

# DIVISION, DESPAIR AND HOPE

by  
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These three words signal the dramatic history of Israel from the death of Solomon to the birth of Christ. The fatal sundering of the kingdom of Israel with the consequent violence of internecine strife, humiliating defeat by foreign powers, and subsequent exile to other lands – these form a black picture of despair, lightened only by flashes of divine revelation through the prophets of God. Their proclamations held out hope for the captives, not only for a return to their homeland, but for a coming Messiah, a King of kings. In this most helpful study we are led to hope for the second coming of this King and for the kingdom of righteousness and love which He alone has the power to establish.

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## Foreword

The kingdom of God is a grand and momentous theme which has echoed down the corridors of history for thousands of years. The rule of God among His people was the ideal of Israel's theocratic kingdom and was witnessed to even in the failings of her monarchy.

Epitomizing the age-old mortal struggle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil were the prophets Elijah and Elisha in their confrontations with King Ahab, Queen Jezebel and other worshippers of Baal. Prophetic triumphs notwithstanding, God's holiness coupled with the ultimate failure of certain royal reforms to curb idolatry made divine judgment inevitable. First Israel and then Judah were conquered by foreign enemies, and with the fall of Jerusalem came the destruction of the Temple, historic overtones of which carry down even to our own day.

The fallen monarchy was not reconstituted in the restoration period when a Jewish remnant returned to their homeland and rebuilt the Temple and the walls of Jerusalem. But they possessed prophetic promises of a messianic King and a kingdom which would know no end. Thus the old monarchy provided but a symbol, a shadow of a universal kingdom over which Jesus is Lord.

A fleeting signal of this kingdom whose origin is from another world is given at the end of Elijah's days as the horses of fire champ by the Jordan, and the prophet is taken UD to heaven. Elisha watches and cries: "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."

*Division, Despair and Hope* carries us through the post-Solomonic period of Old Testament history, in applying the lessons of the kingdom of God to our lives in the twentieth century. It is the second volume in a series of four, which will carry the reader through both Old and New Testaments, all the while pointing to Jesus Christ and His kingdom as the key to history.

### How to Use This Book

This is a daily devotional and study workbook. Here are some suggestions for its most profitable use.

Study the Scriptures daily, using the Bible readings in this book as your guide. There are Bible readings for every day of the week. Always begin by asking the Holy Spirit to guide you and give you a personal message for the day. Read with a pencil in your hand and record your responses to the questions asked.

On the last page of each chapter you will find "Make a Decision." Read this after you have completed the daily studies for the chapter. Determine to apply what you have learned during the week in your Bible study. *Develop the habit of searching the Scriptures for the solutions to life's problems.* The last page of this volume contains a list of books for further reading which will enrich your study as you refer to them.

It is suggested that you use a notebook as you study, to record your thoughts, questions and answers concerning the passages of Scripture you have read.

## **Division in the Kingdom**

The kingdom of God is the structure of control in which the will of God directs all the actions of all that is involved. It is marked by the willing obedience of all living beings in it. The dynamic is love. The origin of this love is in the love of God.

God is love. John tells us that the truth of the believers relationship with God is that God first loved us, and we now love Him because He first loved us.

God's love toward us is perfect, but our response to Him is imperfect. In acting to obey His will we manifest our own sinful tendencies. This was seen when the people of Israel divided the nation in seeking to do the will of God.

Introductory Bible reading for this week: I Kings 12-22

### **1st Day Division Caused by Arrogance**

I Kings 12:12-16

The kingdom of God would have an intrinsic unity. Since all action would be directed by the will of God there would be no turmoil or conflict in the course of events. Thus there would be no opposition of purpose, no division in interest, no contradiction in plan: this would be peace and rest.

The dominion of God in the kingdom would require the yielding of all living beings to obey willingly the revealed will of God. God created man with certain capacities and commanded him to subdue the earth and have dominion over it. Man had the capacity to exercise his dominion to whatever end he would choose.

When sin entered into man he became selfish and proud. He developed an interest in doing his own will to serve his own desires. This would bring judgment from God with suffering and loss.

God revealed certain promises to win man to obedience. Then He sent prophets who would teach the Word of God to guide man into obedience. He provided priests and a revealed procedure of worship so that sinners could be forgiven and reconciled to God even after being disobedient.

Finally, God gave them a king who was to lead them into obeying the will of God that they might be blessed. Despite the help given in the law of God, the repeated help from God in practical crises in battle and in living, the ministry of faithful servants who declared the will of God, the king's sinful human nature would prompt him to disobey God.

When Rehoboam was confronted by a request from the people which called for a lowering of taxes, he was not willing to humble himself. Although wisely advised by his experienced helpers to grant the request, he allowed his own vanity and arrogance to influence his decision, and by his harsh manner alienated a large section of the nation, causing them to rebel against his throne.

When Jeroboam was called by the northern ten tribes to become their king, the division of Israel became a fact. The northern nation was called Israel with Samaria as its capital city; the southern nation was called Judah with Jerusalem as its capital city.

### **To Go Further**

What lessons can be learned from the conduct of Rehoboam?

What does this incident show about the fitness of human nature to live in the kingdom of God?

## **2nd Day Arrogance Judged by God**

I Kings 14:12-16

The kingdom of God may be brought into distress by the arrogance of sinful persons who use their opportunity to advance their own selfish ends, but God will not allow them to go unpunished. Jeroboam took advantage of the situation in Israel to offer himself as king of the rebelling tribes.

Realizing the strong influence of their religious worship of God in the Temple at Jerusalem, which would likely bring the rebellious tribes back into the national situation surrounding Jerusalem and the Temple worship, Jeroboam set up altars of his own making in the northern rebel state so that the people could worship there and not go to Jerusalem.

In grace and mercy God sent a young prophet to declare the unfitness of Jeroboam's arrangements for the worship of Israel. Despite this warning Jeroboam continued in his willful evil plan to lead the nation away from the true worship of God in order to secure his own place as king. In this persistence he provoked God to the destruction of his whole family.

### **To Go Further**

What was the sin for which Jeroboam and his house were destroyed?  
What aspect of this sin was particularly evil?

## **3rd Day Division Leads to Violence**

I Kings 15:16-22

The kingdom of God is blessed with peace within its realm. When the will of God is obeyed, individuals are led into such actions as will demonstrate unity resulting in peace. Individuals will differ both in interest and in conduct, just as the several instruments in a band will differ or as the several voices in a choir will differ.

Sin leads the individual into independent action aimed to secure the interests of self. When one person acts to suit his own judgment, others are inspired to do likewise. This leads to division among persons in the kingdom. When once a person acts in self-interest he becomes sensitive to the possibility of another person becoming a rival. This leads to comparison, criticism, suspicion, envy and jealousy, which taken together, produce hostility.

When Rehoboam in his arrogance and Jeroboam in his wickedness led to the formation of two nations, Israel and Judah, they caused a situation in which violence would easily occur. As the king in each nation would develop his own interests, he would see the other as a potential rival and thus an enemy. Therefore warring actions followed in the course of events as the separated kingdoms continued in selfish pursuits.

### **To Go Further**

How could Israel have been spared civil war?  
Were both sides equally responsible for this conflict?  
What application does this lesson have to your own soul?

## **4th Day Evil Actions Bring Destruction**

I Kings 16:15-20

The kingdom of God was manifested in a measure in the history of Israel. One of the problems apparent was the sinfulness of the children of Israel. In the kingdom, God would show forth His will. As God dealt with Israel, so God would deal with all men, whosoever entered into the kingdom that he might be blessed.

But "God so loved the world" that He planned to save anybody who would yield himself into the will of God to obey Him. The plan of salvation was very simple. "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

One of the ways in which the word of God was revealed to all men was in God's dealing with the children of Israel. "All these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition." In the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the ways of God in His grace as He deals with men who obey Him can be seen. Even so in the history of the children of Israel the gospel can be seen in the exodus of Israel, out of Egypt, across the wilderness, into the land of Canaan.

But Israel was sinful. Despite all the help which God in His grace offered to Israel, this people in sin disobeyed and worked evil. God revealed His Law on Mount Sinai and also revealed His grace in the Tabernacle and the priesthood with the authorized procedure for worship, all designed to make it possible for Israel to walk before God in obedience that they might be blessed. Later God gave them a king who was to lead the people in the will of God.

When the kings were evil, God judged them and brought them to destruction that the people might not be deceived. In swift destruction God showed His judgment upon evil conduct.

### **To Go Further**

Since Zimri did what God had said would happen, why was he himself destroyed?  
Why would sinful men be chosen to reveal the gospel of God to men?

## **5th Day In Grace God Sends a Prophet**

I Kings 17:17-24

The kingdom of God demonstrates the saving grace of God. That men might be blessed, God acts among those who believe so that they may be led in the ways of righteousness and peace. In order that man may believe His promises, God reveals His word to chosen servants who serve by sharing their understanding with the people.

In Old Testament times not many Scriptures had been written, and not many persons had a chance to know them. But God had called Israel as His own peculiar people that He might reveal His will in dealing with them. The events in Israel's history were controlled and directed so that God's ways could be revealed to all.

After Rehoboam and Jeroboam had led Israel into division which resulted in two nations, Judah and Israel, Jeroboam took certain measures to secure his throne in Israel by working to make the division permanent. Therefore Jeroboam instituted a whole system of worship centered within the borders of the northern kingdom, in the practice of which the people were turned away from God.

But God did not forsake His people. They denied Him but He did not deny them. At the very time when their wicked kings followed each other in evil conduct, God sent Elijah to be His prophet in Israel. And so in the darkest night He placed the brightest star.

The prophet needed to be accepted by the people as a man of God that he might play his part. There would be miracles performed at the word of the prophet which would indicate that he was truly a man of God.

Elijah had become well-known throughout the entire nation by announcing there would be no rain until he said so. When he brought the widow's son back to life he was known as "a man of God."

### **To Go Further**

What lessons could a teacher or preacher learn from Elijah?

How important is the personal faith of a teacher or preacher in fulfilling the functions of his office?

### **6th Day The Prophet Calls the People to God**

I Kings 18:30-40

The kingdom of God provides blessing for all persons in it as they willingly obey the will of God. But human beings do not naturally want to obey God. They would rather trust in themselves and seek fulfillment of their own desires.

In grace God sends His word to call men to Himself. His word reveals that God loves man and this arouses in man a response of love toward God. "We love him, because he first loved us." When His word reveals what would be pleasing to Him, the response of the heart that now loves Him is glad to obey His will. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (I John 5:3).

In Old Testament times God sent prophets to bring His word to His people. Elijah was sent to the wicked Ahab to pronounce judgment upon his evil ways, and to call the people to believe in God despite the king's preference for the worship of Baal. But so great was the influence of the king that the people were bewildered and were without any assurance as to what was true, or what they should believe.

Elijah was commanded to meet Ahab with a bold request that he be permitted to confront the prophets of Baal in a public showdown so that the people might know that the Lord is God. Elijah proposed a test to see which god would answer with fire upon His altar in response to prayer.

The prophets of Baal numbered 450 and were supported by 400 prophets of the groves. Thus 850 religious leaders favored by the king confronted Elijah, who stood alone as a prophet of God. Elijah emphasized the issue by taunting the prophets of Baal with sarcasm. When he challenged the people to commit themselves for either God or Baal, "the people answered him not a word."

When God answered Elijah's prayer with fire from heaven the people were once more sure in their hearts: "The LORD, he is the God." Immediately Elijah called upon the people to destroy the prophets of Baal. It is most important that the heart of the believer be committed without reservation to God Himself. This will call for a definite rejection of all competitors.

### **To Go Further**

What can you learn for your own life from the fact that God sent Elijah to a people who were in doubt, led by a king who was evil?

How important is the people's opinion of the prophet?

## **7th Day In Willful Wickedness the Righteous Suffer**

I Kings 21:5-14

The kingdom of God bestows the blessing of peace upon all within its realm. Since all actions are directed by the will of God nothing that happens will hurt or destroy (Isaiah 11:6-9). The poor and the humble can be glad because they will be protected.

When the truth of the kingdom was revealed in the history of Israel the place of the king was filled at times by an evil man. Such was Ahab, who ruled as king over Israel with his wife, the wicked Jezebel. Despite the faithful ministry of the courageous prophet Elijah, Ahab continued in his evil ways.

In developing the king's estate of lands, Ahab coveted the vineyard of Naboth, so he offered to buy it. Naboth considered his field as a family inheritance and would not think of selling it for personal gain.

By a clever plot Naboth was falsely accused of treason and immediately put to death. This enabled Ahab to seize the vineyard for his own purposes. Though Naboth was altogether innocent of any wrongdoing, and thus was entitled to protection of his life and property, because of willful wickedness he was violently killed and robbed.

When Ahab went to take possession of the vineyard, God sent Elijah to pronounce judgment upon him and to announce the coming destruction of his whole family. Ahab accused Elijah of being an enemy who had come to do him harm, but Elijah told him he had caused the harm himself by killing and robbing Naboth. Ahab was so impressed by the fearless prophet and so convicted in his own conscience that he drastically humbled himself before God "and went softly."

God showed grace even to this wicked king when Ahab humbled himself, and He withheld the destruction of Ahab's family as long as he lived. However, the judgment was carried out as Elijah had announced, and Jezebel was also violently destroyed. Because of the sinfulness of men injustice and oppression may occur, and the righteous and innocent may suffer, but God's ultimate judgment upon such willfully wicked conduct is sure.

### **To Go Further**

What does the incident of Naboth's vineyard show about this world?

In the light of what happened to Naboth why would anyone want to be righteous?

What does the judgment upon Ahab teach about the future of the wicked?

### **Make a Decision**

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Man's actions make a difference as to his future outcome. He can continue in his own selfish ways and reap a life of sadness, loneliness and emptiness, and in the end death itself; or he can commit himself to God, taking what He has to offer him in Christ Jesus and have joy and peace and happiness here and now – and in the end heaven itself. "When you see Him will you be clothed in His righteousness waiting to hear, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"? The final outcome is up to you.

## Conflict in the Kingdom

The kingdom of God is manifested on earth among men as souls respond to the call of God and yield themselves to obey His will. The pattern of this was revealed in the history of Israel. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place . . . obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Hebrews 11:8). Isaac, Jacob and Joseph followed in succession as men who believed God and obeyed Him that they might be blessed.

In time the children of Israel responded as a nation, forsaking Egypt and crossing the desert to enter into the Land of Promise where they lived by faith, depending on God. Throughout their history obedience to God brought blessing, in contrast to their many acts of disobedience which brought punishment.

Introductory Bible reading for this week: II Kings 11-16

### 1st Day Turning Away from God Is Judged

II Kings 1:9-16

The kingdom of God calls upon men to look to God for guidance and for help. Despite God's sovereign power He gives man freedom to choose his course of action. The believer may not obey at all times, but God in grace will answer him as long as he turns to God for help. However, God will test the believer by allowing others to offer themselves as helpers. When anyone fails in this test, by turning away from God to look to someone else for help, God will act in judgment.

When Ahaziah, the king of Judah, was injured in a fall, he turned to a pagan god to find out about his possible recovery. In his place as king he was committed to come to the God of Israel for whatever help he needed. Immediately God sent Elijah to pronounce the death of Ahaziah as a judgment of God upon this apostasy.

When he heard that Elijah had predicted his death, the king sent an escort of fifty soldiers to bring Elijah to the king's court. Elijah called down fire from heaven which consumed this company of soldiers. This happened a second time. The third time, the captain cried out to Elijah for mercy.

Guided by the angel of the Lord, Elijah granted this petition and went down to face the king. Here the prophet immediately announced the judgment of God upon the king for turning to another god. "So he died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken" (II Kings 1:17).

There is a sober truth revealed in this instance, God looks upon the heart. The attitude of the heart is revealed in the way a man acts in a crisis. When confronted by the possibility of death, Ahaziah turned to the pagan god as the object of his first cry for help. That god could not help him, but in showing that he esteemed him above the God of Israel, Ahaziah showed himself as unworthy of the grace which could have spared him.

Israel was to learn that God is a jealous God and will not share His place as the Almighty One with any other god. To turn from the one true God is to invite destruction.

### To Go Further

How does God qualify to be the first in the esteem of the soul?

What sobering truth is shown here about God's interest in the thoughts of man?

## **2nd Day In Grace the Prophet Helps the Poor**

II Kings 4:38-44

The kingdom of God manifests the benevolence of God in providing for those within its realm. From God's point of view there is no respect of persons. But men have different needs. God will satisfy each person, but because of individual differences His actions will vary.

When God sent Elisha to take up the mantle of Elijah that he might minister the Word of God, he directed the prophet to demonstrate the grace of God by supplying the needs of the people. On one occasion the food prepared for eating was poisonous, endangering the lives of those who ate. Elisha cast meal into the pot and the food became edible so that no one was hurt.

On another occasion the supply of food was inadequate. Elisha overruled the reluctance of the servant who did not want to serve only a few of those present and commanded him to set food before everyone! This was done and some was left over after they finished eating.

It is in such acts of undeserved and unearned favor that the riches of God's grace can be seen. The glory belongs entirely to Him. No flesh can ever glory in His presence. The least person and the most unworthy are equally eligible with the greatest and the best for the benefits of His grace.

### **To Go Further**

What is so unusual about the grace of God?

Why would the prophet do works of wonder? How is the gospel revealed in this service of Elisha?

What parallels can you draw between the ministries of Elisha and Jesus Christ?

## **3rd Day In Grace the Prophet Heals the Leper**

II Kings 5:9-14

The kingdom of God shows the grace of God in providing healing for any within its realm. The consequences of sin brought sickness and disease which bring death, as well as cause pain and suffering. When God promised blessing to all who would yield themselves to Him to obey Him, He included healing. Not only would He raise from the dead those who believe in Him but He would deliver from dying those who in sickness and disease were beginning to die.

"Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man . . . and honorable . . . : he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper" (II Kings 5:1). In Himself He manifested the truth that the comparative greatness of any human being did not matter before God. Just as death comes to all men of every class and no one is great in the grave – even so in sickness and disease personal prestige is of no significance.

A captive Hebrew maid, through her confidence in Elisha the prophet, was used to bring to Naaman the hope of relief. In characteristic display of his personal prestige, Naaman came with his horses and chariot to Elisha to seek help. Elisha did not even come out of his house to see him but sent instructions by his servant. Such humbling treatment irked Naaman who started home in a rage. Again it was his servants who prevailed upon him to obey the instructions. When Naaman did obey he was gloriously cleansed.

