell us *why* Josiah became such a “butt-insky” or what his purpose was. Maybe he simply resented this Egyptian incursion into the territory which he had recently annexed. Had he allowed the Egyptian armies to march uncontested back and forth across his land, he would not be able to long maintain his national independence. Maybe he was

just rashly putting the Lord to the test to see if his undermanned, and under-armed “army” would be miraculously delivered by the Lord. Pharaoh-Necho tried to persuade Josiah how foolish for him such a confrontation would be. Pharaoh-Necho insisted he had no quarrel with Josiah, and insisted that God had directed him to undertake this mission of helping the Assyrians against the Babylonians—he warned Josiah that should he persist in resisting his march toward the Euphrates River he would be fighting against God. (Sounds like the Rabshekah, doesn’t it?). In Pharaoh-Necho’s case, however, the writer of Chronicles seems to concur that the action of Josiah was contrary to the will of God for **the Chronicler declares that Josiah “hearkened not unto the word of Necho from the mouth of God” (2 Chron. 35:22).** How was Josiah to be certain God had revealed his will to Pharaoh-Necho? We don’t know—but apparently he was supposed to know—perhaps a “man of God” confirmed it to Josiah. Whatever the case, Josiah persisted. He and Pharaoh-Necho met in battle at Megiddo (near a place called Hadad-Rimmon, in the Plain of Jezreel), Josiah’s army was defeated and Josiah himself was mortally wounded (2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chron. 35:23-27). Jeremiah, the prophet, led the nation in lamenting the death of this good king. For many years the anniversary of the death of Josiah was marked by weeping and lamentation (Zech. 12:11).

Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he began to reign over Judah. He reigned 11 years from 609-597 B.C. (23:36). In spite of the poverty that had come upon the nation of Judah, this petty little king spent huge sums of money on himself. In one of Jeremiah’s blistering sermons he condemned Jehoiakim for building for himself a fancy new palace (Jer. 22:13-14). Jehoiakim was the villain of the closing years of Judah’s history. He was everything that is despicable in a national leader. He was a spend-thrift, a bigot, an arrogant and irreverent tyrant who brooked no criticism, not even when that criticism came from a man of God. A prophet named Uriah was too bold in his denunciation of Jehoiakim, and paid for his boldness with his life (Jer. 26:21). Jeremiah was himself in danger of his life more than once during the reign of this mad-man. Jehoiakim carefully watched the political developments on the Euphrates River to the north. From July 609 to June 605 B.C. the armies of the Babylonians and the Assyro-Egyptian coalition fought one another. For the most part during those years the Babylonians were on the defensive. Finally, the Babylonian army under the brilliant young crown prince, Nebuchadnezzar, was able to launch a mighty offensive which was to have world-wide significance. The focus of the attack was the fortress of Carchemish on the Euphrates. Nebuchadnezzar won a crushing victory. The Egyptian armies fled southward from Carchemish in disarray. Nebuchadnezzar was able to roam at will through Syria-Palestine, the Hatti-land as he calls it in his annals. Shortly after Carchemish in 606 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar went up and besieged Jerusalem—in the 3rd year of the reign of Jehoiakim and in the **first deportation** took into exile some of the best and brightest of the Judeans (e.g., Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego) to Babylon (Dan. 1:1-3). Jehoiakim probably acceded to some sort of “oath of allegiance” to Nebuchadnezzar. In 604 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar’s father, Nabopolassar, died and Nebuchadnezzar return to his capital city of Babylon to assume the throne. Jehoiakim had no intention of remaining permanently the “vassal” of Nebuchadnezzar. Since Pharaoh-Necho was regaining strength down in Egypt, Jehoiakim was encouraged to rebel against his Babylonian overlord. In 598-597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar returned to Syria-Palestine to put down a revolt of Jehoiakim and continue his conquests. It was probably at this time that Nebuchadnezzar bound king

Jehoiakim to take him to Babylon. During his reign, Jehoiakim executed Uriah the prophet (Jer. 16:23)—destroyed the scroll of Jeremiah’s sermons (Jer. 36:20-23)—and ordered Jeremiah and Baruch, the prophet’s scribe, to be arrested (Jer. 36:26). There is no evidence Nebuchadnezzar took him to Babylon so he probably decided to leave Jehoiakim on his “throne” at Jerusalem as a “vassal” ruler under Babylonian dominion. Jehoiakim died on December 9, 598 B.C. Jeremiah had predicted that he would be “buried with the burial of an ass” and his death would not be mourned (Jer. 22:18-19) which suggests that he was probably assassinated and his body dishonored by his own countrymen by throwing his cadaver out to rot and be eaten by wild animals. His young son, Jehoiachin, reigned in Jerusalem.

