

Lesson Five

THE KINGDOM OF GOD – UNITED



1 Samuel 9–31; 2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1–11

AND DIVIDED



1 Kings 12–22; 2 Kings 1–16

MEMORY VERSE

“For the LORD sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

–1 Samuel 16:7

God utters these words to the prophet Samuel as he is discerning which of Jesse’s eight sons to anoint as the future king. David was the youngest and smallest in stature (he was still a teenager), while his older brothers were grown men, soldiers, and, obviously, far more distinguished and mature looking. It is in this moment that God teaches us all a timeless truth through his message to Samuel: Don’t judge a book (or a person) by its cover. God desired David to be king because David, as we are told later in Scripture, was “a man after [God’s] own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14). God looks at us from the inside out, not from the outside in like the world. Our heavenly Father’s desire is for us to have our hearts right, to follow him, and to live out his will, not allowing the world or the opinions of others to affect who we are or what we do.

OPENING PRAYER



Lord God, be with us during this lesson. Allow us to see ourselves in the characters we study. Help us to better understand how you move and think and act and to see more clearly all the ways you try to save us from our own sin and shortsightedness. Thank you for never abandoning us, even in our pride and in our weak and sinful moments. Draw near to us now, and open the eyes of our hearts to see where we need to grow in holiness to become more like you. Amen.



TIME PERIOD OVERVIEW

ROYAL KINGDOM » DIVIDED KINGDOM



Our previous lesson ended with a series of judges ruling over the Israelites, who had finally entered the Promised Land after the **Desert Wanderings**. Over the past few decades, as they tried to establish themselves as a nation, the Israelites had battled several foreign enemies. In the end, the people cried out to God for a king so that they might be like the other nations around them.

As we open this new time period of the **Royal Kingdom**, God's people will learn that they need to be careful what they ask for. God's desire for them is that he serve as their king, but they want a king like the other nations, which were ruled by **MONARCHS**. Although God warns the people, they seem to know better.

Through these narrative books (1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Kings), we are going to be introduced to three kings who will rule about forty years each before the kingdom unravels. As 1 Kings transitions into 2 Kings, we will enter a new time period, the **Divided Kingdom**, in which Israel divides into two parts—the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah—with a new series of kings for each.



You will notice as we move through these two time periods that God continues to be patient with his children. He desires for them to remain in relationship with him through the covenant. He allows them to build the Temple as a central and visible space for worship and as a sign of heaven on earth, and he sends prophets to warn them to change their ways. In all these moments, you will see how active God is in working for their salvation and how hard he tries to form their hardened hearts to be more like his own.



ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD, UNITED AND DIVIDED

VIDEO 5.1

Video Notes »



Check Your Understanding

1. The Israelites asked for _____.

- a) lower taxes b) peace with the foreign nations c) a king d) a temple

2. King Saul reigned for _____ years.

- a) 40 b) 35 c) 15 d) 20

3. King David was _____.

- a) a man after God's own heart b) a mighty warrior c) the builder of the Temple d) a and b

4. King David was the shepherd boy from the story of David and Goliath. He is also the songwriter who wrote many of the psalms in the book of Psalms.

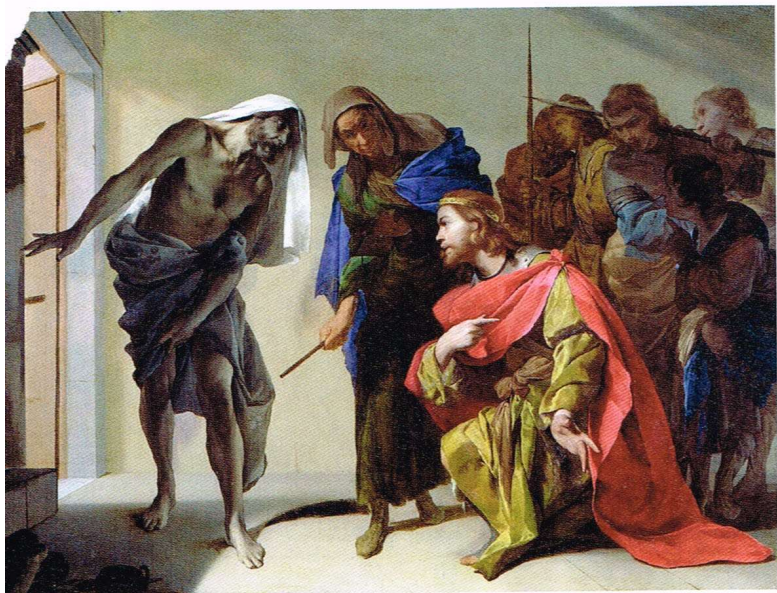
- a) True b) False

5. King Solomon was known for _____.

- a) his wisdom b) building the Temple c) having hundreds of wives d) a, b, and c