Once more the human pride in Naaman prompted him to offer payment for the benefit received. But the faithful prophet refused any reward. The grace of God is not for sale. No man has special privilege because he is rich. God's gifts are free, and they are free to all regardless of human differences.

## To Go Further

How is the healing of leprosy different from providing food as in II Kings 4:42-44?  
List all the points at which Naaman was humbled.  
Why did Elisha not come out to honor Naaman?

## 4th Day A Source of Evil's Destroyed

II Kings 9:30-37

The kingdom of God will be distinguished by the absence of evil within its realm. Since men will be called into that kingdom, and all men are sinners, drastic action against evil must be taken.

Ahab repeatedly sinned against God. He married Jezebel who was a worshiper of Baal. When she came to be queen, Ahab built altars of Baal worship and tolerated the presence of the prophets of Baal and the priests of the groves in his court. The example of the king influenced the people to begin the worship of Baal, until there was widespread uncertainty and confusion in the nation as to who was God: the God of David or Baal?

Prophets were sent to Israel to warn the people that God would not share His glory with anyone else; It became apparent that for the sake of Israel Jezebel must be destroyed.

Jehu was anointed to be king over Israel and was given the commission to destroy all that pertained to Baal in Israel. This was done in an open, harsh manner that showed all the nations that the destruction of Baal worship was planned.

In the killing of Jezebel, the main inspiration of Baal worship in Israel was destroyed. Such drastic measures are hard to accept unless they are kept in the context of the issues involved. The killing of Jezebel was like the removal of a malignant tumor. The life of the patient may require amputation of a poisoned limb.

## To Go Further

Why was Baal worship such a menace?  
How can the grace of God be seen in sending Jehu?  
What does this incident teach about error?

## 5th Day Idolatry Is Destroyed by Harsh Actions

II Kings 10:17-28

The kingdom of God will be featured by the wholehearted worship of God as the only one to whom allegiance is due. It is characteristic of natural man in his sin that his affection can be given to a number of contradictory persons or things. This means that at no time is the heart utterly or completely committed. This results in a broken attitude toward everything, and leaves the person distracted and inwardly in turmoil. When called into the kingdom of God a drastic reorientation of the individual occurs as he is brought into the worship of God alone.

Such transformation is not easy to achieve. Reasoning by itself is not effectual in dealing with the commitment of the person. Only the drastic consequences of the judgment of God, openly shown in the destruction of all who favored the pagan deities, was deemed sufficient to turn men to God in Jehu's day.

In the call of Jehu, God willed the destruction of those who had committed themselves to Baal.

This drastic violence made the issue of loyalty to God a matter of life and death.

Jehu came upon Jehoram, king of Israel, at Jezreel and killed him. Having found King Ahaziah of Judah – also a Baal worshiper – in Jezreel, Jehu wounded him so that he died

Then Jehu made a public exhibition of the killing of Jezebel, leaving her dead body in the streets to be eaten by dogs. After this Jehu hunted out and killed the seventy sons of Ahab in Samaria. Later he came upon the forty-two brethren of Ahaziah, king of Judah, and slew them. All these men were Baal worshipers.

Finally Jehu called all the worshipers of Baal in the country to come to a great rally in the house of Baal. The great multitude filled the house "full from one end to another." Jehu then shut the doors and ordered his soldiers to kill all who were in the house. Such procedure was harsh and drastic, but it was effectual. "Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel" (II Kings 10:28).

### **To Go Further**

Relate this lesson to the occasional necessity of amputation of parts of the body.

What does Israel's history teach about idol worship?

What should be a believer's attitude toward error?

### **6th Day False Worship Is Destroyed that the Truth Might Be Known**

II Kings 11:13-21

The kingdom of God is revealed from heaven that man might know what God has prepared for them who will obey Him. Man was created in such a way that he can only know fulfillment in peace and joy if he obeys the will of God. When sin entered into the heart of man he became self-centered and began to act according to his own wishes. But God in love planned to save sinful man from the misery his sin had caused.

The worship of Baal so distracted Israel that many were weakened in faith and did not obey God. In Judah it was Queen Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, who led the people to worship Baal. For the sake of the welfare of the people it became necessary that Athaliah should be destroyed. Jehoiada the priest was called of God to lead the forces of the nation to destroy Athaliah.

Since Athaliah was queen it would be necessary that someone should be prepared to take over the government when Athaliah was removed. Jehoiada had secretly prepared a prince, Jehoash, to be king. When the time to act had come, Jehoiada arranged to crown Jehoash and to present him as the new king. At the same time he assigned soldiers to the task of killing Athaliah. When this had been done, "All the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was in quiet."

### **To Go Further**

Why could there be no compromise in worship?

What should a Christian remember in worship to strengthen his faith?

What needs to be put to death for strong spiritual life?

## **7th Day Violence Follows the Reign of the Wicked**

II Kings 15:8-10

The kingdom of God is revealed from heaven as the promise of God to bless any man who will come to God, yielding himself to accept the will of God as his own way of life. Man was given a certain liberty in his capacity to choose which way he will go. Man is responsible for what he does, but he is free to choose whether he will follow his own wishes or choose to obey the will of God.

In His grace God sets examples before man so that he can learn what it means to disobey God. Reward for obedience and punishment for disobedience show man the significance of his choices.

When the people of God had been given a king to lead them, God used the king in his public position as an example that the people might see and know. When the king obeyed God he was blessed with victory over his enemies, with loyalty among his subjects and peace with his neighbors. And the nation was blessed because God blessed the obedient king.

On the other hand when the king disobeyed God to do his own will, God would bring him to disaster. He would be defeated in battle, would find rebellion among his people, and conflict with his neighbors. The people in the nation would be in distress because of the sin of the king.

Over and over this demonstration occurred in the history of Israel. The pattern was always the same: the king would disobey God; enemies would rise up against the king; and in violence the king would be destroyed.

Thus in His sovereign control of the fortunes of His people, God showed the real significance of disobeying His will. Israel would thus understand the importance of obeying the will of God. Disobedience to God brings disaster and loss.

### **To Go Further**

What is the role of experience in learning?

How can one know when a certain way is wrong?

What makes any road the right road to travel?

### **Make a Decision**

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). God is a jealous God and will not give His glory to another. God must reign supreme in the heart if the believer expects to walk well-pleasing before God. It is impossible to please God apart from His help; and to have the help of God one must be obedient to the will of God.

To the natural man this appears too demanding. To the one who has yielded to God's control it is life, joy and peace. With Him in control of your life, you need not worry what shall happen tomorrow, for God will be there with you helping you, blessing you and strengthening you all the way. Have you yielded?

## The Prophets in the Kingdom

The kingdom of God operates by the grace of God working in, by and through men who obey the will of God. To be able to obey they must know what the will of God is. This must be revealed from God to man, in terms and in ways that man can grasp. Sometimes the promises are uttered in so many words; sometimes events happen in a way that is meaningful; sometimes there are natural processes that in themselves reveal the ways of God. But all such data would need to be interpreted so that man could receive the message from the mind of God.

In His grace God sent among His people in His kingdom prophets who knew God and who understood His ways. Their teaching and preaching would be true and could be followed with confidence.

Introductory Bible reading for this week: I Kings 17-19; II Kings 2-6

### 1st Day The Man of God Speaks Judgment Against the King

I Kings 13:1-6

The kingdom of God was featured by the ministry of prophets among men. The prophet spoke the Word of God as revealed directly to him. He spoke with total confidence since the message was not his own, but was sent from God. People respected the prophet because of his authority in setting forth the Word of God. Kings feared the prophet because they realized God was sovereign and no matter how great their prestige among men, God was still the real power in the nation.

When Jeroboam became king of Israel he planned to make his throne secure by arranging to make the division in Israel a permanent situation. To do this he set up a system of worship centered in an altar which he built at Bethel. By calling his people to worship at this shrine in their midst, he tried to reduce the chance of reunion in Israel as might have been induced by one universal system of worship centered at Jerusalem.

God sent a young man out of Judah to pronounce the unfitness of the altar at Bethel. In bold prophecy the man of God announced the judgment of the Lord against this altar and predicted the doom of those who served at it. By way of offering his credentials to be accepted as a man of God, the young man gave as a sign his prediction that the altar would be shattered. This happened as he said it would.

When Jeroboam moved to strike down the prophet, "his hand . . . dried up." In response to the prayer of the prophet the king was healed. When an older prophet pretended to speak the Word of God and urged the young man to accept hospitality, the young prophet heeded the older man and disobeyed God. On his journey the next day the young prophet was killed in judgment upon his disobedience. The old prophet confessed his deception at once but this did not restore the young man to life. The people were being shown that the Word of God is to be obeyed as top priority at any time. There is never any excuse for disobedience.

### To Go Further

Are these prophets among God's people today?

What signs of disobedience are manifest in today's ministers?

What is the basic message the minister today has to give?

## **2nd Day God Reveals His Will Directly to the Prophet**

I Kings 19:9-18

The kingdom of God depends on the work of prophets that its people's faith might be strong and effectual. Man would not know the will of God if left to himself. All the events occurring in nature and in history – as well as what was symbolized in ritual, depicted in vision or told in parable – could be interpreted by the mind of man, but there would be no assurance that any of the ideas thus conceived were the true spiritual meaning of the revelation. Only God knows the mind of God (I Corinthians 2:11).

In His grace God reveals His will directly to His servant the prophet (Deuteronomy 5:27), who will then teach it to the people. Thus it was in the days of Elijah. Even though the servant was close to God, this did not mean that the prophet knew everything he needed to know at all times immediately when he needed to know it.

After being helped by the angel of the Lord when he was worn out and weary under the juniper tree, Elijah traveled "forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God." He had no idea as to what would happen next. When he recognized a still small voice as the voice of God, Elijah confessed that his present state was the result of his bold witness to the reality of "the LORD God of host" and the wayward apostasy of the children of Israel.

God revealed to Elijah that he was to run three errands for God before his ministry as prophet would be ended: he was to anoint Hazael to be the king of Syria; Jehu, the son of Nimshi, to be king of Israel; and Elisha, the son of Shaphat, to be prophet in the place of Elijah when he was gone. In due time Elijah completed these three assignments, after which he was taken into heaven in a chariot.

### **To Go Further**

What does the ministry of Elijah show about the nature of a prophet?

What gives the word of the prophet its significance?

What can be learned from Elijah's experience "under a juniper tree"?

## **3rd Day God Raises Up Another Prophet**

II Kings 2:5.9

The kingdom of God was served by the ministry of the prophet, that the people might know the will of God in order to obey Him and receive blessing.

When Elisha was named as the one who should serve as prophet after Elijah, there was no mention made of Elisha's abilities or of his record. He was working as a farmer when Elijah came and cast his mantle upon him.

Elisha accepted the call seriously. No one could ever question the commitment to his call. Time and again Elijah gave him the opportunity to stay behind but Elisha was totally committed to serve him.

When the time came for Elijah to be taken away into heaven he proposed to Elisha that he not be with him, but rather stay behind as Elijah went to the River Jordan. But Elisha was steadfast and would not leave Elijah. When the two came to Jordan, Elijah smote the waters with his mantle. The waters were parted and they crossed the river on dry ground. When Elijah asked Elisha what he wished before Elijah would be taken away, the young prophet asked for "a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." Elijah told him that if he saw him leave the earth, his request would be granted.

As they walked and talked a chariot of fire and horses of fire caught Elijah up in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha tore off his own clothes and took up the mantle of Elijah. As he returned he came to the

Jordan and taking the mantle of Elijah he smote the waters, which parted so that he walked over on dry ground. This was the proof he needed that the power of Elijah had come upon him. When the sons of the prophets witnessed this display of power they accepted Elisha as the true successor of Elijah.

### **To Go Further**

- Why was it important that the prophet could work wonders?
- Why did Elisha need to see his own power to cross Jordan?
- What does this teach about qualification of a minister of the gospel?

### **4th Day The Prophet Will Help an Obedient King**

II Kings 3:6-14

The kingdom of God as it was manifested in the history of Israel demonstrated the hand of God in the control of the course of events. Since the children of Israel in themselves were natural men, the sons of Adam, they would not obey the will of God. In order to give them the opportunity to obey, God sent prophets who would interpret both the word of God and the acts of God for the benefit of the people.

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, was a godly man who was committed to obey the will of God. King Jehoram of Israel, the son of Ahab, was a worshiper of Baal, having forsaken the God of David. These two joined with the king of Edom in a military campaign against the king of Moab. In their maneuver to attack Moab the united armies passed through dry country where they found no water. Jehoram in panic felt that God had in His providence brought them into this plight to destroy them by forcing them to surrender to the king of Moab.

But Jehoshaphat asked that they seek the help of Elisha the prophet. Elisha took regard to the presence of Jehoshaphat in the company because the king of Judah was an obedient servant of God, and for his sake Elisha would help.

Elisha then sought guidance from God and directed what should be done; Ditches were to be dug in the valley. Despite the fact there would be no rain and no storm, the ditches would be full of water to quench the thirst of the host and their cattle. Also the prophet told them they would defeat the Moabites in battle.

The words of the prophet were obeyed. The ditches were full of water and the army won a great victory over Moab.

### **To Go Further**

- What does the procedure of Jehoshaphat show about a mistake a godly person can make?
- What does Elisha's answer to Jehoram show about the ways of God with those who disobey?

### **5th Day The Prophet Will Help the People of God Against the Pagans**

II Kings 6:8-12

The kingdom of God manifests great blessing upon the man or the people helped by God in the course of conflict with ungodly forces. This world has in it forces of evil, but it also, contains persons who put their trust in God. Conflict between these parties was inevitable, and God chose to reveal His own will

by helping the obedient to victory.

When the king of Syria developed tactics for battle, which included plans to ambush the king of Israel, God would reveal to Elisha what the king of Syria planned to do. Elisha immediately conveyed this information to the king of Israel who was thus able to avoid being trapped. When this had happened several times, the king of Syria felt some of his own men must be betraying his plans to Israel. Then he was told of the help Elisha was giving to Israel by revealing what had been planned.

When the king of Syria understood that it was Elisha who was helping Israel, he sent out his forces to capture the prophet that he might kill him. The raid was not successful because the host of the Lord surrounded Elisha to deliver him. The Syrians were smitten with blindness; and when they sought a guide to lead them, Elisha himself acted as guide and led them into Samaria. When their eyes were opened they saw they had been led into the very hands of Israel's army and were in danger of death.

The king of Israel asked Elisha for permission to kill them all. But Elisha would not allow this. Instead, the prophet asked that these prisoners should be given a full meal and sent home. In this way pagan people were given a practical demonstration of the grace of God.

## **To Go Further**

How is the Bible today something like the prophet in Old Testament times?

How does the Holy Spirit minister to believers as the prophet did to Israel?

## **6th Day It Is Fatal to Scoff at the Message of the Prophet**

II Kings 7:1, 2, 17-20

The kingdom of God reveals truth about the ways of God with men. Human ideas are so inadequate in view of the actual facts. It is so obvious life is fragile, and so far as this world is concerned, it is temporary. Death is sure even though the time may be uncertain. But it is not so obvious to men that God's hand has any part in the ending of life.

In conveying the truth to man that God is sovereign and that He controls all events, there were times when death was brought upon a man in the clear will of God. Sometimes death was invoked as if it were a punishment, so that others might take note and learn something about what God approves and what He disapproves.

Since it was so important that men should heed the word of God that they might be blessed, it was equally important that men should respect the prophet who was declaring the word of God. For this reason God acted to keep the prophet high in the esteem of the people.

At one point in the siege of Samaria, Elisha the prophet told the king that within twenty-four hours there would be an abundance of food available to the besieged inhabitants. One of the lords serving the king heard this word and openly scoffed at it. Elisha promptly told him that though he would see it, he would never eat any of it. The implication obviously was a warning as to his death. As matters occurred the siege was lifted overnight and an abundance of food was available to the starved people. As they crowded through the gate to get the food, this lord who scoffed was trodden under foot so that he died.

Like so many other instances of revelation, what happened was apparently natural. All the processes involved were natural. But actually the truth is that God uses natural events to convey His message. The truth is not to be seen in the event itself, but will be heard in the interpretation of that event.

## **To Go Further**

Why is the use of death as punishment actually not so arbitrary?  
What can be learned here about the process of revelation?  
What is implied about handling the word of God?

## **7th Day The Prophet Interprets the Word of God to the King**

II Chronicles 34:18-28

The kingdom of God was revealed in the history of Israel. In this way the truth of its operation might become known to men so that by faith in that operation they could be blessed. The basic underlying principle is that the will of God must be obeyed if blessing is to be received. But the will of God must be known if it is to be obeyed. That it might be known, God revealed His will in His dealing with Abraham and his seed.

The true, eternal, spiritual kingdom of God is structured in the will of God's Chosen One, the Messiah which is Christ. And the nation of the Jews was ordered by the will of the king, whoever he might be at a given time. When he was a good king the nation was blessed; when he was evil the people were in distress. But the king was only human and in his limitations he often would not know what was God's will for him. He learned to depend upon the prophet who would interpret God's word to show His will to the king.

In the days of Josiah, while the zealous young king pressed the repairing of the Temple, the Word of the Law was found in the temple. This discovery in due time was brought to the king and its contents read in his hearing. According to this Word it was obvious the Jews had not been obeying the will of God.

The king sent to Huldah the prophetess to learn what should be done. The prophetess bluntly told the king that judgment would surely come upon the Jews on account of their sins, but that because Josiah had been so sincere in seeking to obey Him, God would delay His judgment so that it should not come to Pass while he lived.

## **To Go Further**

Why would the prophet not go by his observations of natural process?  
How is God related to the processes of nature?  
How is the function of the prophet performed today?

## **Make a Decision**

"My grace is sufficient for thee." It has been said and rightly so, "He who has God on his side is a majority!" God always helps, guides, and blesses the soul who puts his individual trust in Him.

This is all summed up in: "Lo, I am with you alway." This promise is given personally by our Lord Jesus Christ to all who obey Him. Do you have any burdens too heavy to bear? He would like to bear them for you. Cast all your care upon Him, for He does care for you.

## **Idolatry in the Kingdom**

The kingdom of God operates in the relationships which exist between God and His people. There is never any question about God's part since He is always the same: He does not change. His plans are settled and His purposes are fixed. He is eternal and His Word is settled forever in heaven.

But man is uncertain and fickle. The heart of man can forsake God and become enamored with idols. As foolish as it is, man can actually choose an idol, which he has made, to be his supreme value. When this is done, God not only withholds His favor, but manifests His displeasure. God will eventually destroy the idol and all who worship it.