The brief reign (3 months and 10 days) of the teen-ager Jehoiachin occurred in 598-597 and Nebuchadnezzar took him as a prisoner of war to Babylon along with a **second deportation** of Judean peoples. It is highly probable that Nebuchadnezzar took **Ezekiel**, the prophet, back to Babylon in this second deportation. Ezekiel began his ministry ca. 592 B.C. down in Babylon. Jehoiachin was 18 years old according to 2 Kings 24:8 but only 8 according to 2 Chron. 36:9. James Smith says in his commentary on *First and Second Kings*: “II Chronicles 36:9 gives his age as *eight*. In Hebrew the number eighteen is written with two words, the word for eight and the word for ten. In the process of copying the manuscript of Chronicles, some scribe must have accidentally omitted the word for ten.” So here is Jehoiachin, only 18 years old, and left to face the wrath of the mighty Nebuchadnezzar without any possible aid from Egypt (2 Kings 24:6-7; 2 Chron. 36:8) and with a nation whose peoples (by the thousands) have already been deported to Babylon. Jerusalem, Jehoiachin’s capital city is under siege by the most powerful force on the face of the earth at the time, and with only **one true prophet (see Jer. 5:5ff)** remaining in the land telling all the Judeans that the will of God was for them to surrender to the king of Babylon. **WHAT WAS THIS 18-YEAR-OLD, WHO WAS AS WICKED AS HIS FATHER, TO DO? HE SURRENDERED!** He may have thought that if he surrendered Nebuchadnezzar would allow him to retain his throne in Jerusalem as a “vassal” king. **WRONG!** Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin to Babylon as a prisoner of war (2 Kings 24:10-16; 2 Chron. 36:9-10). William Albright, famous archaeologist, has reported a discovery of tablets by Weidner, in the ruins of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, listing the names of those to whom regular allotments of oil and grain were made, among them, “Jehoiachin king of the land of Judah.” (See 2 Kings 25:27-30). Evidently Jehoiachin died in Babylon, never to see his homeland of Judea again—as did many other of the Jewish exiles.

After the deportation of Jehoiachin, Nebuchadnezzar appointed Mattaniah to be king of Judah. Mattaniah was the third son of Josiah (2 Kings 24:18; 1 Chron. 3:15). The victorious king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, demanded (as was his practice—see Daniel 1:6-7) that Mattaniah, his new “vassal” change his name to Zedekiah (meaning, “Righteousness of Jehovah”). 2 Kings 24:18 makes it clear that Mattaniah-Zedekiah was a son of Josiah (Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah, was the wife of Josiah and mother of Jehoahaz). The Hebrew text in 2 Chron. 36:10 calls Zedekiah the *brother* of Jehoiachin. “*Brother*” is used in 2 Chron. 36 in the general sense of “relative.” The reign of Zedekiah was, in many respects, the most tragic in the history of the people of God. The territory of Judah had been ravaged by warfare. The population had been drastically depleted through deportation—the upper class of people being completely depleted (Dan.