DIVE IN

In 1 Samuel, we are introduced to Samuel as a young boy. God has a special mission for him, not only as the final judge to rule over Israel but also as the first true prophet since Moses. In the opening chapters, we will see Samuel rise as a prominent voice and leader. We will also hear the people of Israel asking God for a new leader, a king of their own (see 1 Samuel 8). God warns the people that a king will ultimately tax them, enslave them, and even take their land and property, but the people seem to know better than the all-knowing God in heaven.



Shade of Samuel Invoked by Saul by Bernardo Cavallino

Soon after, God tells Samuel that he is sending a man to him who is destined to be the king for whom the people have asked. Then a man named Saul is sent to Samuel and is anointed by him as the first king of Israel. (An **ANOINTING** is a formal blessing that sets the person apart, usually for a sacred purpose.) King Saul begins his reign well, but over time he stops relying on, seeking, and trusting the Lord. Eventually, he is unfaithful to the Lord, and God decides that it is time for a new king—one “after his own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14).

It is at that point that God sends Samuel to a town called **BETHLEHEM**, to the house of Jesse. It is here that Samuel anoints one of Jesse’s sons—a teenage shepherd named David—as a sign that he is to be the

future king. Though Saul still reigns, David quickly makes a name for himself when he battles and defeats the giant Goliath, the mightiest foreign warrior, with a mere sling. The next few years prove challenging to David as King Saul’s jealousy grows almost as quickly as David’s popularity and fame. Although Saul seeks to kill David, David spares Saul’s life on more than one occasion. Eventually Saul dies, and as 2 Samuel begins, David rises as the new and uncontested king of Israel.

David is a mighty warrior and military strategist, and under his leadership the kingdom of Israel grows and expands and becomes a force to be reckoned with. However, David, though a man after God’s own heart, gives into temptation with a married woman named Bathsheba. To make matters worse, he attempts to conceal his sin by arranging for her husband to be killed. God was going to allow David to build him a glorious temple in Jerusalem as a sign of the covenant he made with his people, but as a result of David’s sin, that honor would now fall to the next king.

Although a strong leader, King David was not a great husband or father, and his forty-year reign was characterized by a lot of family drama, including multiple wives, backstabbing, and even attempts by his children to have him killed. As 2 Samuel ends and 1 Kings begins, David dies at an old age, and his son Solomon