Introductory Bible reading for this week: I Kings 16-18

### **1st Day Idolatry Introduced in Willful Disobedience**

I Kings 16:30-33

The kingdom of God is a system of relationships in which the will of God is the controlling factor through the willing obedience of those who are in the kingdom. Such willingness to obey is grounded in the attitude of those who know God and who worship Him. This attitude is not natural, but is acquired by those who worship God by remembering what He has done, recognizing what He is doing, and realizing what He has promised to do for all who obey Him.

But sin has so affected the heart of man that he is prone to seek some way of living which will not require obedience to the will of God at the cost of total self-denial. In his interest to secure the benefits of the creation without complete surrender to God, man invented idols to which he could give homage and service while retaining and enhancing his own ego.

When Ahab became king he married Jezebel who was the daughter of a royal priest of Baal and introduced Baal worship to take the hearts of the people away from the God of David. Also he planted groves for the worship of Ashtaroath. In doing this he led Israel away from God and caused them to sin.

Because he was king, Ahab had great influence in the thinking of the people. This made his acts all the more evil because the hearts of the people were turned away from God. God will judge the actions of any man as to whether he is in His will, but when such actions lead the common people away from Him, He judges such conduct to be especially evil and as a consequence He will destroy not only the idols but also they that worship them. God will not tolerate idol worship in His kingdom.

### **To Go Further**

Why is the sincere worship of God so important in the life of God's people?  
Why would God destroy those who worship idols among His people?

### **2nd Day The Land Is Distressed Because of Judgment Upon Idolatry**

I Kings 18:1-6

The kingdom of God in its operation is a revelation of the ways of God. By noting the course of events in the history of God's dealing with Israel and noting also the attitudes and the actions of the people

it would become clear what God approved and what He disapproved. During Old Testament times God kept the sign of His approval a matter of practical benefit; it would be easy to notice. Good crops, health, freedom from calamity, victory in conflict and peace in foreign relations were all marks of the favor of God. Just so, the opposite experiences would indicate that God was not pleased.

When Ahab introduced Baal worship into Israel God sent His prophet Elijah to protest against this evil. The word of the lone servant of God against this approved religious development, led by hundreds of prophets who were supported by the national government, seemed insignificant. In order to instruct the people Elijah needed to be thought of as a real spokesman for God. Also, for his words to be heeded there would need to be some tangible evidence both of the actual sinfulness of idol worship and of the authority of the word of the prophet.

Elijah announced that it would not rain until he said so (I Kings 17:1). Lack of rainfall would be disastrous in the hilly country where Israel lived. It quickly became known over the whole land that Elijah had asserted there would be no rain until he said so.

In the course of time God sent word through Elijah that it would rain again. Now the fact that it would rain when Elijah said so would be concrete evidence that Elijah spoke the mind of God in his comments about national affairs.

## **To Go Further**

Why was it important that the prophet be recognized and esteemed as a spokesman for God?  
What lessons can be learned here which could apply to God's people today?

## **3rd Day The land Is Discouraged Because Idolatry Is Tolerated**

I Kings 18:17-21

The kingdom of God promises blessing to the people when the will of God is done. God is benevolent and "the goodness of God endureth continually."

The long drought brought distress to the whole land, but it also depressed the people because it was evidence that God was not pleased. The ministry of Elijah was widely known. He was known to be a man of God because of the miracles he had performed. And it was known that he denounced the worship of Baal as evil. In confronting the king with his announcement of the drought as a judgment from God because of the toleration of Baal worship, Elijah served notice to the whole nation that God would not bless the land while such conditions persisted.

The nation was troubled because the drought was severe and food for both man and beast would be scarce, and also because without the blessing of God, Israel stood in jeopardy. In many ways all their distress seemed to originate from the person of Elijah. The result was that the prophet began to be held responsible for the trouble. To be sure Ahab had introduced and supported idol worship. Elijah had warned of the evil, and had urged that everyone worship the God of David. But all this was easily ignored as the people in their misery and distress placed blame upon Elijah.

When Ahab saw Elijah he at once accused him of being the one who "troubled Israel." But Elijah did not concede any such responsibility; rather he directly and openly charged Ahab and his whole family with forsaking the commandments of the Lord and following Baalim. In the meantime the people were at a loss, not knowing what to believe.

## To Go Further

Why was calamity often a sign of God's displeasure?

What can be learned about the effect of evil conduct on the part of leaders?

## 4th Day The Prophet Is Exhausted Because Idolatry Is Favored

I Kings 19:4-10

The kingdom of God left a record to show that distress and loss were the portion of God's people due to the prevalence of Baal worship. The people knew that the king had favored the worship of Baal and Ashtaroath because of the building of the high places for the worship of Baal and the planting of the groves for the use of the worship of Ashtaroath. Lest they be confirmed in this error Elijah made public announcement of the judgment of God against the nation because of the toleration of idol worship, which judgment took the form of this grievous drought.

Despite the ministry of the prophet and the dramatic demonstration of God's power in answer to the prophet's prayer before the whole nation, Ahab and Jezebel continued to favor Baal worship. When Jezebel heard how Elijah had destroyed the prophets of Baal, she sought to kill him. Elijah fled for his life, escaping into the wilderness. Here under a juniper tree the old prophet requested that he might die.

The strain of maintaining his witness for the truth throughout the years of controversy and personal danger, the tension of the public confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, and now this new vicious threat against his life had completely exhausted him.

The angel of the Lord provided two meals while Elijah rested. Refreshed by both sleep and food the prophet continued his flight to Mount Horeb where he received further instruction from God. Many have thought that Elijah's request, while he was under the juniper tree, for release from his ministry was evidence of discouragement or even lack of faith. But the context of the whole account does not seem to warrant such judgment upon the prophet. What actually happened after Elijah's request was, first, that the angel fed him as he rested. Then on Mount Horeb the Lord talked to him and gave him three final errands to perform. When Elijah had carried out these three assignments God took him up to heaven in a whirlwind. There seems no justification in all this that Elijah had faltered in his own obedience. In his human strength he had been worn out and wished for relief.

## To Go Further

What does this incident show about the cost of obedience?

Explain Elijah's request under the juniper tree.

What can be learned from what happened to the prophet?

## 5th Day The Prophet Foretells the Doom of the King Because of His Idolatry

I Kings 21:15-20

The kingdom of God is planned to make blessing available to the people. In His benevolence and grace God plans to promote the welfare and the happiness of men. Such blessing will come as a result of obedience to the will of God. Men are hindered in obeying, both because they do not know what the will of God is and because they do not want to deny themselves.

When King Ahab coveted the vineyard of Naboth, Jezebel planned the death of Naboth so that

Ahab could confiscate the property and get his wish. This rank injustice seemed beyond redress, but Elijah was sent from God to pronounce judgment upon Ahab for his cruel action.

The prophet came boldly to the king and announced his doom because of his wickedness. He said that Jezebel would be killed and left lying in the street, and that the whole family of Ahab would be completely destroyed because he had provoked God to anger by his incorrigible wickedness. Ahab was so smitten by the prophet's message that he humbled himself for the rest of his days. Because of this, calamity did not come upon his house as long as he lived, but eventually the word spoken by the prophet was totally fulfilled.

### **To Go Further**

Why should leaders be held especially responsible for their conduct?

How can you understand the boldness of Elijah?

Why should Jezebel have been so specially condemned?

### **6th Day Jehu Executes the Judgment of God in Israel**

II Kings 9:21-28

The kingdom of God reveals the will of God for the welfare of man. Blessing will be given to any man who will obey the Word of God. Destruction will be the lot of any man who will turn away to follow any other way. That men might learn, the blessing of God was manifested in practical benefits that could be recognized and appreciated. At the same time the judgment of God was executed in destruction that could be seen and understood.

It is often difficult to accept the idea that a God of love would ever destroy by death because of disobedience. Actually death is quite an ordinary event. Every living unit in this world is a prospect for death. "It is appointed unto men once to die." In a case of death by the judgment of God, no ultimately unnatural event is involved. No one knows how long he will live, although he does know for sure that he will die.

When Jehu was anointed by the prophet (II Kings 9:6-10), he was given the commission to destroy the house of Ahab and especially the woman Jezebel. First he killed Jehoram the son of Ahab, who was king of Israel. At this time he also killed Ahaziah, king of Judah, who was related to Jehoram, and also a worshiper of Baal. Then he went to Jezreel where he destroyed Jezebel, leaving her body lying in the street, as Elijah had predicted would happen.

Jehu continued his campaign of extermination by killing all the sons of Ahab to fulfill the words of the prophet. Then Jehu set up a worship service in the house of Baal to which only Baal worshipers were admitted. When they were so assembled Jehu ordered their mass execution.

These procedures seem most severe and harsh, yet the record shows they were effectual. "Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel" (II Kings 10:28). It must not be forgotten that death in any case would eventually be the lot of each, and also that the circumstances were meant to be salutary to all who would ever hear about this. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

### **To Go Further**

Why would the worship of Baal be counted as such a heinous sin?

What does this seem to teach about leaders who introduce false doctrine?

## **7th Day Jehoiada Executes the Judgment of God in Judah**

II Kings 11:13-20

The kingdom of God will have one of the seed of David on the throne forever. In Old Testament times as this truth was revealed in the history of Israel the house of David sat on the throne throughout, with the exception of the reign of Athaliah who ruled as queen-mother for seven years. Athaliah was a daughter of Jezebel and became the wife of the king of Judah but she continued to worship Baal as her mother had done.

When Jehu killed Ahaziah, king of Judah, the throne of Judah was vacant. Athaliah saw the opportunity to usurp the throne, and proceeded to kill "all the seed royal" so that her claim would not be contested. Her plan was defeated by her own daughter who hid a one-year old baby prince named Jehoash and saved his life.

When the boy was seven years old Jehoiada the priest arranged to present him to the people as their true king. He was enthusiastically received, and when Athaliah moved to recapture the throne Jehoiada led the forces that defeated and killed her.

Baal worship was never rooted as deeply in Judah as it had been in Israel, but it was also removed by harsh measures under the leadership of Jehoiada the priest in a way similar to the procedures of Jehu in Israel. Personal loyalty to the seed of David was the very essence of the true relationships in the kingdom.

The procedures taken by Jehu in Israel and Jehoiada in Judah seem harsh and stem, but they need to be seen in the context of the situation caused by Baal worship. The worship of idols interferes with the response of the heart to the Word of God. Blessing would be given only in response to obedience, and obedience is impossible without faith. But faith needs true worship, based on the revelation of God's Word.

### **To Go Further**

Why is it so important that the believer love the Lord with all his heart and all his strength?  
How would the destruction of Athaliah be like amputating part of one's body?

### **Make a Decision**

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation" (II Corinthians 1:3, 4). What a promise this is to all who "know" Him as their heavenly Father. Again He has promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

Like Elijah we may become weary and heavy-hearted due to circumstances beyond our control. It is at this time that God will come to us in a special way as He did to Elijah – to strengthen us, to bless us and to guide us to what our next move should be. Is He your Father?

## Enemies in the Kingdom

The kingdom of God is a manifestation among men of relationships in which the blessing of God comes upon those who obey His will. Some of the problems involved are caused by the nature of the world in which men live.

There must be revelation from God to enable man to know God's will. Because of sin man has tendencies that cause him to follow his own ideas which are not in the will of God. Because of limitations man is often not able to understand or to obey. More complications and hindrances result from the activities of enemies who are in hostile conflict with man in his affairs.

Introductory Bible reading for this week: II Kings 3-8; 17-19; 24; 25

### 1st Day Enemies Who Attack the People of God to Be Destroyed

I Kings 20:35-43

The kingdom of God must be understood that it might be believed and become operative. Salvation will be received only by those who obey the call of the gospel. Obedience requires some knowledge of the will of God, which is revealed in His dealings with His people. Such knowledge must be learned through revelation from God. Such revelation comes by different means: direct revelation to the heart and mind of chosen men as led in their understanding by the Holy Spirit, and also significant events in providence that can be interpreted by prophets.

One of the aspects of history that reveals an important truth is the destruction of enemies who attack the people of God. In His covenant with Abraham, God promised He would watch over the believer: He would bless whoever blessed Abraham, and He would curse anyone who cursed Abraham. By such faithful and watchful care God would keep Abraham from harm and make him blessed. This is an aspect of the promise of God in the gospel that, makes every believer in Him fortunate.

The promise of blessing from God was always related to obedience. To believe is to accept the word of God, and that word comes as a directive, either as a call or a commandment. The word of God about those who threaten the welfare of God's people is that they should be destroyed. Sometimes such destruction is to be at the hands of God's people.

When the great host of Syrians under Ben-hadad engaged Israel in battle, God helped His people to win a great victory. He commanded Ahab, king of Israel, to destroy the Syrians. When victory had been won, Ben-hadad came with guile and submitted himself humbly to Ahab, offering to pay tribute that he might be spared. Ahab disobeyed in deciding so to do.

By a clever ruse a prophet gained access to the king and announced the judgment of God. Inasmuch as Ahab had disobeyed in not destroying the Syrian, God would now destroy Ahab. Those who attack the people of God must be destroyed.

### To Go Further

In what sense was this destruction of Syria not arbitrary?

What does this piece of history say to you regarding your personal life?

## **2nd Day Enemies Who Threaten the People of God to Be Destroyed**

II Kings 3:21-27

The kingdom of God brings rich blessing to all who obey the will of God. One important aspect of the blessing of God is protection from hurt or harm. This world includes elements that are hostile to the welfare of those who walk with God. The believer must expect to face such enemies confident in the assurance that God will move to protect him. This protection is not merely a passive wall about the believer to keep away that which would cause distress and loss. It may be an active attack on the threatening elements to destroy them before they can do any harm.

Encouraged by the death of Ahab to think he could defeat Israel in battle, the king of Moab rebelled and prepared to fight for his release from bondage. Jehoram, king of Israel, asked Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to join him in fighting against Moab. This the king of Judah agreed to do. Thus Israel and Judah united their armies and moved as one host to meet Moab. Their route led through arid country where they suffered from lack of water. The king of Israel in despair felt they must yield to Moab, but the king of Judah called on God's prophet Elisha for help. Elisha told Jehoram he would help only because Jehoshaphat was involved. Then he told them water would be provided over night, and on the next day Moab would be defeated.

Things happened just as Elisha predicted. He also commanded that Moab be totally destroyed. This order was carried out not only in the military defeat but in the destruction of the countryside, in the ruining of the fields and the wells of water and in the cutting down of all the trees. Such annihilation was evidently aimed at destroying Moab as a potential threat to the people of God in the future.

This incident is typical of the general guidance given to God's people about those who threatened their welfare. Since God is no respecter of persons, and since the covenant with Abraham included the promise that in his seed all nations should be blessed, the commandment to destroy Moab completely would not be inspired by the fact that they were Moabites. It was because they had threatened Israel. The promise of God to protect those who belonged to Him by faith, took priority over His general relations with those who were His creatures in the natural world.

### **To Go Further**

- What seems strange about God helping Israel in this incident?
- What can here be learned about receiving the blessing of God?
- What lessons can be noted to guide believers in praying for blessing?

## **3rd Day The Grace of God Is Shown to an Enemy**

II Kings 5:7-14

The kingdom of God was revealed in the history of Israel. Despite the natural weakness of the children of Israel and their own sinful tendencies which so often prevented the full blessing of God, it was yet possible for the plan of God in His overruling grace to be manifested. It was to the glory of God that even though Israel sinned again and again, and even though the kings would disobey, God continued to deal with them according to His promise.

Despite the fact that God commanded the total destruction of enemies that attacked Israel or threatened her welfare, God had compassion on all men, and planned the blessing of all men through the seed of Abraham.

Time and again there would be occasions when God would bless those who were not in the nation

of Israel. In this would be manifested the truth that the grace of God is for all men. Naaman was a Syrian, but as a leper he was desperate for help. When he came to Elisha – through the advice of a little maid out of Israel who was a captive servant in his household – Naaman did not know the God of Israel, nor did he know His ways. The whole incident reflects over and over again that Naaman was quite without understanding as to how he should act before God. But "the times of this ignorance God winked at" (Acts 17:30). Despite the evidence of pride and vanity on the part of Naaman, the grace of God was extended to him.

### **To Go Further**

How is the gospel of Jesus Christ pictured in this incident?  
What encouragement can be learned in this for any sinner?

### **4th Day Merciful Action Promotes Peace**

II Kings 6:15-23

The kingdom of God in its operations reveals the ways of God with man. Basically its eternal purpose is to bless whoever obeys the will of God.

When the king of Syria warred against Israel, he was repeatedly defeated in his strategy to ambush the Israelites because Elisha revealed his schemes to the king of Israel. The Syrian king then sought to capture Elisha that he might kill him. But his plans were revealed to Elisha by God, and the prophet easily evaded him. On one occasion Elisha himself offered to guide the Syrians in their blindness. He led them into Samaria where they were at the mercy of the forces of Israel.

Elisha would not permit any harm to come to his prisoners. Manifesting the mercy of God, "he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master." Such grace would be utterly unexpected among men. The fact that Elisha was a prophet of God would show to all men the kindness and goodness of God. But the result was perhaps even more remarkable: "so the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel." Paul wrote "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." It may seem incredible to sinful man that God would be so gracious, but when such grace is manifested, man can be mightily affected.

### **To Go Further**

Why does man naturally expect judgment from God?  
How is the gospel to be seen in this event?

### **5th Day God Will Help Against Enemies**

II Kings 7:5-11

The kingdom of God manifests the blessing promised to Abraham in respect to enemies. Even as God made man to live in the world He had made, He also created Satan and made it possible for man to be tempted into conduct that would result in death.

The enemies would be so strong that man could not withstand them in his own wisdom and strength. But God is almighty and able to overcome any creature that would rebel against Him. In His

promise to Abraham, God said He would "curse him that curseth thee." Time and again in generation after generation it was demonstrated that when man believed in God and yielded to His will to obey Him, He would act to enable man to defeat and to destroy his enemies.

In the days of Elisha the prophet, while Jehoram was king of Israel, the king of Syria besieged Samaria with such a superior force that the Israelites suffered famine within the city. When disaster seemed inevitable God intervened in His grace and caused the Syrians to flee in panic.

This intervention by God was all the more remarkable because Ahab had been disobedient to God and Jehoram was not righteous in his ways. But God would keep His word to bless Israel and He remembered His promise to David. So it happened that blessing came upon people whose leadership at the time was not obedient, because God's promise is true.