1:1-7). Zedekiah himself seems to have been at the mercy of his “princes.” The royal court was bent on rebellion. A brief insurrection in Babylon no doubt sparked renewed hope in the heart Zedekiah and his “princes.” When a new Pharaoh (Psamtik II) came to power in Egypt in 594 B.C., the little states of Syria-Palestine began to make plans for a concerted effort against Babylon. Ambassadors from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon met in Jerusalem to plan the rebellion (Jer. 27:3ff), but Zedekiah was summoned to Babylon and this insurrection was nipped in the bud. A still more boastful and aggressive Pharaoh took the throne of Egypt in 588 B.C. (Pharaoh Apries—Hophra as he is known in the Bible) and he actively encouraged a western coalition against Babylon. But the revolt does not seem to have been wide-spread in Syria-Palestine. Zedekiah, however, sent ambassadors to Egypt (Ezek. 17:15), and entered wholeheartedly into the rebellion. The Babylonian army arrived at Jerusalem on January 15, 588 B.C. They blockaded the city and began to systematically eliminate the outlying strong points. The fortified towns of Lachish and Azekah were among the last to fall to the Chaldeans (in 1935 18 ostraca which date to this very time were discovered in the ruins of Lachish—military communications between a field commander by the name of Hoshayahu and his superior in Lachish named Yaosh—confirming once again the historical accuracy of the Bible). The author of Kings omits all details of the siege of Jerusalem and passes immediately to the final catastrophe (25:2-3). Jeremiah and Ezekiel add significant information on this siege (Jer. 37:1—38:28; Ezekiel 17:17-21). False prophets gave false hope to Zedekiah and the besieged people of Jerusalem. The defenders of the city began to suffer from famine (Jer. 21:7,9; Lamentations 2:12,20). All the bread in the city was consumed by July of 588 B.C. Famine was followed by pestilence (Jer. 21:6-7), and after a time the city was reduced to the last extremity, mothers eating their own children to stay alive (Lam. 4:10). (Cannibalism became pervasive in the Nazi siege of Leningrad during World War II). **Zedekiah gave nothing but contempt to the TRUE word of God from the mouth of Jeremiah—because he put his hope in Egypt which Isaiah said, long before this, was “a big mouth which does nothing” (Isa. 30:7—“Rahab” means “big mouth” and “sabbath” means “do nothing or sit still”).** That’s the way of the unbelievers of all generations! WHEN GOD’S WORD SPEAKS, IT IS ABSOLUTELY FOOLISH AND DANGEROUS TO GO TO “SECULAR” OR “HEATHEN” SOURCES FOR HELP IN ONE’S EXTREMITIES! Zedekiah was captured, along with some of his “princes” and “sons” attempting to escape the city, taken to Riblah, where he was forced to watch the slaughter of his sons, and then have his eyes put out (probably with a hot iron), bound and taken to Babylon (2 Kings 25:7). The writer of 2 Chronicles states: “He (Zedekiah) also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God; he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the Lord, the God of Israel. All the leading priests and the people likewise were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations; and he polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem— they kept mocking the messengers of God (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, *etal.*), despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, till there was no remedy.” (2 Chron. 36:11-16).

The people who remained behind in Jerusalem when Zedekiah and the soldiers tried to escape, and those who had deserted to the Babylonians during the siege were ordered to prepare for deportation (25:11). Only the poorest of the citizens were allowed to remain in the land (25:12). **The Babylonians did not want the area to lie waste, since it**

could then have paid no tribute! Furthermore, if they were poor and destitute, they would be unable to take much time off from scratching out a living to foment any kind of rebellion. **ONE NEEDS MONEY TO RAISE A REBELLION!** Nebuchadnezzar would have no need for *more* poor people for the government to care for than he already had of his own citizens in Babylon **so why not leave them behind in a powerless, devastate land to fend for themselves!** **THIS WAS JOSEPH STALIN'S PROGRAM UPON HIS OWN RUSSIAN PEOPLE TO BRING THEM UNDER HIS CONTROL IN THE 1930s—starve them into submission!** It is how most dictators operate China, North Korea, Iraq, *etal.* Again, American Christians should be on their knees every day thanking God that they live in a country with a republican/democratic, free enterprise, capitalistic government! Long wars devastate both rural and urban infrastructure in a land. It took years and years and billions of dollars for America to restore itself after our own Civil War in the USA. Think of all the countries devastated by WWI and WWII, and of all the USA taxpayer's money that has gone into "restoring" the lands of both allies and enemies (England, France, the Balkans, Russia) in those two wars, and additionally, Korea, Viet Nam, Kuwait, Afghanistan, and Iraq! **WARS MAKE MOST PEOPLE POOR—IN MONEY AND IN SPIRIT!** The human race seems never to learn that lesson and unable to settle differences between nations and within nations without constant wreaking physical havoc and demolition, and psychologically scarring human souls by warfare!