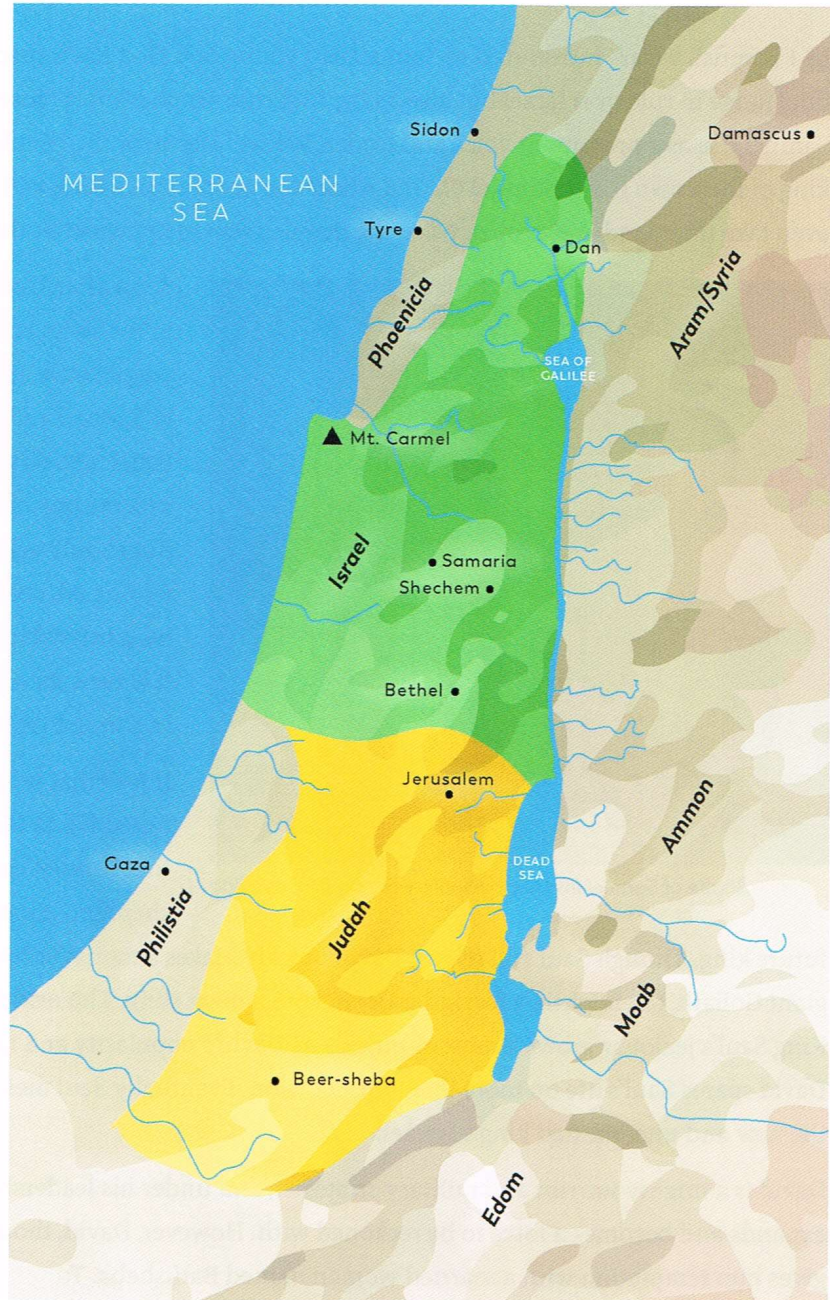


ascends the throne and is tasked with building the Temple. Called the wisest man in the world (see 1 Kings 4:30), King Solomon is a shrewd leader, but unfortunately he has a big weakness—he has hundreds of wives, many of whom are foreign and worship false gods. Solomon allows them to redirect him away from the one true God of Israel. He even builds places of worship for their false gods as his heart turns from the Lord. To make matters worse, the magnificent Temple that he is building in Jerusalem is very expensive, so he begins to tax and enslave the people and take their land to finance his efforts, thus fulfilling what God had warned the people about when they asked for a king.

After a forty-year reign, King Solomon dies (see 1 Kings 11), and his son Rehoboam becomes king. The once mighty kingdom begins to crumble, and some of the tribes rebel. As we enter a new time period, called the **Divided Kingdom**, the kingdom splits in two. The ten northern tribes form their own independent kingdom in the north and take the name Israel. Their king is Jeroboam. The two remaining tribes form a southern kingdom with their headquarters in Jerusalem and retain Rehoboam as their king.

During this time of the **Divided Kingdom**, which we read about through the end of 1 Kings and throughout 2 Kings, each kingdom—northern and southern—will have a series of kings, most of them bad. During this time God will also send, at different times, many **PROPHETS**, major and minor, to tell the kings and people to change their ways. In time, the Northern Kingdom of Israel, after a series of bad kings, will be invaded and destroyed by the Assyrians. The Southern Kingdom of Judah will last longer because of a few good kings, most notably King Josiah, but it will suffer a similar fate when it is conquered by Babylon and the people are sent into exile.