### **To Go Further**

Since God is no respecter of persons, why does He deal with some as enemies?

What comfort could a Christian gain from this truth seen in Old Testament history?

### **6th Day God Used Enemies to Destroy Israel**

II Kings 17:1-12

The kingdom of God was revealed in the history of God's dealing with the Israelites. They were chosen to be the example in whose affairs the ways of God could be seen as demonstration. The actual situation in which man lives includes both a temporal world of nature and an eternal world of spirit. The spiritual is the more basic since God is a Spirit. The natural is the visible.

One great truth man must learn is that God will bless those who obey Him. It is he that doeth the will of God that abideth forever. In His dealing with Israel God gave His promise to bless the obedient, but He also gave warning that He would destroy the disobedient. As king followed king in Israel, God judged his conduct and brought chastisement upon the nation as his conduct was seen to be ungodly.

In mercy and grace God sent prophets who preached the word of God and pointed out the evil of willful disobedience. When Jeroboam arrogantly established a substitute altar to enable the northern kingdom to practice religious rites without going to the Temple at Jerusalem, God sent a prophet from Judah to pronounce judgment upon it. When the wicked Ahab built high places for Baal worship and established groves for the worship of Ashtaroath, Elijah was sent to warn him of the doom this would bring upon the royal family.

But the kings of Israel proved incorrigible and continued in willful" disobedience. Such persistent ignoring of the warnings and continued rebellion against His word provoked the Lord to anger. He raised up Assyria, a pagan nation, to bring about the destruction of Israel. The Assyrians did not know they were being used of God, but God was able to bring His will to pass through them.

### **To Go Further**

What does this show about the long suffering of God in dealing with disobedience?

What lessons can be learned about the dangers of rebellion?

## **7th Day God Used Enemies to Destroy Judah**

II Kings 25:1-11

The kingdom of God demonstrated also the chastisement of God's wayward people in the history of Judah. When the nation of Israel was formed of the ten northern tribes, the nation of Judah remained loyal to the throne of David. In Judah was the Temple of God in Jerusalem. The Levites continued to minister as priests and the Temple worship was unchanged. Throughout the history of Judah there was a consistent testimony in worship which was to the honor and glory of God.

During the reign of Ahab and Jezebel in Israel there was considerable communication between Israel and Judah, with fraternal fellowship and intermarriage. The worship of Baal was introduced into Judah, and during the time of Athaliah this became a serious blemish. Despite the warnings of the prophets this defection from true worship continued.

Despite the godly efforts of Hezekiah, his son Manasseh in his long reign allowed serious deterioration of the true worship of God. This became so serious that God determined to allow Jerusalem and the Temple to be destroyed, and the people carried away as captives for a term of seventy years.

Yet this judgment was not permanent as the punishment of Israel under Assyria had been. Babylon was strengthened to overthrow Judah, to destroy the city of Jerusalem with the Temple, but not to destroy the people utterly. In the captivity under Babylon Judah suffered chastisement, with the promise that upon repentance the people would be restored and the nation reconstituted. Even during the captivity prophets were sent to preach to the people to help them understand the judgment of God.

### **To Go Further**

What lessons can be learned from the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple?  
Why did God deal differently with Judah than He had with Israel?

### **Make a Decision**

"The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." It is to the glory of God and to the peace and satisfaction of the believer that God will face any situation for us: He will fight our battles. If we try to fight our own battles in our own strength we will be defeated. But if we commit them to God through Christ Jesus we shall find that we are living victoriously regardless of the circumstances. Is He actually fighting your battles? You will find a deep peace and quietness in your own soul when you let Him have "all" of you. This includes the burdens, sorrows, decisions and battles you face each day.

## **Judgment in the Kingdom**

The kingdom of God reveals for all men to see the judgment of God upon that which is evil and wicked. In the natural world judgment is accepted normally as the proper consequence of conduct. The man who transgresses, ignores the laws of nature, will reap his harvest of suffering and loss. Such results can be understood as natural phenomena and so have little effect in the conscience of the persons involved.

In the spiritual world the conduct of man is unseen to others. The judgment of God likewise would be invisible unless proclaimed by prophets and dealt with by open acts of God. By using Israel as an example God could reveal to the world His judgment upon man's behavior.

Introductory Bible reading for this week: Deuteronomy 28; I Kings 13; 16; 20-21; II Kings 17; 21-24

### **1st Day Judgment Will Be Sure**

Deuteronomy 28:58-68

The kingdom of God reveals to all men the ways of God to the honor and glory of His name. God is always consistent and reliable in all His ways. He is eternal and unchanging, but He is also benevolent and purposeful. What God does is for a purpose that is good. God has allowed evil to exist in His creation and to confront man with an alternative in living. Man is not obliged to do the will of God since he has the opportunity to choose the evil way. But God in His grace has not left man without plain warning of all that is involved.

When Israel lived in Egypt they had opportunity to see evil being practiced before their eyes. When the time came that the people of God should come out of Egypt, God brought judgment upon the Egyptians that was so obvious and so severe that no one could miss the import. God judges evil and moves to destroy it.

With Israel such judgment was seen in practical ways. There would be sickness in body. The death rate would be very high. The people would be scattered as captives so that there would be no fellowship among them. They would be influenced to serve other gods. But their personal experience would be of great distress. They would eventually become slaves to their enemies.

By such obvious results God's people would come to know what it would mean to disobey God. The presence of evil would challenge His people to intelligent consideration of their possible behavior. By seeing the obvious results of judgment upon evil, the people of God could turn to the good with every confidence and with total acceptance.

The heart of man is so deceitful that God needed to warn man by open and obvious judgment upon evil. God is of "purer eyes than to behold evil," but man would have to see it to believe it.

### **To Go Further**

Why would man ever want to do evil?

Why would a man ever stop acting in a certain way?

How can pain caused by sickness actually be a blessing?

## **2nd Day Judgment Proclaimed Against False Worship**

I Kings 13:1-6

The kingdom of God reveals the will of God for those who yield to obey His will. God will lead them at all times in every circumstance. Generally speaking this will mean many times that a person will have to deny himself in order to obey the will of God.

Man does not have in himself the strength needed to obey the will of God in self-denial. But man can be strengthened by the grace of God. For the grace of God to be operative in a man it is necessary that the man should know and appreciate what God has done, is doing, and will do. This awareness will grow in the heart as man worships God in the prescribed way.

On Mount Sinai Moses received the revelation from God as to the pattern in which His people should worship Him. The Tabernacle was to be built in a specified design and articles of furniture were to be placed in it in a meaningful pattern. Required procedures of worship were described, the design of which would instruct the worshiper about the grace of God. As the heart of the worshiper followed the authorized course of worship, the mind would be informed and the spirit would be prepared to believe God, and to receive from Him the grace needed to obey His will.

When Jeroboam built a substitute altar in Israel and set up another system of worship according to his own ideas, he caused Israel to sin. As the Israelite would come to that altar and be led in worship in that way, he would have a false idea of God and would not know what God would do to help him. This was the sin which brought doom upon Jeroboam. upon his family and upon Israel.

### **To Go Further**

What is the significance of worship?

Why is it so important that the pattern of the worship procedures should be revealed from God?

Why is the Bible so important in planning worship exercises?

## **3rd Day Judgment Proclaimed Against the House of the Disobedient King**

I Kings 14:11-16

The kingdom of God was demonstrated in the history of Israel, the people of God. Not everything in their affairs happened in obedience to God's will. Individual kings exercised the prerogative of choice and on occasion continued in willful disobedience to the Word of God.

In the fact that the judgment of God upon the king's conduct was extended to his family, there is recognition of the significance of a man's household in his life. "No man lives to himself alone," and this is true also in the spiritual nature. The promise of salvation in the gospel is to the believer and to his household. When Cornelius was instructed to send for Peter he was told that Peter "shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14). When the Philippian jailer asked what he needed to do to be saved, he was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

Jeroboam was the outstanding case of disobedience to the Word of God. Although he knew the significance of the Temple worship in Jerusalem, he deliberately set up a substitute system of worship leading the people in Israel away from a true worship of God. That he should have suffered the judgment of God could be expected, but that his family would be destroyed because of what he had done seems almost too much to expect. But this was what happened.

When Jeroboam's son Abijah fell sick and Jeroboam's wife came to Ahijah to learn the will of God

about the child, the prophet announced that this child would die and be buried, but the rest of the family would be cut off as well. It was Jeroboam who had arrogantly disobeyed and defied God, but his family also suffered judgment.

### **To Go Further**

What does this teach about the responsibility of a parent?  
How can a parent help his child in relation to God?  
How would the judgment of God be understood today?

### **4th Day Judgment Proclaimed Against the Evil King**

I Kings 16:1-7

The kingdom of God brought the judgment of God to bear upon individuals who had disobeyed God and deliberately followed procedures that were evil. This was seen most clearly in the actions of the kings because the king had the freedom to follow his own choice without as great influence of others.

Baasha became king of Israel after he had killed Nadab. He had completely destroyed the king's family as the prophet Ahijah, the Shilohite, had predicted would happen, because Nadab was the son of Jeroboam and continued in the evil ways of his father. But Baasha did no better. When he became king he "walked in the way of Jeroboam" and led Israel into sinning against God. For this reason he likewise was doomed to destruction, as well as his "posterity."

In this consistent treatment first of Nadab and then of Baasha, God revealed that in His judgment of disobedience He was no respecter of persons. In this harsh record the truth could be plainly seen: God would judge each man's conduct in terms of obedience and He would destroy each man and his household who would deliberately disobey the revealed will of God.

The gospel tells the whole world that God is interested in each individual soul. The promise is given to "whosoever will." But there is with it a promise of the blessing of the whole household of the believer. It is just as true that God will destroy each one "whosoever believeth not" together with his unbelieving household.

### **To Go Further**

What are the consequences of rejecting the gospel?  
How important is the evangelization of the parents?  
What are some of the hindrances in evangelizing children?

### **5th Day Judgment Proclaimed Against Disobedience**

I Kings 20:35-43

The kingdom of God is revealed to show the ways of God with those who yield to Him in faith. Such yielding takes the form of obedience and is marked by the blessing of God.

The promise of blessing upon the obedient will appear even more desirable when the judgment upon disobedience is vividly proclaimed.

When Ahab was king of Israel he was attacked by Ben-hadad, king of Syria, leading a vast host

which included a coalition of thirty-two kings banded together against Israel. Though Ahab was not a righteous king, Israel belonged to God; and in any conflict with pagans the promises to Abraham and to David would often bring the help of God in a special way. Ahab was helped to victory over Syria in the first invasion and advised how to prepare for the second onslaught in the next year. Again Ahab was victorious by the help of God.

When Ben-hadad saw that he could not defeat Israel in battle he sought her friendship. By flattering Ahab, the Syrian king saved his own life. God had instructed Ahab to exterminate the Syrians and this fraternizing was open disobedience. A prophet was sent in disguise to confront Ahab with his own disobedience. Ahab pronounced immediate judgment upon him. Whereupon the prophet revealed himself and proclaimed the doom upon Ahab which his disobedience had brought on himself.

### **To Go Further**

Why is a bad example sometimes more impressive than a good one?

What lessons are to be learned here about obeying God?

Why should a believer's conduct not be left simply to his own judgment?

### **6th Day Judgment Proclaimed Against an Idolatrous People**

II Kings 17:7-17

The kingdom of God is based upon the obedient response of believing people who have willingly yielded themselves to obey God. While this commitment may have been made at a point of crisis, it needs to be maintained by constant believing. Such faith is aided in the practice of worship.

The shedding of blood in presenting the sin offering reminds the worshiper that his pardon for sins is dependent upon the sacrificial death of another who is accepted as a substitute. The wages of sin is death but the grace of God will provide a sacrifice that the worshiper may go free.

The total burning of the burnt-offering taught the worshiper that only total committal to obeying God would be acceptable. Each observance of this ritual in worship would impress the heart and arouse the response that would guide the soul in daily living.

In the worship of idols men indulged themselves in carnal satisfactions. Their religious practices were reflected in the fact that the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. The idols themselves were conceived by men in their own hearts and designed by their own hands. The high places built as shrines for the worship of Baal lent themselves to vanity and pride. The groves of Ashtaroah were given over to sinful pleasures. The total effect of idol worship was a deterioration of national and individual character.

The prophets were sent by God to remind Israel of the covenant with Abraham, of the Law of Moses, of the worship of the Temple, and of the covenant with David. Israel belonged to God and was committed to obey Him that the people might have His blessing.

### **To Go Further**

Why did the prophets on occasion call Israel a harlot?

Why was the punishment of idol worship so severe?

## **7th Day Judgment Executed Against a Rebellious People**

II Chronicles 36:1-13

The kingdom of God demonstrates how God will deal with His people according to their behavior. When God chose Israel to make them His own peculiar people He dealt with them in such a way that their history would reveal something of the ways of God. The very fact that they were neither many in numbers nor mighty in battle emphasized their dependence upon the help of God.

God is creator and maker of all men. He had the whole world in mind when He made His covenant with Abraham: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." David was promised that his throne would be established over the whole world and his seed would be "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Thus men would look at the fortunes of Israel and learn the ways of God. When Israel was blessed it meant that God was pleased. If Israel were ever wayward and disobedient, the ensuing punishment needed to be obvious so that men might learn.

The history of Judah was marked by many kings who walked obediently in godly fashion. Though the nation was few in number and weak in natural resources, the blessing of God was so real that Judah fared well among other nations. David had been a king after God's own heart and kings who "walked in all the way of David" were noted for the blessing which came to them.

But in the later generations a succession of kings ruled over Judah who did evil in the sight of God. After Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, reigned for three months, the king of Egypt put Jehoiakim, brother of Jehoahaz, on the throne. He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord and was carried away captive to Babylon. His son Jehoiachin ruled three months and ten days and did evil in the sight of the Lord. He was followed by Zedekiah whose evil reign was ended by the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

### **To Go Further**

Why would the judgment upon Judah be even more impressive than upon Israel?  
Why would God deal more sternly with Judah when they had such a good record?  
Why does scandal in a church attract so much attention?

### **Make a Decision**

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13, 14).

To walk obediently before the Lord does not just happen. It requires a definite decision on your part. It involves the giving up of yourself – the surrendering of your life to God and obedience to Him. Knowing *about* God and His salvation is not enough. He must become your God and your Saviour in a personal way. Do you have a heart knowledge of Jesus Christ? Remember, merely a head knowledge will not do.

## **Destruction in the Kingdom**

The kingdom of God promises life abundant in the blessing of God. To live fully and successfully is probably the basic interest of any man. Anything that pertains to living is of primary concern. In this the people of God are the same as all other people. The covenant with Abraham stated plainly that God Himself would guarantee success in living.

Because of this, destruction is the worst fate that can possibly occur. Any kind of pain or distress can be endured if life is not ended. No matter how miserable a man's lot may be, while there is life there is always hope of possible improvement. The grave is the dark end to be avoided at all cost.

Introductory Bible reading for this week: I Kings 15-16; II Kings 17; 20-23; 25:1-10; II Chronicles 25:14-28

### **1st Day Joshua Warned About Destruction**

Joshua 23:11-16

The kingdom of God brings the blessing of God upon all who obey Him. Man was created by God in His own image and put into this world which God had made. In his freedom of choice man faces the alternative of choosing to do what promises to please himself or choosing to do what God wants him to do. For his guidance man is told that if he chooses to do what appeals to himself he will be destroyed, but if he chooses to do what God has commanded he will be blessed.

The world in which man lives presents to man that which appeals to his appetite, to his imagination and to his pride. Other men have lived before him and do contemporaneously live around him. Many of these have developed procedures of living that promise to satisfy his personal wishes. Inasmuch as such procedures involve a commitment of the person in full participation, they are in one sense forms of worship. The object in mind that serves to guide the response is called an idol or even a god.

The Canaanites had developed practices of worshiping their own gods. Such procedures were very attractive in their promise to give satisfaction and pleasure. When the children of Israel came into the land they learned of those customs and became enamored with the prospect of satisfaction which apparently was available to anyone who would enter into this way of living. One very dangerous aspect of the conquest of Canaan was the possibility of intermarriage with the Canaanites. When an Israelite and a Canaanite married there was the tendency that the Israelite would be influenced to worship the idol of the Canaanite and thus forsake God.

Joshua warned the people that such disobedience would result in their destruction.

### **To Go Further**

What does this warning from Joshua teach about the importance of God's favor?

What lessons can be learned about the responsibility of a believer as to his own faith?

### **2nd Day Destruction Comes to the Wicked Son of a Wicked Father**

I Kings 15:25-30

The kingdom of God reveals the judgment of God upon willful disobedience. Just as the blessing

of God was seen in daily benefits that made life fortunate and blessed, so the judgment of God was seen in destruction that included violent death.

A notoriously wicked king of Israel was Jeroboam, who led the people away from the worship of God. At the time when tension between the king and his people caused the northern ten tribes to withdraw their support of Rehoboam on the throne of David, Jeroboam returned from exile to take the leadership of the ten estranged tribes. He accepted their call to be their king, and immediately took steps to ensure that the estrangement would be permanent. He conceived the plan to devise a substitute system of worship with altars in the northern areas so that fraternization with the south would not occur.

No doubt Jeroboam committed many kinds of sins. But it was when he led the people to forsake God, by turning to the worship of idols, that God was provoked to executing judgment upon him. Not only was Jeroboam to be destroyed but his entire family was to suffer the destruction of every male member. To the Israelites this was a grievous doom.

The judgment was executed in the reign of Nadab, the son of Jeroboam. Nadab was an evil king himself but his fate was sealed by the fact that he was Jeroboam's son.

## **To Go Further**

Why was the sin of Jeroboam so grievous?

How does Matthew 18:6-10 seem to apply here?

What lessons may be learned from the fate of Nadab?

## **3rd Day Destruction Follows Destruction**

I Kings 16:1-7

The kingdom of God was manifested in God's dealing with the children of Israel. The history of Israel would show the ways of God so plainly that no one could mistake the meaning at any time. Obedience to the will of God was followed by blessing; disobedience was followed by destruction. The blessing of God would be manifested in material benefits: plenty of rainfall, freedom from plant disease and insects, good crops, victory in war, peace within and without the nation, loyalty among the people. Destruction would be shown in material disasters and calamities: drought, mildew, grasshoppers, famine, defeat, enemies and treachery. The signs would be plain for anyone to see.

When Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, was to be destroyed, Baasha was raised up to smite him and to slay him. This was in the will of God as the prophet had predicted, but Baasha was not a godly man. He did God's will in one particular but did not walk in God's ways. Actually he walked in the way of Jeroboam, making "my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins." Because of this he was doomed to suffer the same fate as Nadab whom he had slain. "Behold, I will take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house; and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat."

The fact that Baasha was used to destroy Nadab because of Nadab's sin did not make Baasha righteous by contrast. God is able to make even the wrath of man praise Him. The very man who was used to execute judgment upon a disobedient man would himself be liable to a similar judgment. The issue is not the person involved but the act. When it is said "God is no respecter of persons," this truth is applicable for evil as well as for good. It is not who the men are but what is being done. The man who does righteously will be blessed but the man who does unrighteously will be destroyed.

## To Go Further

What lessons can be learned here about the gospel?

How can it happen that known sinners may enter the kingdom before many righteous persons?

## 4th Day Destruction Puts an End to Idolatry

II Kings 10:1-28

The kingdom of God is based upon a total commitment in obedience to the will of God. God looked upon Israel as His spouse and any interest in any other god on the part of Israel, as a case of adultery. This was a sin which was always liable to be punished by death.

Jeroboam had introduced the worship of false gods into Israel and had been destroyed for this sin. But Ahab was responsible for the introduction of the worship of Baal and Ashtaroah on a national scale. When he married Jezebel, who was a Baal worshiper, and built an altar for Baal worship (supporting the pagan priests out of government funds), he influenced the people to think the worship of Baal was valid. Despite the ministry of the great prophet Elijah and his public demonstrations of the power of God, the worship of Baal persisted.

Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat was anointed with the commission to destroy Baal worship in Israel. Acting with drastic efficiency Jehu killed the king Joram, and also his kinsman Ahaziah, king of Judah, who was the grandson of Jezebel and also a Baal worshiper. Then he moved quickly to Jezreel where he killed Jezebel and left her body in the street. After that he came toward Samaria and demanded the death of the seventy sons of Ahab as a condition for sparing the city of Jezreel. When this condition had been met, Jehu then proceeded to kill all the household of Ahab in Jezreel.

On his way to Samaria Jehu met forty-two brethren of Ahaziah, king of Judah, the Baal worshiper, and killed them. "When he came to Samaria, he slew all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the LORD, which he spake to Elijah." "Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel."

## To Go Further

Why would the sin of idol worship bring on such severe penalty?

Why would the whole household share in being destroyed for the sin of the king?

What would justify the treatment given to Jezebel?

## 5th Day Destruction Follows Willful Disobedience

II Chronicles 25:14-24

The kingdom of God operates on one basic principle that is actually indispensable: obedience to the revealed will of God.

Destruction because of disobedience helps to emphasize the importance of obedience. Blessing upon obedience is also valid as evidence, but it is not usually as dramatic or impressive. There is a finality about destruction that conveys the whole meaning at once. The gentle growing of a plant over weeks, months and even years reflects health and vitality, but the sudden destruction of a tree has a totality about it that is shocking to anyone who may have an interest in it. Severe penalty upon disobedience in the form of sudden destruction makes a lasting impression upon all who see it.

Amaziah had been victorious over Edom, and he became arrogant in his willful acceptance of pagan gods. God sent a prophet to warn him of his foolish disobedience but Amaziah was incorrigible. He was not to be restrained from his disobedience. He challenged Israel to battle. Despite the peaceful answer from Israel he pressed his challenge to open combat. But this was actually in the overruling will of God, who would have Amaziah force the battle so that he should be defeated and destroyed.

The career of Amaziah would serve as an object lesson to all who would beware the outcome. Obedient kings had repeatedly been helped to notable victories. Amaziah worshiped false gods and his defeat would emphasize the importance of obedience.

### **To Go Further**

Why would defeat and ruin make such an impression upon Judah?

List reasons why it is so important that God's people remain true in devotion to Him.

### **6th Day Destruction of the Wayward Nation**

II Kings 17:18-23

The kingdom of God is the eternal plan of God to achieve the final purpose of creation. In it the creatures of God are to be forever blessed in joy and peace by the grace of God. The one basic requirement is obedience to God's will in willing surrender by the creature.

This truth was revealed in the history of Israel. The seed of Abraham was chosen to demonstrate the kingdom of God to the whole world. The nation of Israel was to show the blessedness which would be experienced by those who obeyed the will of God. This would be emphasized by the judgment of God manifested in the destruction of those who disobeyed and walked in wayward fashion.

When Jeroboam came to the throne of the northern ten tribes he prepared a substitute system of worship in which the people would worship two calves, and made a grove that they might worship Ashtaroath. Such false worship was evil, and Jeroboam was doomed to destruction because he was responsible for leading Israel into this error. But Israel also provoked God because the people accepted this false worship. Therefore the nation of Israel, by this and subsequent acts of disobedience, was doomed to destruction.

### **To Go Further**

How would the destruction of the wayward teach the truth of the kingdom of God?

What guidance is here for mentioning hell when preaching the gospel?

How can noting the result of mistakes promote right choices?

### **7th Day Destruction of the Insincere People**

II Kings 25:13-21

The kingdom of God demonstrated the chastening of those who would be turned to God from their foolishness. When the nation of Israel was divided, the two southern tribes remained loyal to the throne of David. Many of their kings were obedient to God and worshiped Him in truth. Generally the nation of Judah was blessed. One dangerous tendency appeared from time to time. Sometimes the king, though a

godly man in his own conduct, would become friendly with the king of Israel, who would be a worshiper of idols.

In such times of fraternization with Israel there was the danger of Judah becoming tolerant about idol worship.

Jehoshaphat was a godly king who walked diligently in the way of David. He promoted the true worship of God by arranging for the teaching of the law of God throughout Judah. But he was given to seeking friendly relations with Ahab, the wicked king of Israel. Despite the danger to himself because of treachery, Jehoshaphat joined Ahab in military ventures. And so it happened that Jehoram his son married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. Through Athaliah, Baal worship was encouraged in Judah: high places were built as shrines to worship Baal and groves were made for the worship of Ashtaroath. Despite the stern measures of the priest Jehoiada, who killed Athaliah, and restored the house to the seven-year old Joash, the influence of Baal worship reappeared again and again in Judah.

In the reign of Manasseh the high places were rebuilt, a grove was made for the worship Ash-taroath and a graven image of the grove was set in the Temple of God. The record is: "Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel" (II Kings 21:9). Because of this wickedness God eventually brought Babylon to destroy Jerusalem and to carry Judah away captive for seventy years. The Temple was looted and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

## **To Go Further**

Why would God chastise His own people by destroying their city?

What lessons can be learned from the fact that God allowed Babylon to destroy the Temple?

How was the destruction of the Temple like Moses breaking the tables of stone (Exodus 32:19, 20)?

## **Make a Decision**

God promises blessing and peace to all who will obediently do His will. But He warns: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." God made all the necessary provisions for the salvation of all men in Christ Jesus, His only begotten Son. But this salvation is only effective when Christ Jesus is received into the heart of each individual. God will not force Himself upon any man; but He will gladly and joyfully receive all who will come to Him. Is Christ Jesus living in your heart?

## Captivity in the Kingdom

The kingdom of God was revealed in the history of Israel as God overruled in the affairs of His people to show His will. A practical problem developed as the result of two seemingly contradictory realities: the covenant with Abraham which guaranteed to Abraham that his seed should be blessed forever, and the righteousness of God which demanded that evil should be destroyed.

The nation of Israel represented the seed of Abraham and so should inherit the promises of the covenant. But Israel disobeyed God and in this disobedience was liable to judgment which would bring destruction. In the wisdom of God the national political structure was destroyed, but a remnant was spared to continue as the true Israel who would inherit the promises.

Introductory Bible reading for this week: II Kings 17-25; II Chronicles 36

### 1st Day Nation Enslaved Because of Turning to Idols

II Kings 17:6-18

The kingdom of God reveals the will of the living God for those who are committed to serve Him. In grace, God promises all who will obey that He will bless them, keep them and bring them into great benefits. However, the basic element in obedience is a total commitment to Him. "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:5). By way of emphasizing this truth Moses admonished Israel, "For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God" (Deuteronomy 4:24).

Despite the warnings of Moses and later of Joshua, Israel showed a proclivity to forget the Lord and to worship Baal and Ashtaroth after the customs of the Canaanites. Their deliverance from Egypt was only by the power of God. Their problems in the desert would have been too difficult apart from the help of God. Their entry into the land and their conquest of Canaan by reason of repeated victories over the Canaanites had been possible only because God had helped them to overcome their enemies. Yet Israel would so easily forget God and turn to worship the gods of the land into which they had come.

During the time of the judges Israel had seen repeated demonstrations of the fact that when they forgot the Lord and worshiped idols, they suffered defeat and oppression. When they cried to God He sent them a judge who led them to victory and peace. After a time they would again turn to idols and again suffer distress.

In the time of the kings the same sort of demonstration was repeated. At that time God sent prophets who declared the word of God, interpreted the disaster and calamities which befell the nation as being the judgment of God, and who urged Israel to repent and to seek God's face. When the people showed themselves to be incorrigible and stubbornly unwilling to repent, God gave them over to the pagan invaders.

### To Go Further

What does this account show about human nature?

What lessons can be learned about the value of warning as to consequences of evil?

Why was Israel so ready to worship idols?

## **2nd Day The Worship of God Became Impure**

II Kings 17:32-41

The kingdom of God is manifested in obedience to His will which is sustained by faith, which is then nourished in the worship of God. God calls the person by His promises which are demonstrated in His acts and which in turn show His grace. In responding to this call the believer looks unto God and is strengthened by remembering what God has done, is doing and will do in the worship exercises, prescribed in the Word of God.

The heart of man is prone to seek some natural element upon which it can focus attention as being more certain because it can be seen. Promises of blessing seem more powerful when they are identified with natural things such as sun, moon and stars, or strong animals like the bull, or works of magic. In the same way promises seem more attractive when they are identified with the pleasures of eating, drinking, dancing and other more crude satisfactions of appetite and passion.

When Israel began to turn to the gods in the land the prophets declared the judgment of God against them. They warned Israel of the certain doom awaiting them if they persisted in this waywardness. Not only the northern nation of Israel but also the southern nation of Judah became infected with this tendency to forsake God and to turn to the worship of idols. At no time did Israel admit a complete forsaking of God. They would keep the routines of Temple worship but they tolerated also the worship of idols. Even as the Samaritans who followed them, "they feared the LORD, and served their own gods" (II Kings 17:33).

### **To Go Further**

Explain: "The LORD . . . is a jealous God."

Why is idol worship so evil?

What traces of idol worship can be seen in church services today?

## **3rd Day Judah Destroyed Because of Sin**

II Kings 24:1-4

The kingdom of God reveals the truth that God is no respecter of persons. Not all men maintain the same obedience in response to the word of God. Some are more ready to do God's will. It would be easy to expect that those less willing to obey would be judged and punished, and this is true. But even those who are more willing may fall into evil ways.

God is just. There is an integrity about His judgment upon evil. Even if one of His own people falls into sin, the judgment of God is sure. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Hebrews 12:6).

The history of Judah was marked by the righteous acts of the majority of her kings. David was the standard by which they were measured: "A man after mine [God's] own heart."

One of the best was Hezekiah whose reign was marked by diligent obedience to God. But this good man foolishly prevailed upon God to lengthen his life fifteen years. In this time his son Manasseh was born, who became the wickedest king Judah ever had. Manasseh gave himself over to doing evil, worshipping idols and cruelly persecuting unto death those who would not join him in his wayward course. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD (II Kings 21:5). By such actions in bringing pagan worship into the Temple, "Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel" ( II Kings 21:9). "Moreover

Manasseh shed innocent blood very much" (II Kings 21:16). When defeated in battle and taken as a captive to Babylon, Manasseh "humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem" (II Chronicles 33:12, 13). Manasseh was spared but Judah was destroyed.

### **To Go Further**

What lessons can be learned about the constant danger of falling into error?

How could the son of Hezekiah be so wicked? Make some modern applications of this.

### **4th Day The Leaders of the Nation Taken Captive First**

II Kings 24:12-16

The kingdom of God deals with men as they are. While it is true that response to the word of God occurs in the individual so that obedience is a matter of each man's personal relationship with God, it is also true that men live in companies and are affected personally by what happens to the group. Whenever men are gathered together as in a nation, some come to the foreground as leaders. Usually they have some special ability to act in a significant function so that what concerns everyone is attended to by the action of the leader. When such men are successful, everyone benefits; and when they fail, everyone loses. In dealing with a nation God deals with the leaders around whom the whole situation revolves.

When Judah had provoked God to anger so that He took action to destroy the nation temporarily, the leaders of Judah were the first to be taken captive and carried away into Babylon. Jehoiachin was king, and the king of Babylon seized him and all his household first to take them as prisoners to Babylon. Judah was thus stripped of its central leadership, rendering the nation as a whole helpless to deal with emergency problems of control. Next Nebuchadnezzar seized all the portable wealth in the form of gold vessels so that the nation was impoverished. Then he took prisoner all the important persons in the government, in the army and in industry, leaving only "the poorest sort of the people of the land." In this systematic fashion the king of Babylon rendered Judah helpless to resist his will in the disposition of national affairs.

Strong competent leaders in a nation are a blessing from God. The efficient handling of public affairs is to the advantage of everyone, and when a nation is pleasing to God, He raises up able persons to serve as leaders. When such servants are not available, the nation suffers.

### **To Go Further**

List reasons why it is such a blessing for a nation to have good leaders.

What lessons can be learned here about the control of subversive movements?

### **5th Day The City of Jerusalem Destroyed**

II Kings 25:1-10

The kingdom of God involves all the circumstances in which the people of God live. No man lives to himself alone. Men live together in "families." While each one responds to God in himself and obeys God in a personal individual sense, it is also true that in living, man lives with other men. Nearly all the features of his life are derived from the society of other men: language, customs, food, dress, shelter, pro-

tection, companionship and other aspects of living which make life possible, fruitful and satisfying. Not only is the family in the home basic to his existence, but the neighborhood and the community are too. The city in which he dwells is actually an integral part of his life.

If God had in mind only to destroy the disobedient sinner, He could have taken his life. But in order to reveal His plan for blessing those who obey Him, God showed His judgment upon the city – Jerusalem – in which His people dwelt. The lesson would be clearly seen in the destruction of the city: that God can and does affect the situation in which His people live. Just as He destroyed the city because of the incorrigible sins of His people, so He would bless the city with prosperity when His people were obedient.

This destruction was not effected in one giant catastrophe. First there was the prolonged siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar which lasted about a year and a half. This resulted in famine within the city which forced its fall. When King Zedekiah and his army fled in the night, the Chaldeans pursued and overtook them in the plains of Jericho. After his sons had been slain before him, Zedekiah's eyes were put out and he was brought as a prisoner ("bound him with fetters of brass") to Babylon. After this, Nebuchadnezzar proceeded to destroy Jerusalem utterly.

### **To Go Further**

Why would the destruction of Jerusalem be so long drawn out in time?  
Describe the significance of providence in the life of a Christian.

### **6th Day The Temple Was Destroyed**

II Kings 25:13-21

The kingdom of God involves the spiritual welfare of the obedient. Faith must be acquired and maintained. In order to have confidence in God; a man must know what God promises and must have some knowledge of what God has done. Such knowledge can be acquired in the worship of God. Moses received from God the pattern of the Tabernacle which was actually to be "the example and shadow of heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5).

It is quite possible that in its ornate magnificence, Solomon's Temple engendered pride in the nation. This may account for the deterioration of the spirit of worship among the people. In time they seemed to take for granted that since they had this grand Temple all must be well between themselves and God. The prophets warned them that God looked upon the heart, and proclaimed the word of God: "This people draw near me with their mouth . . . but have removed their heart far from me" (Isaiah 29:13). Hezekiah found the Temple in disrepair because of neglect and led the people in reviving the worship services as originally prescribed. Josiah again worked to restore worship to its designed course. But the nation as a whole fell into indifference, which was offensive to God. What they so carelessly neglected, God finally let Babylon destroy.

### **To Go Further**

What are the dangers spiritually of having an elegant house of worship?  
What lessons can be learned in the destruction of the Temple?

## **7th Day The People of God Taken into Captivity**

II Chronicles 36:14-21

The kingdom of God can be seen as operative in the life and welfare of the people. Though it is entered into by each individual, it is demonstrated more clearly in the history of the nation. Obedience is the basic element without which there can be no blessing. Since obeying the will of God will involve the denying of the self, there is the problem of motivation which would move men to yield to the will of God. The natural man understands rewards and punishment. The rewards can be offered in promises, and are often obscure in actual experience because of the tendency in the human heart to give glory to self effort.

The punishments are more vivid not only because of their drastic shock, but also because no one will assume the blame. In presenting the truth of the significance of obedience, punishment is often the more impressive.

When King Zedekiah "did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet" (II Chronicles 36:12), he set an example with this result: "Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen." The sad record shows that they "polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem." Despite the ministry of the prophets which God sent "because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place," the people were incorrigible, "until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

The history of Judah then records a most profound and sobering fact: when God's people refuse to accept correction they are doomed to suffer chastisement. Since they abused the privileges of God's favor in giving them the land, and polluted the place of worship where they could learn of Him, God allowed the pagan nation of Babylon to destroy their nation, to take them to Babylon as captives, and to burn their Temple and their city. The people suffered the cruel abuse of fierce conquerors because of their stiff-necked rebellion.

### **To Go Further**

What lessons can be learned here for Christians?

What lessons can be learned in the victorious campaign of an ungodly nation like Babylon?

List reasons for the importance of obedience among God's people.

### **Make a Decision**

To worship God means that He has first place in the heart. The word "worship" and the word "love" are closely related. The Bible says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind" (Luke 10:27).

To worship God means that I give all honor unto Him; that I adore Him; that I hold Him in the highest place in my esteem; that I hold Him most dear in my heart. When I worship God I am considering Him to be the most valuable of any person or thing in my life. How valuable is the God of the Scriptures in your life?

## Restoration in the Kingdom

The kingdom of God reveals the triumph of God's grace. The natural man is subject to the law of God. In his own foolishness he disobeys God's revealed will and follows the desires of his own heart. Despite all chastening, warning and instruction, he is incorrigible in his stubborn rebellion so that in judgment he must be destroyed.

But "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29). Even though Israel could be rebellious in stiff-necked disobedience so that destruction was inevitable, the promises of God to Abraham and to David could not be broken. In grace God would restore a remnant of His people to whom the promises would be fulfilled.