This is the way God has operated in history—it is revealed in the Bible and fulfilled in the history of the world! God most often uses **secondary, human agents (nations)** to bring about his wrath upon flagrant, rampant disobedience to his will. Of course, there is no nation on earth completely "righteous" by the standards of God in his word. Some are *relatively* more righteous and just than others. When an individual or a nation become so belligerent and rebellious and aggressive that it is destroying national or international civil order, God sends his "troops" (whether it be police or armies) and makes whatever corrections need to be made to restore civil order. God sent Abraham to chase down the "kings of the East" and slaughter them for aggressively attacking the "cities of the plains of Moab and Edom (Gen. 14). God sent the king of Assyria against the depraved, idolatrous, wicked and murderous northern ten tribes of Israel (Isa. 10:5ff). God sent the Babylonians against the depraved, idolatrous, wicked and murderous nation of Judah (Jer. 27:5-7). Then God turned around and sent the Babylonians to destroy the Assyrians. He sent the Medes and Persians to destroy Babylon. He sent the Greeks to destroy Persia. He sent Rome to destroy the Greeks. He sent the Romans to destroy a still impenitent Jewish nation (Matt. 22:1-10; 24:1-35 and parallels in Mark and Luke). He sent the Scythians and Germanic tribes to destroy Rome! God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to desecrate the Jewish temple because the Jews of that day had turned it into an abominable, detestable, vile, wicked den of idolaters and liars, and thieves, and sexual perverts and murderers! **NEBUCHADNEZZAR COULD HARDLY DESECRATE THAT TEMPLE MORE THAN IT HAD ALREADY BEEN DESECRATED BY THE VERY PEOPLE WHO "WORSHIPED" THERE!** God is not partial toward any sinner! He has vowed to punish them all—if they do not repent—in torments for ever and ever! He is omnipotent and omniscient—he can use any "tool" in all his creation and outside this created universe (angels in flaming fire, 2 Thess. 1:7-10) to carry on his program of redemption. The secret of salvation from this coming torment is to turn to God and beg him for mercy and embrace his Son, Jesus Christ, in faith and covenant-relationship!

After the fall of Jerusalem, Judah became a “province” (satrapy) of the Babylonian empire. The Holy City had been completely destroyed, reduced to a heap of ashes. But Nebuchadnezzar did not intend to leave the land desolate and without some kind of order. He appointed Gedaliah, a member of a prominent Jewish family, as governor over the poor of the land whom he had left behind. Gedaliah was an ideal choice. He came from a God-fearing and influential family that through the years had supported Jeremiah’s declarations that Nebuchadnezzar had been appointed by God to be ruler of the world. Gedaliah’s father, Ahikam, had once protected Jeremiah when he was on trial for his life (Jer. 26:24). His grandfather, Shaphan, had been secretary of state under the godly king Josiah (2 Kings 22:8). Under the leadership of Gedaliah, Nebuchadnezzar intended to create in Judah a self-governing commonwealth under Babylonian sovereignty. Gedaliah called to Mizpah from whence he ruled, all the “captains” of the guerrilla bands which had somehow escaped capture and destruction by the Babylonian army. Gedaliah honestly and forthrightly presented his program of governance to these captains and urged them to use their influence to secure peace throughout the land. BUT IT WAS NOT TO BE! Ishmael, a member of the royal family, began plotting behind the scenes to assassinate Gedaliah. Either he resented the fact that Gedaliah had been appointed governor rather than a member of the royal family, or he may have despised and hated Gedaliah for collaborating with the Babylonians—or both! Whatever his reasoning, Ishmael was being used as a political pawn of Baalis, the king of Ammon (see Jer. 40:7-26, esp. 40:14). Gedaliah was warned of the plot but gave it little heed. During a banquet given by Gedaliah for these “captains” Ishmael and his men rose up suddenly and slew the governor, the Jewish officials who served with him, and his Babylonian bodyguard (Jer. 41:1-3). Jeremiah expands at great length on the events associated with the death of Gedaliah (Jer. 41:1—42:22). Eventually this “guerrilla” force with their families, and Jeremiah as a hostage, fled to Egypt where they all perished (Jer. Chs. 43-44). **2 Kings and 2 Chronicles and Jeremiah close their “books” by relating the account of how Jehoiachin the former king of Judah, was treated when taken to Babylon as a prisoner of war in 597 B.C. Jehoiachin was kept in prison for 37 years from 497 to 560 when Nebuchadnezzar died.** But Nebuchadnezzar’s son, Evil-Merodach (“stupid one of Marduk”) *lifted up the head of Jehoiachin* (i.e., restored him to royal favor, and ordered him released from prison. WE HAVE NO CLEAR STATEMENT AS TO WHY EVIL-MERODACH TREATED JEHOIACHIN WITH SUCH FAVOR AND RESPECT. We do know that Daniel and his three “friends” were highly respected and valued by the Babylonians from Nebuchadnezzar through the reign of the Persians in that area of the world! We also know that many Jews (e.g., Esther, Mordecai) later became very influential in that area of the world! So many of the Jewish exiles did exactly as Jeremiah told them to do (Jer. 29:4-14)—they *integrated* themselves into the Mesopotamian culture, political and financial structure and became very respected and influential. It may be that Daniel and the other highly esteemed Jews at the Babylonian court used their influence to secure the release of the imprisoned king. This might also account for the favor bestowed upon Jehoiachin when his throne was placed above the thrones of the other captive kings in Babylon. The presence of these kings each on a “throne” of honor was thought to enhance the dignity of Evil-Merodach. Jehoiachin was given garments suitable to a “lesser” monarch, invited to dine daily at the royal table, and was spoken to with respect and kindness by his captors. **The release and subsequent elevation of Jehoiachin no doubt bolstered the morale of the Jewish captives and made them confident that one day God would fulfill his promise to put an end to their**