The Divided Kingdom



DAVID AND GOLIATH

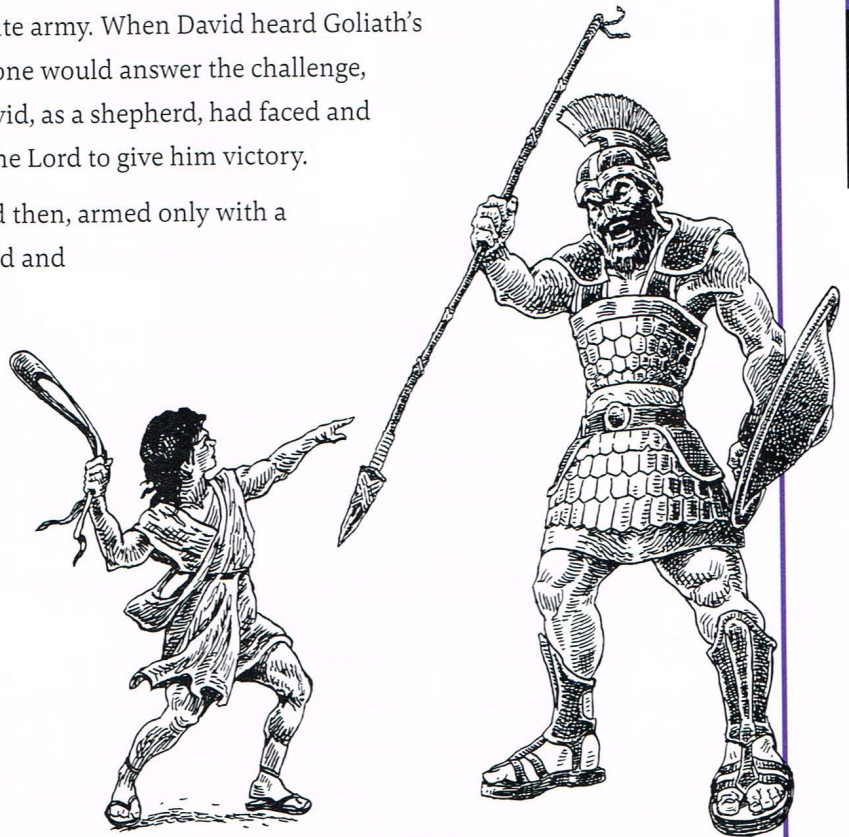
The story of David and Goliath is undoubtedly one of the most well-known stories of the Bible. In fact, it is so well known that the term “David and Goliath” has been incorporated into secular language to denote a situation where an underdog takes on a much stronger and established opponent.

The story of David begins in 1 Samuel 16. Because of Saul’s unfaithfulness, God had decided that his kingship would not pass to his sons. God directed Samuel to go to Bethlehem, to the house of Jesse, and told him to anoint one of Jesse’s sons as the next king. Jesse brought out all of his sons, but God told Samuel that none of these was the one he had chosen. Jesse then called for his youngest son, David, who had been in the fields watching the sheep. He was the one whom God had chosen, and Samuel anointed him. However, David was a youth, and it would be many years before he would take the throne.

In the next chapter of 1 Samuel, we see King Saul and the Israelite army in a stalemate against the Philistines. Both were encamped on opposing mountains with a valley between them. Each day, Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, would come down and challenge the Israelites to a single combat that would decide the outcome of the battle. Scripture describes Goliath as standing six and a half cubits, or nine feet and nine inches tall. (Note: Some ancient manuscripts list his height as four and a half cubits, which would be six feet and nine inches tall.) Because of his great size and experience as a warrior, Saul and the Israelites were afraid of Goliath, and none would accept the challenge.

It is at this moment that David enters the scene. He had been sent by his father, Jesse, to bring food to his brothers who were in the Israelite army. When David heard Goliath’s challenge, he was indignant and, seeing that no one would answer the challenge, resolved that he himself would fight Goliath. David, as a shepherd, had faced and defeated many wild beasts, and he relied upon the Lord to give him victory.

Stopping by a brook, he gathered five stones, and then, armed only with a sling, he stood before Goliath, who mocked David and the Israelites. Taking a single stone and placing it in the sling, David struck Goliath in the forehead causing him to fall. David then took Goliath’s sword and cut off his head. Seeing that their champion had been vanquished, the Philistine army turned and ran. From this moment, David’s story becomes the story of Israel, and after the death of Saul, he becomes not only king but the greatest king of Israel, and from his royal lineage the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, would one day descend.



TOUGH QUESTIONS

VIDEO 5.2

- Why would God select Saul as king if he was such a bad person?

- Are we really supposed to believe that Goliath was nine feet tall and that David really defeated him?

- How was Solomon allowed to have so many wives and concubines?

- If God loves his people, why does he allow them to be conquered and to suffer?

- Are we really supposed to believe that Elijah got carried off to heaven in a chariot, or is that just symbolic?