Introductory Bible reading for this week: Ezra; Nehemiah

### 1st Day Restoration Predicted in Promise

Deuteronomy 30:1-10

The kingdom of God as predicted in Scripture described a promise that God would do a work of grace in restoring to the land such as were repentant. Even in the time of Moses it was revealed that God's people would become so disobedient that they would be destroyed as a nation in the judgment of God. They would be scattered as prisoners and captives throughout the lands of their enemies where they would be harshly treated. Some would repent and turn to God in contrition and confession when they would call to mind the warnings and the promises which Moses had proclaimed.

No matter where His people had been scattered, God knew them and watched over them. He would see when they turned to Him and began to obey His voice, and with compassion would gather them and bring them back "into the land which thy fathers possessed." Here He would do them good and multiply them above their fathers.

In His grace God promised even more blessing. Not only would He bring them back into the promised Land, but He would change their dispositions so they would not wander away again. "And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." This is a new aspect in the plan of God. Later in the Old Testament the prophets set forth truth about the new covenant, which outlines more clearly how this is to be done.

God further promised to destroy the enemies of His people, especially those who persecuted them. Also He promised prosperity to Israel in all they did and all they had, so that their blessedness would be like that of their fathers when they had enjoyed the favor of God – "if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul."

### To Go Further

Why would God's people ever turn away from Him?

What is the spiritual significance of Deuteronomy 30:6?

How is the new birth similar to circumcising of the heart?

## **2nd Day Restoration Pictured in the Potter's House**

Jeremiah 18:1-8

The kingdom of God reveals a profound truth in God's plan for His creation. The sad part is that Adam and his progeny have fallen into sin. "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). The Word of God plainly states, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Corinthians 15:50). Yet God had a plan in mind which He would eventually bring to fruition. He made His covenant with Abraham and afterward with David in which He promised certain everlasting benefits to their seed. Such promises were in danger of being broken because the holiness of God would not condone sin. The nature of God demanded that sinners be judged and the incorrigible be destroyed. The sin of Adam and his children threatened to bring destruction upon all men. But the grace of God overcame this danger by regenerating souls that turn to God in repentance.

Jeremiah served as a prophet during the last generation of Judah that lived in Jerusalem. To him was revealed the wisdom and the power of God who would yet accomplish His purpose in grace. Though Jeremiah knew that the fate of Judah and Jerusalem was sealed – Babylon would come in force and utterly destroy the nation and the city – he also knew by revelation from God that there would be restoration in days to come.

The truth of this restoration in God's grace was shown to Jeremiah in what he saw when he went "down to the potter's house." As he watched the potter he saw that whenever a vessel "was marred in the hand of the potter," the potter would destroy that imperfect vessel and proceed to make another. Just as the potter was the master who would do as he would with the clay, so God is sovereign over His creation. As Jeremiah listened to the revelation given to him (Jeremiah 18:6-10), he was given to understand that God revealed His Word to men for their response: those who repented would be made anew.

### **To Go Further**

What difference can you see in comparing the second birth to the first?  
How is the sovereignty of God seen in this truth?

## **3rd Day Restoration Made Possible by Permission of Pagans**

Ezra 1

The kingdom of God was manifested in the history of Israel. Again and again the overruling will of God would be brought to pass even without the willing obedience of yielded people. Israel lived in the midst of nations who made no pretence of worshiping or of serving God. The blessing of God would come upon the Israelites as they obeyed His will. But there were times when Israel rebelled against God and followed the gods of the land in worshiping idols. The wisdom and power of God were to be seen in His overruling such disobedience and bringing in unbelieving pagans who, in following their own desires and obeying their own wishes, would actually do what was necessary to bring God's will to pass.

When the time came, as God had revealed through Jeremiah (Jeremiah 29:10), that Israel was to be restored in the land and was to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the Temple of God, God moved the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, to issue a proclamation authorizing this work to be done. Not only did Cyrus give permission, but by his decree he made materials available that were needed for the construction. By calling on the pagan neighbors of the Israelites to help with silver, gold and other material, Cyrus actually provided the means for the project.

The astonishing aspect of this development is that the pagans had no way of knowing how signifi-

cant their help was. In any case it worked out that Israel could rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple even though only a remnant showed interest in this effort.

### **To Go Further**

What lessons can be learned about the power of God?

What lessons can be learned about the plan of God?

What sort of help could the pagan society of the modern world give to a revival movement?

### **4th Day Restoration Begun by Reviving Worship of God**

Ezra 3:1-6

The kingdom of God is demonstrated in the history of Israel. In the restoration of the Jews to their ancient city and in their resuming the course of living according to the directives of God's Word, there is shown the pattern of the new covenant. With the nation of Judah destroyed, the city burned and the Temple demolished, the sentence of death had been executed. When seventy years later the remnant of Israel came trickling back to take up their life in the land again, it was indeed like resurrection from the dead. These people came back as the Lord had promised they would, but not as the continuation or the resumption of the nation of Judah. They came as the heirs of the promises of God given to Abraham, to Moses and to David. They were to be given the land and the city without having to win these in battle.

The life of these who had returned was begun by reviving the worship of God. With a spontaneous gathering in unity – "as one man to Jerusalem" – the people were led by the priests who "built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings thereon."

They "set the altar upon his bases . . . and they offered burnt-offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt offerings morning and evening." They "kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt-offerings." They were to live by trusting in God's promises.

### **To Go Further**

If the burnt-offering signified obedient yielding to the will of God, why should it be offered "continually"?

What possible application to your life does Israel's restoration have?

### **5th Day Restoration Completed with Joy**

Ezra 6:13-22

The kingdom of God was predicted in the events as they occurred in the history of the restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem. According to His promise, God opened the way for the Jews to return to their land. The nation as a whole was not brought back. Individuals from any and all of the twelve tribes, regardless of whether they had been in the nation of Israel or the nation of Judah, were welcome to return at their own choice when they heard the offer of Cyrus, king of Persia. Not only did these souls have permission to return freely, but they were offered help to enable them to rebuild their city and later their Temple.

Despite temporary setbacks due to the opposition of powerful enemies, the work of restoration was carried on and completed under the leadership of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. When all was done

the Temple of God had been rebuilt and then was dedicated with joy. The altar had been rebuilt from the first and on it burnt-offerings had been offered continually. The worship of God in the Temple would be carried on by consecrated persons who loved the Lord and wanted now to praise and to honor His name.

In this complete worship procedure the Jews' first action was to bring "a sin-offering for all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel." There was no notice here of the division of the nation into Israel and Judah; rather there was recognition of the promises of God which had been given to the children of Israel as one group of people. These were the souls that "were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the LORD God of Israel."

### **To Go Further**

What can be expected about response to the call for godly living in a church?  
What was different in the rebuilding of the Temple from the first construction?

### **6th Day Restoration Requires Repentance**

Ezra 10:1-5

The kingdom of God leads the sincere believer into complete commitment to the will of God from the heart. There may be evil customs developed in his former way of living that need now to be confessed and forsaken.

Israel had fallen again and again into fraternizing with pagan people by intermarrying. Although Moses had warned them of the danger of being led away to the worship of pagan idols, and had instructed them to avoid intermarriage, the children of Israel had been incorrigible in this and had practiced it even to the final destruction of the nation.

When the Jews were brought back to Jerusalem to begin their lives in humble, chastened obedience to God, the former habits of living in emotional, domestic, and social relationships were so strong they continued in their personal affairs with the pagans. When this was brought to Ezra's attention he was moved to intercessory prayer of confession and petition. It seemed to him that the Jews had gone beyond possible forgiveness. Humbly he confessed their sin to God. Boldly Shechaniah called upon Ezra to lead them into repentant confession and correction of their wrongdoing. He urged upon Ezra, "Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee." When Ezra called for repentant response the people obeyed.

### **To Go Further**

What lessons can be seen here for Christian living?  
How could the Jews have continued in such an evil practice?  
What is the responsibility of the leadership?

### **7th Day Restoration Involves Knowing God's Word**

Nehemiah 8:1-8

The kingdom of God involves individual obedience to the Word of God. Not only must the people as a whole accept the will of God and commit themselves as a people to seek His face, prepared to obey

His guidance, but this must actually be the response of each individual. The people may say they will obey, but it is the individual soul that must actually perform the obedience. This makes it imperative that each individual understand what the will of God is. Such individual understanding was the aim of the Tabernacle worship ritual. Each article of furniture in the pattern of the Temple had its own message of the meaning of God's promises. But the Temple had been destroyed for seventy years. The Jews returning to Jerusalem were ignorant of the promises of God's salvation. They needed to know what God had promised that they might believe.

The revelation of God's plan with His promises had been written in the book of the law of God. These authoritative Scriptures would teach the people what the will of God was, together with the promises and the warnings which would enable them to understand and to evaluate their own conduct. As the returning Jews realized their ignorance and felt its limitations in their own hampered spiritual experience, they came "as one man" and asked Ezra to read the book of the law to them and to interpret it so they could understand.

Ezra organized a teaching procedure for the purpose that all should come to know what the law of God meant. Gathering the people into one place, Ezra "stood upon a pulpit of wood," and "opened the book in the sight of all the people." The congregation consisted both of "men and women, and all that could hear with understanding." Standing with Ezra and helping in the instruction of the people were a number of the leaders. "So they read in the book in the law of Go<sup>9</sup> distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." As each soul came to understand the Scriptures he could believe and obey.

## **To Go Further**

What lessons are here for congregational Bible study?  
What lessons are here for understanding the Scriptures?  
How does this predict modern Christian education?

## **Make a Decision**

"Come unto me" is the personal call of the Lord Jesus Christ to your soul. There is no substitute for personal fellowship with Him. If you want His help, come; if you want His guidance, come; if you want His salvation, come.

This also applies to the soul who once had a personal relationship with the Lord but the cares and pleasures of this life came in and robbed him, making him a captive. To this one the call of God is "come." "Return unto me." Have you wandered away from God your heavenly Father? If so it is not too late to return home. He will receive you and restore you to your rightful place with Him.

## The Remnant in the Kingdom

The kingdom of God is portrayed in the history of Israel. This history unfolds in two phases. There is first the natural history of the flesh descendants of Abraham, in which some of his flesh choose to follow him in obeying the call of God. Despite their natural state they undertake to obey God.

But this natural phase ends in destruction. The sinfulness of the flesh results in Israel being incorrigible until destruction cannot be avoided. But God plans to save a remnant out of natural Israel by restoring them in His will in the new covenant. This remnant will inherit the promises of God.

Introductory Bible reading for this week: Isaiah 10:20-23; 11:11-16; 37:31, 32; Jeremiah 31:7-14; Ezekiel 6:8-10; Joel 2:28-32; Micah 5:7, 8; 7:16-20

### 1st Day The Remnant Shall Return to God

Isaiah 1:9; 10:20-23

The kingdom of God is fulfilled in a limited number of obedient souls who turn away from their natural selves to seek above all else the grace of Almighty God. Such persons may have shared in the common disobedience and may have been involved in the public worship of idols, but they respond to the preaching of the prophets in confessing their sins and turning to God. When the opportunity came to repent and to trust the mercy of God these were ready and willing.

In the history of Israel, disobedience to God became so willful and so chronic on the part of both nations, Israel and Judah, that they were finally judged to be incorrigible. When the worship of idols developed to the point that shrines for their worship were built in the Temple itself, the prophets announced the coming destruction of the nations in the will of God. Even then the final call to repentance was preached by the prophets with the promise of forgiveness in the grace of God to any who would obey. Despite widespread indifference among the people as a whole, there were some individuals who heard and believed.

Isaiah speaks of "a very small remnant" who would return to God and thus save Israel from being as Sodom and as Gomorrah (Isaiah 1:9). The destruction of Israel will come as the harvest time, but in the wholesale gathering in there will be a few who will escape the judgment: "Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough" (Isaiah 17:6).

When Ezekiel was shown in his vision how widespread idol worship had become so that destruction in the judgment of God had been determined as unavoidable, he was also shown how the Lord provided for sparing some: "set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" (Ezekiel 9:4). It would be this "remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters" (Ezekiel 14:22, 23). In seeing these Ezekiel would be comforted despite the wholesale destruction of Jerusalem.

### To Go Further

How does this aspect of Israel's history demonstrate "many are called, out few are chosen"?  
What lessons can be learned here about the prospect of the conversion of all men to God?

## **2nd Day The Remnant Shall Return by the Help of God**

Isaiah 11:11-16

The kingdom of God will manifest a stage of history of God's people when some will turn to God in repentance and will come to worship Him in humble dependence upon His grace and mercy.

The incorrigible sinfulness of Israel will in due time bring the final destruction of both Israel and Judah as nations, with the people scattered as captives among their enemies. But there will be a few who will respond to the preaching of the prophets and will return to God as individuals in sincere obedience. God will receive such individuals freely in His abundant grace.

In His sovereignty God will move pagans to bring this remnant back to their land so they can again possess their inheritance that had been promised to Abraham and to his seed. They will come in such humility and meekness that all contention and conflict will be gone. There will be no continuation of the strife between the two nations: "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." But even more amazing will be the willingness of gentiles to help them in returning.

The old traditional enemies will be the very ones who will help to bring them back to the land. Just as in the exodus from Egypt when the time finally came for their coming out of the land and the Egyptians gave them gifts to send them on their way, so in this return the gentiles would actually bestow goods upon them. "And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt."

### **To Go Further**

What does this teach about signs of true revival?

What lessons are here to encourage believers to turn to God?

What can be seen here about the end of denominational rivalry?

## **3rd Day The Remnant Shall Be Replanted in the Land**

Isaiah 37:31, 32

The kingdom of God will be triumphant in overcoming the consequences of sin among the people of God. God is holy and will not tolerate sin in His presence.

The physical descendants of Abraham and of Israel "forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth" (Judges 2:13). And God was provoked in anger to destroy the nation of Israel.

But in the grace of God a small remnant of Israel, composed of individuals who responded to the prophets preaching of the call of God to repentance, returned to God to confess their sin and to seek His pardon. Thus they became the heirs of the promise of God, given first to Abraham by covenant, and were brought back into the land of promise.

God is no respecter of persons and His judgment of sin was carried out in every case: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." In that judgment destruction was the doom of every sinner before God. But God can raise the dead. While this truth was not so clearly set forth in the Old Testament as it was in the New Testament Scriptures, written after Jesus, of Nazareth rose from the dead, it was implied nonetheless in this very situation. Whereas death passed upon all Israel because of their sin, in His grace God brought back such as in repentance turned to Him.

## To Go Further

What lessons are here to encourage the believer even while he feels his sinfulness?  
How can anyone believe in resurrection?  
How important is resurrection in Christian experience?

## 4th Day The Remnant Shall Return with Joy

Jeremiah 31:7-14

The kingdom of God moves toward the day when regenerated souls will worship and serve the Lord with joy and gladness. When man was created he was made flesh of the dust of the ground. He was subject to the law of God and given a commandment to obey. In yielding to temptation to serve himself, man sinned and was doomed to die. He was given opportunity to gain the blessing of God at the cost of self-denial. God called Abraham to this life of obedience and gave him gracious promises to inherit as blessing.

Israel enjoyed the benefits of this covenant and received many favors from God. But the human nature of the people could not resist the temptation to seek their own pleasure and when they brought idol worship into the Temple, God was provoked to anger and scattered them among the nations round about.

However, God called His people to return to Him in repentance, promising to bless them in a new covenant which would ensure their everlasting obedience. God promised to send His own righteous Servant to save all who would turn to God, by personally bearing their sins in Himself and putting His own Spirit of obedience into their hearts.

The promise of the blessing of God would fill their hearts with gladness. They would be led in a straight path that they should not stumble. "He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock . . . I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them."

## To Go Further

What does this course of events show about God?  
What lessons are here for such as would walk with God?  
What difference would the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:33, 34) make?

## 5th Day The Remnant Shall Return in Repentance

Ezekiel 6:8-10

The kingdom of God can only be realized in souls that confess and forsake sin. In the history of Israel the covenant with Abraham called him to forsake all aspects of his natural self that he might obey the word of God as revealed to him. There was no specific reference to sin, though there was definite emphasis upon obedience. In the restatement of the promise to Isaac and to Jacob there was no reference to sin as such, but in the days of Moses when the children of Israel were to be brought out of Egypt into the Land of Promise, the Law of God was set forth in the Ten Words given to Moses on the mount. In this it became obvious that obedience was not merely a matter of following the guidance of God from one country to another geographically, but it was a matter of attitude and conduct toward God and toward man.

In their natural condition Israel might transgress the law of God, but in the Tabernacle worship procedures, confession of sin and the bringing of substitutionary sacrifices to make atonement were ar-

ranged, to be followed by the Levitical priesthood, so that Israel might continue in communion with God and have His blessing. When that worship was polluted by idol worship, Israel fell away from God into such sinful disobedience that the destruction of the nation was inevitable.

But the grace of God provided that the call of God should go out to those who had been scattered, with the promise of a new covenant which God would make with any who would repent and return to Him. In this new covenant God would provide such means of grace that Israel would never turn away again. The only requirement would be sincere repentance.

### **To Go Further**

Why is repentance so important?

Why is toleration and practice of idol worship so evil?

What lessons are here for spiritual life of church members?

### **6th Day The Remnant Shall Be Filled with the Holy Spirit**

Joel 2:28-32

The kingdom of God operates where there is total obedience to the will of God. God knows the nature of man and looks upon the heart. Outward compliance with worship procedures and service routines while the heart is enamored with selfish interest is actually offensive to God. The Scriptures plainly show that the Lord "is a jealous God" (Exodus 34:14) and again "the LORD looketh on the heart" (I Samuel 16:7). It was when it became obvious that Israel was incorrigible in the inner preference for the natural interests of self that destruction was inevitable in the judgment of God. Since the natural heart could not and would not obey the will of God, the new covenant promised to give the repentant believer a new heart which would by its own volition always do the will of God.

The new covenant provided a Redeemer who would take upon Himself the sins of the people of God, and who would pour out His own Holy Spirit into the hearts of the believers to activate the will of this Saviour in obeying the will of God perfectly. This Messiah would be none other than the Son of God whose delight it is to do the Father's will. The believer would humbly yield himself to the will of God, which would be that God would give him a new heart by pouring the Holy Spirit of God in almighty creative power into the believer. The result would be that the believer would have the law of God within his own heart because the Holy Spirit filled him, and his response to the will of God would now be the response of the Lord Himself. Thus God actually would perform His own will in the life and conduct of the believers who had in this fashion been born again as the children of God.