banishment and restore them to their native land! It may even have reignited a spark of hope in the soul of some of the Judeans that God would keep alive the perpetuation of the “throne of David” until the coming of the Messiah. Of course, it would be to the advantage of the Babylonians, and later the Persians to, make use of the “best and brightest” of their “prisoners” of war (Dan. 1:1-21).

Ten lessons have we learned from 2 Kings
(and parallel passages in 2 Chronicles)!

IDOLATRY, WHICH IS GIVING SOVEREIGNTY TO ANY “THING” OR “IDEA” OR “PERSON” OTHER THAN ALMIGHTY GOD AND HIS SON JESUS CHRIST, RESULTS IN CIVIL, SOCIAL, AND PERSONAL CHAOS AND RUIN—AND ULTIMATELY ETERNAL CONDEMNATION FROM GOD!

Idolatry is caused by **neglect** of **God’s** revealed, written **word** which he delivered through his certified spokesmen (e.g., Moses, the prophets, and the apostles).

It is the responsibility of religious leaders to speak forth the unadulterated word of God to kings and princes and paupers—to everyone.

It is the responsibility of kings, princes and paupers to give heed to the proclaimed word of God no matter who is proclaiming it.

God’s word always comes to pass, precisely as God has revealed it, in spite of all contrary wishes and efforts of human beings—no matter how many or how powerful the “rebellious” ones may be!

God honors and shows mercy to those who sincerely give their heart and soul (e.g., Hezekiah, Josiah) to following the word of the Lord!

God’s spokesmen may have to endure extreme affliction and suffering (e.g., Elijah, Elisha, Uriah, Isaiah, Jeremiah) at the hands of those who oppose God in order to faithfully proclaim the message God has revealed!

God has at his disposal and use for his faithful, redemptive-people, an invisible “host” of warriors (e.g. angels, chariots of fire) to give victory to those who trust him and obey him.

God chastises and disciplines those people with whom he is working to bring redemption to the world—sometimes through the hands of their enemies.

“Glory, glory, hallelujah, His truth is marching on!”

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

The Sound Bible Study project is a cooperative effort of Christian educators and Jordan Media Enterprises LLC to provide the serious examination of the Scriptures for the conscientious student. All the teachers are experienced educators who have spent countless hours in the classroom on both sides of the lectern. The audio recordings and written notes are made available for those who wish to learn God's Word at a collegiate level but have been unable to matriculate. There is no intention to compete with the many faithful Bible schools, but rather to serve along side and strengthen both the student and the teacher for a stronger and more effective Kingdom of God that knows how to properly divide the Word of God.