WISDOM LITERATURE

Wisdom literature is the name given to eight Old Testament books: Proverbs, Psalms, Job, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom, Sirach, and Baruch. Much of the wisdom literature in the Bible is attributed to King Solomon, who was renowned for his great wisdom. A common literary genre in many cultures at the time that the Old Testament was written, wisdom literature consists of verses describing moral conduct or simply practical advice for living a good life. It underscores the belief that the fear of the Lord is the root of all wisdom, and it praises God for his great gifts.

THE PSALMS

The Old Testament book of Psalms contains 150 songs that praise God for his majesty, wisdom, love, and mercy and call upon his help in times of distress. The psalms, which were set to music, were sung in the Temple worship and, later, in the synagogue. The early Christians incorporated the psalms into their own worship, especially in the Liturgy of the Word, and the psalms have always been used extensively in the Liturgy of the Hours, the official prayer of the Church. Many of the psalms, which express the deepest longing of the human heart, are attributed to **King David**, who is considered the psalmist of Israel.

*King David by
Adamo Tadolini*



TO THE HEART

Do you let other people define your character? Do you base your decisions on what God wants or on what others think?

How do you make decisions in your life? What dictates your morality? When you are faced with a tempting or challenging situation and you have a tough decision to make, do you do what you want, or do you seek to do what God wants?

That difference makes all the difference.

Integrity is who you really are when no one else is looking. Oftentimes, what others say or think about us tends to influence our decision making. It can be something as simple as a negative comment in your feed, a sarcastic or passive-aggressive moment in a conversation, or a simple roll of the eyes, and all of a sudden, how we behave or how we look at a situation changes.

Just as King Saul stopped following the Lord, or King Solomon let his foreign wives influence his own walk with God, we can all falter if we are not rooted in our Faith.

Ask yourself these questions:

So how much do the opinions of others affect you? On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being unaffected and 10 being completely affected), where would you rate yourself, today, in terms of your “affectedness”? Does it matter to you what others say or think of you? Do you second-guess yourself when others disagree with you? Does it matter more to you to be liked and accepted by your peers or to be the person God is calling and designed you to be?

Try to come up with specific examples in your life when you prayerfully followed God, even if it meant you would be mocked or less popular or not supported. Then, remember some times when you failed to follow God or do what was right, in part because you wanted to be more accepted or go along with the crowd.

What did you learn in each circumstance?

“
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Your Thoughts

Reflect on the questions on the previous page,
and write your thoughts in the journaling space below.

Journaling space consisting of 25 horizontal dotted lines.

BIBLICAL CHARACTER PROFILE

Josiah

No one comes from a perfect family. Every family has its issues and problems because we are all imperfect—we are all sinners. Some families, however, are a little more “imperfect” than others.

King Josiah’s family tree gives an all new meaning to the term “dysfunctional family.” His grandfather, King Manasseh, did not just believe in false gods, he celebrated them. He built altars to false gods and even worshipped them inside the Lord’s Temple. Manasseh sacrificed one of his own sons in a fire, practiced witchcraft and other forms of evil arts, murdered innocent people, and led an entire kingdom of followers away from the one true God (see 2 Kings 21:9).

How is that for a messed up family tree? Wait, it gets worse.

Following King Manasseh, Josiah’s father, King Amon, continued in the same horrible footsteps. King Amon worshipped false gods, just like his father. He, too, abandoned the Lord and was so evil that eventually his own

followers killed him in his own house. It was at that time that young Josiah was named king, carrying with him all kinds of family baggage. Something really interesting happened, though, when Josiah was only a teenager. Read it for yourself in 2 Chronicles 34:1-7.

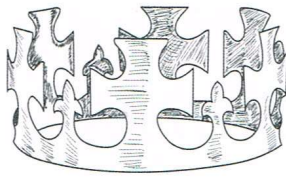
Josiah became king at eight years old. Now, did you notice in 2 Chronicles 34:3 how old he was when he began to “seek God”? He was sixteen years old. Josiah’s family tree was anything but glorious. Yet, rather than letting his father’s or his grandfather’s sins dictate the path of his life, Josiah went further back into his family tree until he found someone he could look up to. He found King David. While David was not perfect, he was a man “after [the LORD’s] own heart” (Acts 13:22). Josiah needed a hero and a role model, and he found one in David.