The only response the remnant need to make is to yield themselves to the grace of God. God Himself will come into them and through His anointed chosen servant will obey His own will perfectly.

### **To Go Further**

Why did Israel fail under the first covenant?

How can the new covenant guarantee perfect obedience?

What lessons are here for Christian living?

## **7th Day The Remnant Shall Be to the Glory of God**

Micah 7:16-20

The kingdom of God will finally manifest to the whole creation the wonders of God's grace and mercy. All men as creatures of God had been called to obey Him that they might be blessed. In His righteousness God had promised "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Again and again man had been shown what the consequences of his conduct would be. He had been warned by dire results that disobedience would be punished, and he had been shown by glorious victory that obedience would be rewarded. But in his own selfish sinfulness the natural man proved to be incorrigible. Even when God took Abraham and made him an example to demonstrate the blessedness of obedience, renewing His covenant with Isaac and then with Jacob, the sinfulness of the natural man led into disobedience. Despite the revelation of the law of God and the procedures of reconciliation unto atonement to Moses, the children of Israel showed their wayward disposition in forsaking the Lord and following after other gods. With all their privileges and opportunities Israel was actually worse than the heathen nations until there was no remedy. In the judgment of God all was doomed to destruction.

But in grace God provided from Himself through His own Son who came to be the righteous Servant, a perfect demonstration of obedience to His will unto glorious blessing. Through His prophets He called men to repent and to come to Him to be saved. Such as would come He would take to Himself and recreate them as His own children, These saved ones would show to the whole world the wonders of God's grace. Sinners as they had been, they would be forgiven, cleansed, restored and blessed to the glory of God.

### **To Go Further**

What is so particularly gracious about the new covenant?

What lessons can be seen here for any who would want to share the blessing of Christ?

What is the secret of godly living?

### **Make a Decision**

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." It is to the praise and glory of God and to the salvation of the believer that he is not expected to live well-pleasing to God in his own strength. If he had to do this in his own strength no one would make it. But thanks be to God, He has so arranged it that when a soul receives Christ Jesus as His Saviour that He [Christ] indwells that soul. The apostle Paul explains it this way: "Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." Do you know by personal experience what it means to live above defeat in your Christian life?

## The New Covenant in the Kingdom

The kingdom of God manifests the blessedness of obedience to the will of God. The very nature of man makes peace most desirable. Trouble is distressing. Pain and loss are intolerable. Gladness of heart is a mark of well-being. Joy in the soul is the great blessing of God.

In the history of man it became sadly apparent that natural man could not and would not obey the commandments of God which would have led him into blessing. Despite all the gracious help given by a merciful God, even Israel failed. God then revealed a new covenant in which He would succeed in bringing His creation into His will.

Introductory Bible reading for this week: Isaiah 41:10-20; 42:1-10; 43:1-7; 43:18-21; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 34:25-38

### 1st Day The New Covenant Will Be Made with the Seed of David

II Samuel 7:12-16

The kingdom of God will be finally consummated when God deals with His people according to the new covenant. There will be no change in God's purpose to bless all who obey His Word. There will be no change in His Word which is forever "settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). There will be no change in the blessing as promised: God will be with the obedient, to watch over him and to prosper him in all that he does. But there will be a change. The change will appear in the response of the believer.

In the first covenant the will of God was revealed in the Ten Words on Mount Sinai to Moses. The significance of these commandments was set forth in promises of rewards for obedience and punishments for disobedience. Despite God's faithful chastening for disobedience, His gracious benefits for obedience, His patient warnings by the prophets, Israel showed themselves to be incorrigible in forsaking God and worshiping Baal and Ashtaroth. The very law which they spurned became their doom when God destroyed them in judgment.

Even as the prophets announced the destruction of the nation in the judgment of God, they proclaimed a new covenant (which God would institute) in which the promises of God would be fulfilled in a small number of individuals through the seed of David. Since it had been demonstrated that Israel would never fully obey God in themselves because of their natural sinfulness, God planned a new and different arrangement wherein one of the seed of David would obey Him perfectly, and as king would lead God's people into blessedness.

This future king was referred to as the anointed one, or "the Messiah" in the Old Testament Hebrew language and "the Christ" in the New Testament Greek language. His obedience would be total and all the promises of God would be fulfilled in Him. His rule would extend over the whole creation and His blessing would be shared by all His people. In His obedience He would deny himself utterly, but in His glory His name would be above all.

### To Go Further

What seems strange in the new covenant being implemented through a king?

How would the chosen one fare differently than Saul?

In what way would the chosen one ever "commit iniquity"?

## **2nd Day The New Covenant Will Settle the Seed of David on the Throne**

I Chronicles 17:11-14

The kingdom of God will one day be established to the glory of God. In the Scriptures there was first the promise and then in the history of Israel there was an incomplete demonstration. The children of Israel failed to meet the basic requirement of obedience and were eventually destroyed in the judgment of God. But God announced a new covenant within which He would redeem, save and establish a remnant out of Israel who would forever be obedient and rejoice in the everlasting glory of God.

The new covenant did not alter the eternal purpose of God to prepare a people for Himself to His own glory, according to His promise to Abraham. The structure of order in the affairs of His people called for the function of a king who would hear the Word of God and obey it according to His covenant with David. The great difference was centered in the branch of the house of David, the Messiah, who would personally perform the will of God perfectly, thus inheriting all the promises of God.

This Son of David would He establish on the throne forever. His reign would bring righteousness and peace. Although His flesh would be of the house of David this would be the Son of God who from eternity was committed to do the will of His Father. By pouring out His Holy Spirit upon the flesh of the believers, God would in grace give them a new heart. and renew a right spirit within them.

### **To Go Further**

Why should the Law of Moses be taught to persons who will become Christians?

What difference in the attitude toward the Law is to be seen in the mind of a Christian?

Does a Christian do right because it is right?

## **3rd Day The New Covenant Assures Victory Over Enemies**

Isaiah 41:10-20

The kingdom of God brings into reality all the blessing promised in the covenant with Abraham. In this world there is evil and there is good. Each human being as a living creature faces a situation in which there are elements that are vital and elements that are fatal. Some of these elements are dynamic, with the result that man is beset by appeals for his interest. The Word of God directs him to the good and promises him blessing. The forces of evil allure him and promise him pleasure and satisfaction. To choose the way of the Word of God involves denial of self; to choose the way of self-interest promises satisfaction of personal desire. Because of their evil import such selfish elements are spoken of as enemies. To follow their guidance is to suffer loss and destruction. The fortune and welfare of the soul depends upon the defeat of these enemies.

In the new covenant under the leadership of the Messiah, blessed by the grace of God and guided in His Holy Spirit, the believer is helped to complete victory over his enemies. Simply by trusting in God the believer will be brought into victory over the evil. Without effort on his part beyond committing himself to God, the enemies will fade away in defeat. This "new sharp threshing instrument having teeth" will shred the forces opposed to Him until the wind shall carry them away as chaff. Thus they will be reduced to nothing.

## To Go Further

How can a believer be in peace when the enemies are so real?  
Why does God not destroy all enemies (Judges 2:20-23)?  
Name some enemies Christians must face.

## 4th Day The New Covenant Will Be Available to the Gentiles

Isaiah 42:1-10

The kingdom of God is designed to be available to all men. Though the covenant was made with Abraham and renewed to Isaac and to Jacob, and made special reference to the seed of Abraham, it included in its promise: "and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). This aspect of the promise was not an afterthought, not a postscript of lesser meaning. This part of the promise was in the mind of God from the first. If Abraham was chosen to be an example, then to whom was he to be an example? Would it not be to those, whom God from the first wanted to bless? Israel was never chosen to be made into a favored nation to be exalted above others. "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34), yet God did deal in a special way with Israel because He wanted to show that He will deal in a special way with whosoever will come unto Him.

Paul argues at length to show that the promise to Abraham was given to him before the rite of circumcision was instituted, while Abraham himself was still a gentile! The Jews did have a real advantage (Romans 3:1, 2), but they needed to be saved by the grace of God just as the gentiles (Romans 3:9). The prophets understood that the salvation which would be provided through the Messiah was to be available for the gentiles (Isaiah 42:1, 6), and the early church in its first great council was guided to its decision by remembering that God always had the gentiles in mind (Acts 15:14-19).

When all men came together to build the tower of Babel by their own wisdom and strength, they were thwarted by the judgment of God who affected them in such a way that their procedures of combined human effort would never be successful. In the very next chapter the record shows that God called Abraham to trust in Him for what he needed for success in living. The covenant with Abraham was not intended as special treatment for one favored man and his family; it was the true way of blessing for all men.

## To Go Further

What are the advantages in being born into a Christian home?  
How would you tell the gospel to a person who had never been to church?

## 5th Day The New Covenant Will Redeem God's People

Isaiah 43:1-7

The kingdom of God brings the promises of God's grace to all who will obey His Word. Throughout history all men have sinned and so are under condemnation to be destroyed. In this sense men are prisoners held in bondage because of their own sins.

God's plan of deliverance and salvation was demonstrated in the exodus of Israel out of Egypt and into Canaan. While serving in bondage the people cried to the God of their fathers for relief. In due time God raised up Moses to lead them out of Egypt, across the desert, and into Canaan.

By exercising the power of God, Moses was able to effect the deliverance of Israel by using the

plagues to affect Pharaoh until he was willing to allow the people to depart from Egypt. When Pharaoh subsequently changed his mind and tried to recapture them by pursuing them with his host, he was drowned when he tried to cross the Red Sea. With Pharaoh destroyed, Israel was free. The bondage was broken. The deliverance was real.

All men are in bondage because of their sin. In yielding to the temptations of self-interest, souls become enmeshed in all manner of commitment and involvement until their bodies become the servants of sin. Thus men often do wrong when they know they are doing wrong, but cannot seem to help themselves (Romans 7:14-23). In God's plan of salvation this bondage is completely broken in the denial of self by the crucifixion of the flesh when self is reckoned to be dead, and the spirit is free.

### **To Go Further**

What is the real reason the law cannot bring a man into blessing (Romans 8:3)?

In what sense is the natural man in bondage?

How is the new birth involved in redemption?

### **6th Day The New Covenant Will Be to the Glory of God**

Isaiah 43:18-21

The kingdom of God will openly demonstrate the plan and the power of God in His grace. After it has been openly seen that natural man cannot inherit the kingdom of God (I Corinthians 15:50) because of the sinfulness of the flesh, there might seem to be only failure in God's work of creation. But in His grace God provided a salvation through His chosen one, the Messiah! God sent His Son into the world to achieve in a body made of the seed of Abraham perfect obedience to God, thus inheriting all the blessing set forth in the promises of God. By setting Him on the throne of David forever and regenerating the repentant souls Who would turn to Him in spiritual natures wholly committed to do His will, God would establish His kingdom to show forth the glory of God.

In the natural world, wilderness and desert were evidence of the withholding of the blessing of God. When God proclaimed through the prophets His purpose to create a new generation of persons spiritually committed to willingly obey His will, He spoke of making "a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." Such language pointed to different circumstances and different results.

Thus the promise is set forth that there will be the creation of a new situation. The people in this new creation will be obedient to God and thus will be qualified to receive His blessing. God will surround them with His favor with "waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert."

There is no mention of what they will try to do. There is no intimation that they will be so virtuous, so wise or so strong that they can earn their fortune or achieve their welfare in their own efforts. Nor is there any warning about what will befall them when they sin. There seems to be no danger of them wandering away or seeking other gods. "This people have I formed for myself."

### **To Go Further**

How could there ever be a people who would not turn away from God?

How does this show the necessity of the new birth?

What is the motivation of obedience in the new creation?

## **7th Day The New Covenant Will Put the Law into the Heart**

Jeremiah 31:31-34

The kingdom of God operates only in hearts that are obedient to the will of God. In the history of Israel the law of God was revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai on two tables of stone. The promise was clearly proclaimed: "Hear, and your soul shall live." The warning was plainly stated: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The sad truth was openly demonstrated that the natural man, born of flesh and blood, did not want to obey the law of God. When man was tempted by his own desires from within, he fell into disobedience and forfeited his opportunity to be blessed.

The long history of Israel provided repeated evidence that the natural man is incorrigible in his disposition to seek his own satisfaction and pleasures. When he went so far as to defile the worship of God by including the worship of other gods, judgment was sure and his doom was sealed. But the prophets who pronounced the destruction of the nation prophesied of the new creation which God in grace would produce. Repentant souls would be received as they returned to God and regenerated by the grace of God into a people who would be indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God.

This new people would receive from God, by His Spirit, an inner disposition in willing obedience to do His will. His chosen servant, the Messiah, would perfectly perform His will and would beget this new generation as His own children: a people that would delight to do the will of God. Out of their inward parts, out of their hearts, the law of God would control their thoughts and deeds. There would be no thought of self-interest, no vanity or pride to restrain. There would be no need to learn the requirements of the law because each one would have that awareness within himself without being taught. There would be no feeling of guilt because all sin would be forgiven.

### **To Go Further**

How would the consciousness of a born again person differ from that of a natural man?  
What difference would there be in a mind that knew sins were forgiven?

### **Make a Decision**

"And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

In Isaiah 41:10 it seems as though God amplifies this verse by breaking it down into our every day language to describe the phrase "with us." He tells us that we need not to be afraid, because He is near; that He will strengthen us, yea, help us; and then He tells us just how He will do all this: "I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." He begins and continues these promises with, "for I am thy God." Is He your God?

## The Messiah in the Kingdom

The kingdom of God in its fulfillment manifests the will of God. Man was created in the image of God and given authority to have dominion over the whole earth. At the same time he was made to know joy and sorrow, and put in a situation where joy would be possible only when he obeyed the will of God.

The history of man records that man fell in yielding to temptation and choosing to act according to his own wishes. When sin entered man's heart he was separated and alienated from God. His sure expectation was to die. In grace God sent His own Son to be the Saviour of man. He came in the form of a servant and perfectly obeyed the will of God, redeeming man and regenerating every believer as a child of God.

Introductory Bible reading for this week: Deuteronomy 18:15-18; Isaiah 9:6, 7; 11:1-10; 52:13-53:12; Jeremiah 23:5,6; Micah 5:2-15

### 1st Day The Messiah Will Be a Prophet like Moses

Deuteronomy 18:15-18

The kingdom of God functions in those who believe the Word of God and yield to obey His will. No man has in himself naturally the knowledge of what God has promised nor what God wants him to do. All this must be revealed to man. When the children of Israel witnessed the events on Mount Sinai, when God revealed His Law in the Ten Words, they requested that Moses be the channel through whom God would communicate His will to the people (Deuteronomy 5:27). Their request was granted and Moses began to serve as a prophet. He would learn the will of God in his own personal worship and communion with God, and then he would declare to the people what God wanted them to do. This became the classic pattern of the work of a prophet.

One basic aspect of the prophet was that he was one of the people himself. He came out of the nation as one of the people. When he received anything from God it came to him in the form of the language and the culture of the people. His understanding and his proclamation of the message was in the speech of the people. Thus they could understand and would know the will of God. The prophet simply expressed to the people, in language they could understand, what God wanted them to do.

The life and experience of the people of God would be affected by the circumstances in which they lived and by the attitudes which the people would adopt toward God and man. Living in this world demands access to natural goods that will provide food, shelter and clothing. Victory in battle and favorable conditions would result in peace and plenty in which the needs of man would be amply provided. The prophet would lead the people of God in their relations with other nations and in their personal conduct that they might be blessed of God. In the Ten Words received from God on Mount Sinai, Moses showed Israel what God required of them in their attitude toward Him and toward other men.

### To Go Further

In what ways would man be dependent upon God for his daily bread?

What causes aggression and war among men?

Why was the Law of God revealed in the Ten Words?

## **2nd Day The Messiah Will Be Born of the Seed of David**

Isaiah 9:6, 7

The kingdom of God will come to pass through the reign of a king, chosen from the seed of David and anointed by God with His Holy Spirit to enable Him to be perfectly obedient to God. God had promised Abraham that blessing would come to his seed and through his seed all nations would be blessed. In the time of David, God further promised that the blessing would be manifested through the function of his throne.

"When . . . the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies" (II Samuel 7:1), it came into David's heart that he wanted to build a permanent temple for the worship of God. Such a structure would encourage the worship of God by the people, and enhance their understanding and their faith.

God took note of this intention in the heart of David and pronounced His own covenant with David in which He promised that the chosen one whom He would anoint to rule over His people forever would be one of David's family. Although His body would be born of the flesh of David, this one would be the Son of God (II Samuel 7:14; Hebrews 10:5). As one of the seed of David He would inherit the throne and the promises of the covenant with David, but as the Son of God He would obey the will of God His Father with joy (Hebrews 10:7-9). Because God was His Father, His human body would not have a human father: He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14).

### **To Go Further**

Why was it necessary that Christ should have a human body (Hebrews 2:14)?

Why was it necessary that Christ should be born in the house of David?

## **3rd Day The Messiah Will Rule in Righteousness and Peace**

Isaiah 11:1-10

The kingdom of God will manifest total obedience to the will of God from the hearts of His people and ample provisions of all needs with rest from all enemies by the providence of God in His grace. When man was created in the image of God and put in this world, it was arranged that he would live in the presence of God in the company of other men.

Adam fell in disobedience and sin entered into the heart of man in the form of self-interest. Pride prompted man to disregard his dependence upon God and to seek security and satisfaction by his own efforts. Selfishness prompted man to envy his fellow man and to covet his goods. In sin man turned from God to worship idols of his own making and entered into conflict with his fellow man that he might seize the other man's goods for himself. Thus the lot of mankind was corruption and distress.

But God in His grace arranged in Himself to save man (John 3:16). He would send His own Son into the world to be born as a man, partaking of the seed of Abraham, that He might redeem any man who would repent and turn to Him, at the cost of His own death. This chosen one would deliver "whosoever believeth in him" from sin, and would regenerate him as a child of God. By the operation, of the Holy Spirit this redeemed soul would be lifted in the love of God where he would willingly yield to the guidance of Christ as his Lord. With Christ living in him the believer would worship God in sincere adoration with kindness and truth.

## **To Go Further**

What is the real cause of fighting among men?  
Why would anyone ever be unkind to others?  
How can peace be possible?