As a teenager, King Josiah tore down the altars to false gods, smashed statues of idols, and restored the Temple for proper worship. He prayed the Scriptures, reinstated and lived out God’s Law, honored the sacred feast days, and renewed the covenant. He was a humble, prayerful man. Josiah was holy and bold and turned his whole heart to God.

The young king understood three things that many of us forget:

- The pursuit of true holiness is contagious.
- Humility is a strong weapon in the hands of God.
- You cannot let your past, or your family’s past, ruin your present or dictate your future.





Do you let your age or, possibly, your lack of knowledge keep you from speaking out for God or living for him more boldly?

Have you ever allowed past failings to make you doubt your present ability or future holiness?

Regardless of how old you are or how blessed or messed up your family tree might seem, God desires a great life for you (see John 10:10). You might come from a family or a past with a lot of darkness, sin, or pain. If so, it is even more important that you do what Josiah did—look around for holy lives you can pattern your own after. It does not matter how young you are—you can live a holy, saintly life today and every day that you walk with the Lord.

Remember that you are never too young to lead others to God through your words and, more powerfully, through your actions. Your life is the greatest invitation others will ever receive to follow the Lord.

Exercise 1: Read **2 Kings 23:1-6**. Notice King Josiah's response when he hears the Word of the Lord. Does he wait or act? What does he do, and how does this young adult respond?

Exercise 2: Read **2 Kings 23:21-25**. Notice how King Josiah is spoken about and celebrated and remembered in verse twenty-five. There was never a king like him, not before or after him. What set Josiah apart from all the other leaders? How do you want to be remembered when you die?

Video Notes >>



Check Your Understanding

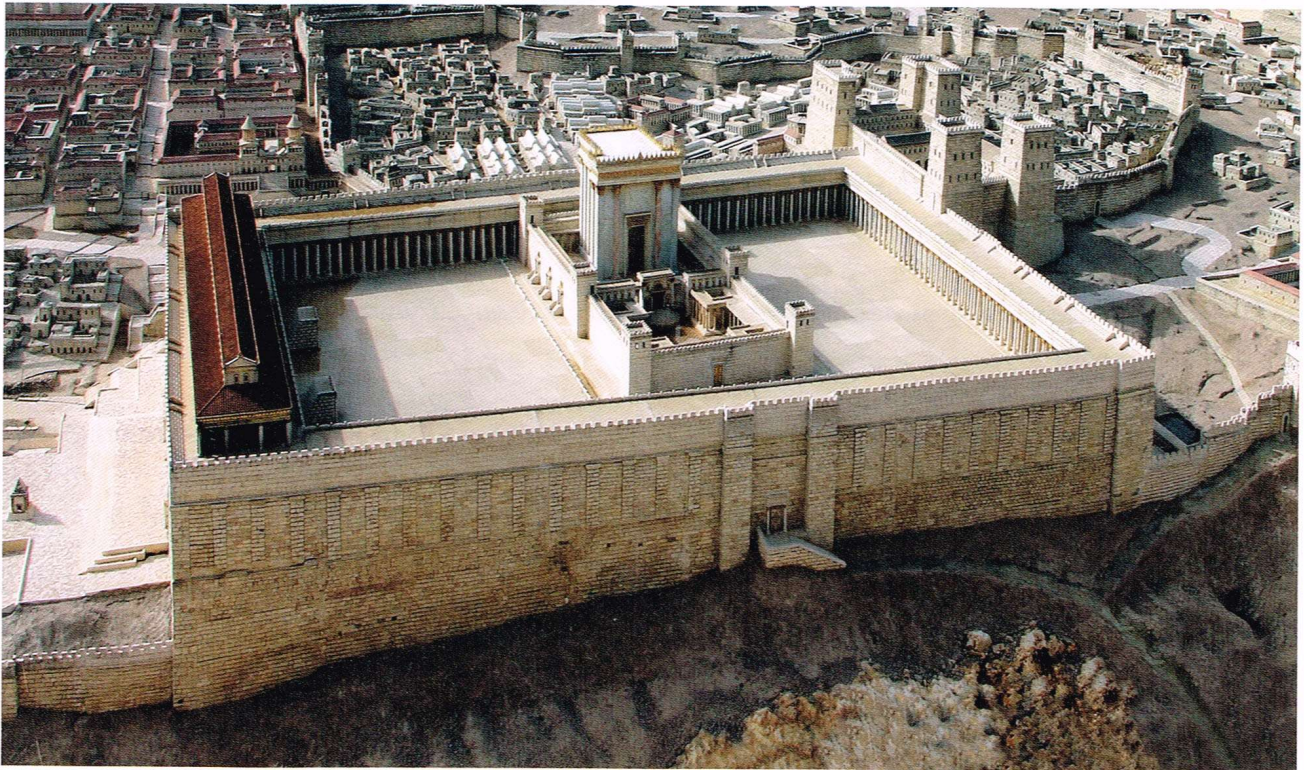
1. Josiah became king when he was _____ years old.
a) five b) eight c) sixteen d) twenty
2. Josiah sought to purify the kingdom and bring the people back to _____.
a) power and prosperity b) proper worship c) God d) b and c
3. In our own lives, we shouldn't underestimate the power of _____.
a) a holy example b) wisdom c) popularity d) royalty

TALK IT OUT

1. David was a man after God's own heart. What does it mean to be "after God's own heart"?
2. What are some examples in your own experience, or in the lives of the saints, that demonstrate the truth that true holiness is contagious?
3. What are some practical steps we can take so that our past or present circumstance don't prevent us from doing God's will?
4. What are some ways in which God might be calling you to be a witness for him in your present circumstances?
5. What are some of the qualities needed to be a good leader? Do you see yourself possessing any of those qualities? Which ones?

Notes »





Model of Solomon's Temple

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

In the book of Exodus, we read how God instructed the Israelites to build the Tabernacle, a portable tent that served as the center of worship for the Israelites. Centuries later, after conquering Jerusalem and making it the capital city of Israel, David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. He wanted to build a permanent temple in Jerusalem on top of Mount Moriah, but because of his sin the task would fall to his son Solomon.

The Temple served as the center of Jewish worship in Israel. As seen in the New Testament, it was a place of ritual sacrifice (see Luke 2:22-24) and pilgrimage, and many of the inhabitants of Israel would travel to Jerusalem for the great feasts, such as Passover and Pentecost (see Luke 2:41; Acts 2:1-5). The New Testament also relates how the outer courts of the Temple became a place for money changing and selling animals for sacrifice. For this reason, Christ overturned the tables and drove the money changers from the Temple, saying, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you make it a den of robbers" (Matthew 21:13).

Unfortunately, Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians about four hundred years later. After returning from exile, the Jews would rebuild the Temple, and shortly before the birth of Christ, the Temple was rebuilt again under King Herod. It was this Temple that was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. Although the Temple has never been rebuilt again, the western wall of the Temple Mount, called the Wailing Wall, is still a place of prayer and pilgrimage.

WORDPLAY

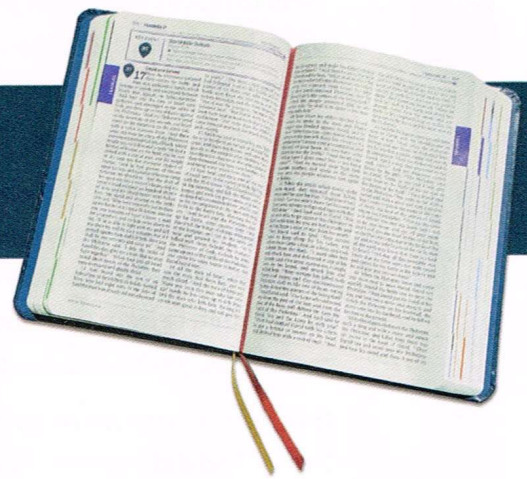
anointing – From the Latin *inungere* (*in-* meaning “upon” and *ungere* meaning “to anoint or smear with oil”), anointing is a ceremonial and sacred gesture in which one is blessed with holy oil as an outward sign of being set apart.

Bethlehem – From the Hebrew term meaning “house of bread,” it was the birthplace of both King David and Jesus Christ (“the Bread of Life”).

monarchy – From the Greek *monarkhia*, meaning “the rule of one,” it is a system of government with a single person (normally a king, queen, or emperor) as the head of state.

prophet – From the Hebrew word meaning “mouthpiece,” prophets were called as instruments of God to proclaim truths concerning both the present and the future.