## **4th Day The Messiah Will Be a Light to the Gentiles**

Isaiah 42:1-10

The kingdom of God is offered to all men. In the history of His dealing with sinful man, God chose Abraham and his seed as a channel through which he would bring blessing to all men. Other people were re-ferred to as "all nations" and known as "gentiles." For our usage we may think of anyone who is not a Jew to be "a gentile." A common error is abroad in our popular opinion that being a gentile implied something inferior, but this view is not based on Scripture. Above all else, "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). Paul set forth very deliberately that the Lord is God, "Yes, of the Gentiles also" (Romans 3:29). Throughout the Bible there is repeated reference to the purpose of God to bring salvation to the gentiles. Several of the prophets (e.g. Jonah) were sent especially to the gentiles. Others, such as Isaiah and Jere-miah, devoted portions of their books to recording messages to the gentiles. In Athens, Paul began his discourse by stating that "God that made the world and all things therein . . . hath made of one blood all nations of men" (Acts 17:24-26), and then went on to say that he "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). In His last command to His disciples the Lord Jesus gave the great commission to go into all the world and teach all nations (Matthew 28:18-20).

Despite this clear teaching of Scripture it was a natural error for Israel to assume that God belonged to them in a special way. They had received the promises directly and the Law had been revealed to them on Mount Sinai. God was worshiped in the Temple in authorized fashion. But from the beginning "all nations" had been kept in view. Abraham was told that in him and in his seed should "all nations be blessed." David was promised that of his seed Christ should come to be King of kings and Lord of all.

## **To Go Further**

In what sense could the Law be a schoolmaster to bring souls to Christ?  
How would conscience function in the gentile to bring him to Christ (Romans 2:14, 15)?

## **5th Day The Messiah Will Suffer for the Sins of His People**

Isaiah 53:3-8

The kingdom of God will be established through the chosen one of God, the Messiah. The basic truth always is that he that doeth the will of God shall abide forever. Such an one will never be destroyed in judgment and thus has eternal life. The history of creation shows that no natural human being was ever able to obey all the will of God: when Adam sinned and fell, all men fell in him. But the Chosen One of God, the Anointed One, known as the "Messiah" in the Hebrew and as the "Christ" in the Greek, who was the Son of God Himself, accepted the body prepared for Him, being born in fashion as a man, taking on Himself the form of a servant, and lived a perfect life. God in heaven spoke to say, "'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 17:5). In the grace of God, just as an the children of Adam fell into sin with Adam, so all the children of God were lifted into righteousness with Christ (Romans 5:18).

The grace of God provides that Christ will offer Himself as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sin of the world. In God's economy, substitutionary sacrifice was set forth as the way in which the guilty sinner could be redeemed. In the history of Israel, the Passover was a notable event in which any obedient Hebrew who killed a lamb as instructed by Moses and sprinkled the blood on the doorposts of his house would be spared when the angel of death passed through the land (Exodus 12:13). Later this truth was more fully set forth in the sacrifices of sin offerings and trespass offerings in the ritual of worship led by the Levites in the Tabernacle and the Temple services.

Because He was without blemish, without sin, death would not be His portion. But He offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice, willingly taking upon Himself the guilt of the sin, and bearing in His own body on the cross the penalty of the sins of men (Hebrews 10:12-14). All the Old Testament sacrifices set forth the same aspect of His sacrificial atoning death on the cross. The Scriptures show that "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22).

### **To Go Further**

What is so wonderful about the idea that Christ would die for our sins?

What is similar in all men being lost in Adam, and all believers being saved in Christ?

### **6th Day The Messiah Will Reign and Prosper**

Jeremiah 23:5, 6

The kingdom of God has a future in which the whole will of God will be demonstrated in glory. Throughout the history of Israel the prophets described from time to time the blessedness that would one day be manifested when God's grace had achieved the complete obedience of His people. It would be the glory of God to show mercy to the unfortunate, to be gentle with the weak, and to help the poor. That justice should be done, the wicked and the unjust would be restrained and punished. As the history of Israel unfolded, the idea of a king who would implement the will of God among the people was definitely established in the prospect for the people by the covenant with David. God promised one of His seed should be on the throne forever.

This Chosen One, the "anointed one," the Messiah would not only be established as King over all the kingdoms of the world, but His reign would be blessed in its character. The Messiah would be given the Holy Spirit to guide Him so that He would know the will of God perfectly; and He would want to obey it fully. He would be in complete control of hostile, disobedient elements and would rule over them with a rod of iron. He would judge according to truth and would be specially careful that the poor and the meek should be protected against aggression.

The great difference would be in the nature of those who were under His rule: These would not be the natural children of Adam. These would come to the Messiah willingly and seek to know His will that they might find joy in obeying to please Him. During the natural history of Israel, such a reign never occurred. No king was every so obedient to God that he had a perfect score. And at no time was Israel ever minded in a general way to obey God to the letter, no matter how much it would cost them. But in the kingdom of Christ such would happen.

### **To Go Further**

How would the righteous reign of Christ be a blessing?

How will righteousness in government help the people in the kingdom?  
What conditions will promote prosperity in a kingdom?

## **7th Day The Messiah Will Rule Over His People**

Micah 5:2-4

The kingdom of God will manifest quietness and peace throughout the nation even though there may be violence in war with ungodly enemies round about. In the natural creation trouble and conflicts are unavoidable. The living are always in danger of being destroyed by elements that are hostile. Living involves a constant struggle, and times of quietness and rest are victories achieved by control of the disturbing factors. When Israel moved into the Promised Land of Canaan they found former inhabitants in possession. It was necessary to subdue these in battle and to destroy them in order to have peace. When Israel failed to follow instructions and did not completely destroy the Canaanites, they left the seeds of future conflict, defeat and distress. From time to time in answer to their cries of distress, God sent judges who would bring the people back in repentance to a humble obedience to God and then lead them in victorious battle against their enemies. During the period of that judge, the land would enjoy peace and have rest from their enemies. But when the judge died, the national interests of Israel would again involve them with their pagan neighbors until – left to themselves – they would again find themselves in bondage.

But Israel not only was beset by implacable enemies from without, but by persistent natural sinfulness from within themselves. Selfishness, greed and pride caused brother to work injustice upon brother, and led to moral decay among the people. The benefits of a strong central government had been demonstrated repeatedly by the judges so that Israel desired a king who would permanently rule to restrain evil and to unite the nation against the enemies. When God directed Samuel to anoint one of the brothers to be king, God restated the promise to Abraham in terms of the covenant with David. One of His seed would be chosen to be on the throne forever. This anointed one would be victorious over all enemies, ensuring peace, and would control the hearts of the people in humble obedience to God.

### **To Go Further**

What causes war among people (James 4:1-7)?  
What causes unrest and distress in personal experience?  
How does acceptance of Christ make for peace?

### **Make a Decision**

Living in Christ Jesus is never drab or mundane, but rich and purposeful and oh, so exciting. Once a great man of God was talking to an unbeliever who was anticipating suicide. The preacher said: "Isn't it strange, here you are wanting to end your life at twenty-seven, feeling you have lived and that life now holds nothing for you? Yet, I feel in my own heart that I will not live long enough to do all the things I want to do." Christ makes the difference. Where He reigns there is peace and joy and satisfaction. Is He reigning in your heart?

## The Kingdom of God

The kingdom of God is the final and complete demonstration in the new creation of the eternal purpose of God. When God created the world as the home for man whom He had made in His own image, He had placed man in it to subdue the earth and to have dominion over it.

Man was made capable of choosing how he would exercise his dominion, and of experiencing joy and sorrow. He was given a commandment to obey which would have led him into the joy of fellowship with God. It was the sad mistake of Adam to yield to his own interests in choosing what he thought was to his own advantage, but which resulted in his sin and rejection by God.

Introductory Bible reading for this week: I Chronicles 22:9-13; 28:6,7; Psalms 22:27-31; 145:11-13; Daniel 7:13, 14

### 1st Day The King Must Keep the Law of God

I Chronicles 22:9-13; 28:6, 7

The kingdom of God depends entirely upon the performance of the King. The plan and purpose is in God's mind. He will reveal His will to His Son who will respond in willing glad obedience by doing everything to please His Father. The structure of the kingdom gives the King the opportunity to act freely in His own will and thus to lead the people along the line of His own choice.

In order that the kings of Israel could keep the law of God, it was necessary that the law be revealed. This was done primarily in the Ten Words received by Moses on the mount and was then set forth even more specifically in the judgments which Moses gave out as he prepared the new generation that they might obey God in all things.

Because the human heart is forgetful and deceitful in its sin, the king was always prone to fall away into following his own desires. The will of God demands a basic self-denial and the human heart shrinks away from obeying that call. The tendency is to pretend obedience by outward appearance while the heart follows its own wishes. In His grace God sent prophets who expounded the real meaning of the promises of God and who interpreted the true significance of the insincere response of the king and the people. Then the prophet would warn of the judgment of God which would surely come upon a stiff-necked and wayward people. The fate of the nation was involved in the actions of the king.

### To Go Further

Why would the demands of the law of God be always the same?  
How does the Holy Spirit today fulfill the function of a prophet?

### 2nd Day The King Must Walk Before God

II Chronicles 7:17, 18

The kingdom of God involves a constant relationship between man as he lives and God as He is. Living is a matter of dealing with the situation in which man is, which God in His sovereign providence has set up and sustains. Man cannot ever face any issue or possibility which God has not made. Everything man does with the issues confronting him is known and judged by God. Thus Paul could say (on

Mars' Hill in Athens) about man's relation to God: "In him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17: 28). Man has been given the charge to subdue the earth and have dominion over it. He is to take control of his situation and handle it as he will. His actions will directly have consequences in his fortune and welfare.

In his control of his situation man is to function as a king. He is free to make his choice and to act. But he will always be responsible to God who made him and who watches over him.

Throughout the history of Israel the succession of kings both good and bad demonstrated how prone to sin each king was, and how sure and faithful were the judgments of God and how wonderful was His mercy. Time and again it was shown that when any king turned to God, God was ready to receive him in mercy and help him in grace. At the same time it was made very clear that when any king disobeyed, judgment would come upon him.

### **To Go Further**

What could possibly be the benefits of allowing man freedom of choice?  
How important is it that evil actions be judged?

### **3rd Day The King Will Be Governor Among the Nations**

Psalm 22:27-31

The kingdom of God includes all the environment in which the believer is living. In His providence God brings together such natural elements as He will to make the situation as He wants it to be for the man whom He made in His own image. But the social environment has much greater goods that can be possessed and values that can be achieved. At the same time there are greater dangers and more difficult problems in this sphere of reality because all the men involved are also selfish and proud. When men are found in groups it is because they have interests in common and often face practical situations where joint action is the way of effective living and the securing of values. Group action of any kind – be it mental, physical or spiritual – requires leadership that order may be preserved and the common interests be served and desirable consequences be achieved.

In His grace, God will prepare and send a King who will be able and willing to provide the leadership needed. The King must not only know what would be right in God's sight but He must know from His own experience what it means to do right (Hebrews 5:8). This will enable Him to lead His people in the ways of righteousness and peace (Isaiah 32:1, 17, 18). In order to lead His people in the paths of righteousness the King must first subdue those nations round about who are unwilling and disobedient. The contrary forces that are incorrigible, set against doing the will of God, must be judged and destroyed. Even in their destruction the call to repent with the promise of forgiveness and reconciliation is proclaimed. Some, in hearing, will respond in confession and in commitment to obedience. The King will lead them to do the will of God perfectly.

### **To Go Further**

How is providence involved in the work of the Messiah?  
What are some of the essential aspects of the truth about the coming of the Messiah?  
How does the law function in the life of a Christian?

## **4th Day The King Will Be Born to Rule**

Isaiah 9:6, 7

The kingdom of God will show order and peace throughout all its realm. The practical reason for this will be the will of the Messiah (Christ), since the structure of the kingdom relates all activity under the control of the King. When man was created he was made in the image of God and placed in the natural world with the charge to subdue the earth and have dominion over it. Inasmuch as his own body was earthly in its composition, man's first task would be to subdue, to bring into subjection under control his own natural body, and then to direct it into the will of God. This whole task was defined for Adam when the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was put within his reach, and he was given the commandment not to eat of it. He was not to eat of the fruit because this was the will of God. The issue was simply a matter of obedience. The course of Adam's yielding to temptation and acting in sin is well-known. From that time the natural man had the inner disposition to seek his own satisfaction and to do his own will. When God sent His Son into the world to be born in the house of David where He would be eligible to rule as king according to the covenant with David, He came as the second man. Jesus of Nazareth was not a child of Adam with the inner nature inclined to self-will, but the Son of God with His eternal obedience to His Father. He could say, "I do always those things that please him." He distinctly said that He could do nothing of Himself: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." His power over natural processes was the power of God and He manifested control over the natural world. When any repentant soul yields to the promise of God in the new covenant, he becomes a child of God which involves obedience to God.

### **To Go Further**

What are some sinful aspects of popular education?

How does the life of Jesus of Nazareth seem different from that of the natural man?

## **5th Day The King Will Rule in Glorious Majesty**

Psalms 145:11-13

The kingdom of God will manifest the glory of God in the majesty of the King on His throne. The one humbling truth about all natural men is that they will die. No matter how powerful the leader may be, he cannot overcome death. No matter how impressive may be the beauty of the flower, it will die. Even so with man. All his deeds, his plans, his hopes will one day cease, as he lies silent in the grave. This end awaits all men, and this weakness marks the limit of his importance. But it will not be so with the Messiah, the Chosen, Anointed One, the Christ. His throne shall be everlasting, and of His government there shall be no end. All who commit themselves to Him in faith will share in His eternal life.

Throughout the whole history of man this fear of death was the constant enemy no one could overcome. In Old Testament times the resurrection was never demonstrated though promises were phrased in language which only the resurrection could fulfill. There were intimations of a new heaven and a new earth wherein the will of God would be perfectly performed by believers who belonged to and lived in, by and through the Messiah.

No one in the natural world had ever been found who obeyed the will of God. The judgment of God had finally been proclaimed against the incorrigible nations and their kings. Despite the forbearance of God and His meek long suffering (even Judah finally turned away from God to worship idols) judgment unto destruction was announced; but the prophets began also to proclaim a new work of grace in the new covenant which would be activated through the Messiah.

Not only could the Anointed One rule in power, but He would rule in triumph over all His foes. The last enemy to be destroyed would be "death." The almighty power of God would not "suffer His Holy One to see corruption." Death belonged in the natural. When Christ and His followers moved into the spiritual, they would be victorious over death.

### **To Go Further**

How will the reign of Christ be different from the reign of any earthly king?

How would the fear of death affect a soul?

How is a Christian delivered from the fear of death?

### **6th Day The King Will Save His People**

Jeremiah 23:3-6

The kingdom of God brings the believing soul into touch with the power of God. While the basic truth is that God will bless the obedient soul, the basic problem is that the natural man in his sinfulness will not obey the will of God. The Scriptures record that God promised Abraham that He would bless him and his seed, and through his seed all nations would be blessed. The history of Israel records the sad fact that the descendants of Abraham, the children of Israel, became incorrigible in their waywardness and unbelief so that in judgment God was moved to destroy them. But "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29). In His grace and power God proclaimed a new covenant in which He would save any soul that would repent and yield to Him.

This new covenant was made with His Chosen, Anointed One, His "Christ," who would be born into the world as a son in the house of David. He would inherit the promise in the covenant with David and sit on the throne as King of kings and Lord of all. Because He was the eternal Son of God, He would perfectly obey the will of His Father. By the grace of God He would offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice to make atonement by His blood, that all who believe in Him would be forgiven their sins. By the power of God He would be raised from the dead in the newness of life and bring with Him all who had received Him as their Saviour and Lord (John 5:21-29).

These promises of the new covenant were spoken by the prophets (I Peter 1:10-12) at the time when the destruction of the nation of Israel was being proclaimed. The general pattern of the resurrection was revealed in the restoration of Judah after the Babylonian captivity, but the actual performance of Christ's work occurred in the coming, the ministry, the death and the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. That work is going on now in the calling whosoever will out of the world by the preaching of the gospel (Luke 24:46-48). As repentant sinners respond to that call by receiving Christ Jesus as their Saviour and yielding to Him as their Lord, they enter the kingdom of God to the glory of the Father.

### **To Go Further**

How was the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) involved in the history of the Old Testament?

How does the new covenant fulfill the promises made to Abraham and to David?

## **7th Day The King Will Come with the Clouds of Heaven**

Daniel 7:13, 14

The kingdom of God will be finally manifested when the King of kings will be revealed in all His eternal power and majesty and will openly show the justice, the power and the mercy of God in the new heavens and the new earth. What had been promised to Abraham and to David and had been demonstrated in God's dealings with Israel will eventually be consummated in actual performance through the seed of Abraham, the son of David in the person of Jesus Christ, who came into this world to do His Father's will and to achieve the will of God in "bringing many sons unto glory" (Hebrews 2:10).

In bringing His will to pass, God created first the natural world into which He placed the natural man, made in his image. To Adam was given the commandment which would guide him into the blessing of God. Obedience to that word of God would require that Adam should deny his own natural interests and personal desires. By yielding to temptation and seeking satisfaction in doing what appealed to himself, Adam sinned and came under the condemnation of death.

In His grace, God promised that the seed of the woman would "bruise the head of the serpent" (Genesis 3;15). God called Abraham to leave his natural native situation that he might follow the guidance of God into a new situation which God would provide for him. In time, when the children of Israel were in bondage in Egypt, God sent Moses to lead them out of Egypt into Canaan which He had promised to give to Abraham. Again and again in their history, God showed Israel that blessing was available to those who would obey Him. When the people requested a king, God granted their request and continued to reveal His truth in dealing with Israel through their kings.

In His grace God promised David that one of his seed should reign on the throne forever, and to Him God would give an everlasting kingdom. This Chosen One who would be known as "Christ" would come in the flesh of David and would die as an atoning sacrifice for His people, but be raised from the dead to come in the clouds of heaven to establish God's will forever.

### **To Go Further**

Why did Christ need to die and be raised from the dead?

What would be mistaken by studying the history of Israel as one of the nations of the world?

How is the return of Christ the fulfillment of God's promises?

### **Make a Decision**

The Lord Jesus warned His disciples to be ready for His return. "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." His coming will be unannounced and unexpected. We would do well to keep this in mind. Each day as we do our work, we would be wise to keep in mind that He may come that day. Each week as we make plans, we should bear in mind that He may come that week. To live in this world as though we were going to be down here forever is just plain foolish. The fact that the time is unknown should not make us careless or indifferent. In fact, since we do not know the time, we should remember the Lord might at any time.

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