GOING DEEPER



Read 1 Samuel 3:1-10, 19

What does Eli’s instruction and Samuel’s response to God teach us about prayer?

Read 1 Samuel 17:22-54

Pay attention to why David is so confident, specifically in verse forty-five. Though heavily outmatched, the teenager is confident why?

Read 1 Kings 3:5-15

What does Solomon’s request and God’s response teach us about the heart of God? In verse fourteen, what is the one condition that God gives to Solomon for his blessing?

Read 1 Kings 18:22-39

Why would Elijah cover everything with water, and what did he demonstrate atop the mountain?



CONCLUSION

You were introduced to several well-known Biblical characters in this section, like King David and King Solomon, as well as some lesser-known characters, like the prophet Samuel, Bathsheba, King Josiah, and others. Did you notice the one constant through all of the men and women we learned about? They were all imperfect and came from imperfect families. In short, they were all sinners—even the holy ones!

But God did not abandon them (or you) in their sin. Instead, he formed a covenant with them, taught them to worship properly, sent them prophets, and called them to repent. God never gave up on his people, even when they rejected him or his perfect plan.



Page after page and chapter after chapter, we see a God who is working harder than we are to save us.



When King Saul turned his heart away, God warned him. When King David sinned, God called him to repent. When King Solomon asked for wisdom over wealth or power, God heard and fulfilled his prayer. Page after page and chapter after chapter, we see a God who is working harder than we are to save us. We also see a God, however, who wants his children to learn from their mistakes. Like a good parent, he punishes his children sometimes, not because he does not love them but specifically because *he does*.

God did not want the kingdom to fall into ruin, but he allowed it to teach the Israelites a lesson. God did not want them to be sent away into exile, but he allowed it. God did not interfere with their free will. He proactively sent warnings, but ultimately the children of Israel made their choices and would have to suffer the consequences.

God does the same for you. He sends parents and grandparents and priests and teachers and youth ministers and coaches and all kinds of other leaders, mentors, and “voices” into our lives to speak truth, to call us out, and to guide us back to him. In the end, however, it is your choice whether you want to actually listen and change so that you can become the holiest version of yourself that he desires you to be.

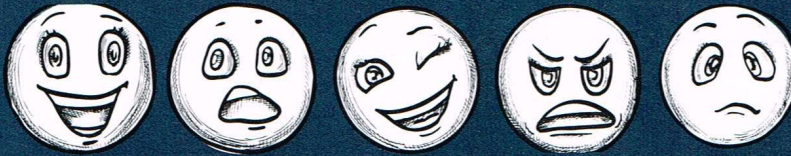
Some say that the Old Testament is just old and outdated and that it has little for a modern, twenty-first-century mind to learn from. Nothing could be further from the truth. We can learn a lot from these characters who lived over three thousand years ago, if we are humble enough to listen to what God is trying to teach us.

LIVING IT OUT

Examine the “voices” in your life this week. Who are the voices you listen to the most? Whose opinions and words have the greatest effect on you, positive or negative?

First, acknowledge those positive voices in your life. Write their names out. Who are they? Your parents? Possibly a grandparent? How about a youth minister or teacher? Who are the mentors in your life? Who are the people who God himself sent into your life to be that voice of inspiration and validation? Now, take time to pray for each of them by name and thank God for them. Next, sit down and actually write them a note of thanks for affirmation. It does not have to be long but it is important to offer thanks and to share gratitude and affirmation. You would not be the person you are without those people. Write the notes and be sure to give them to each person.

Second, pay attention to those negative voices in your life, your circle, and your feed. Who are the people who bring you down, either through bad advice, bad example, manipulation, mind games, betrayal, gossip, and so on. Identify them. Pray for them. If you need to approach some of these people or things, redefine your relationship with them, or even cut them out of your life in your pursuit of holiness, are you willing to do it? Take each individual situation to prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you who these “voices” are and how to handle each situation and to give you the courage to do so.



CLOSING PRAYER



Father in heaven, you have given us so many blessings. May we never take them for granted. Please open our eyes to see how hard you are working to lead us back to you. Make us more mindful and grateful for every soul you have placed in our lives to speak truth to us. Help us to become a positive voice and strong example to others. Pour out your Spirit upon us and anoint us to fulfill our purpose in this world and lead others closer to you and to your Son, Jesus. Amen.