

Old Testament History II

International Alpha Bible Course
by Ralph Vincent Reynolds



OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

PART II

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INTERNATIONAL ALPHA BIBLE COURSE

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Writer

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Sponsor's Page:

Reverend Russell T. Farmer

Dedicated to:

Reverend Ernest E. Jolley Jr.



Ernie Jolley felt a call to ministry as a teenager in Jonesboro, Arkansas. After attending Pentecostal Bible Institute at Tupelo, Mississippi, he preached throughout North America for ten years as an evangelist with the United Pentecostal Church, International. He was ordained in 1951. He married I. Carol Kellick in 1957. Together they evangelized, then pastored churches in Tennessee, Illinois, and Alabama. His last pastorate was First United Pentecostal Church in Bessemer, Alabama, from 1969 until his retirement in 1992.

Throughout his years of active ministry he held many official positions in the districts where he ministered as a presbyter, in youth and home missionary

departments, and most notably with the Sunday School Curriculum Committee of the United Pentecostal Church, International from 1973 to his passing from this life in 1999.

Brother Jolley was an avid reader and amassed an extensive collection of books in his sizable library. He delighted in sharing his knowledge of books on theology and other Christian themes. He was especially influential in the reprinting of old, out of print books written by classic late eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth-century theologians.

Reverend Jolley was honored in 1995 with a Doctor of Divinity Degree from Florida Bible College and Theological Seminary. He celebrated fifty years of ministry in 1998.

Brother Jolley was my pastor when I received the baptism of the Holy Ghost on January 17, 1970. His leadership and the confidence he placed in me allowed me to begin a teaching ministry on Sunday mornings. His love for books became a fountain of blessing for apostolics the world over. His smile and vibrant sense of humor was only surpassed by his love for people.

— Russell T. Farmer, Pastor
Gateway Pentecostal Fellowship
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Old Testament History II

Lesson One



KING SOLOMON

TEXT: I Kings 2-11; II Chronicles 1-9

A. SOLOMON CROWNED KING

Adonijah was David's fourth son, and he believed that, as the eldest living son, he was the rightful heir to the throne. When he was convinced that King David had other plans, he attempted to take the throne while his father was still living. He was able to get Joab and Abiathar, the high priest, to support him. He assembled his followers at the spring En-rogel that he might be anointed king.

Nathan reported this insurrection to David who immediately gave directions that Solomon should be anointed king. This took place at the spring of Gihon which was about 2,000 feet north of En-rogel. When the people shouted, Adonijah's followers quickly dispersed in fright. Adonijah then submitted to Solomon, and civil war was avoided.

It was not long before Solomon found reason to have Adonijah killed. Adonijah had Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, request for him Abishag, the beautiful Shunammite girl who had ministered to David. (See I Kings 1:1-4.) Solomon interpreted this as a threat, for a man's concubines were to be a part of the inheritance. Not only was Adonijah killed, but also Joab. Abiathar was deposed from his office as high priest. Eventually, Shimei who had cursed David was also killed. The kingdom then became firmly established under Solomon's leadership.

B. KING SOLOMON

Solomon was David's second child by Bathsheba. He was young when he became king, possibly about twenty years of age. He reigned for forty years.

There was a contrast between David and Solomon. David had been raised in the open country and had known the life of a fugitive. Solomon knew only the ease and luxury of the palace. Solomon's court became lavish with splendor. No other king could rival King Solomon in wealth and wisdom. His reign was of unparalleled magnificence.

Solomon was a king of peace and was content to stay at home. His court became luxurious, and he had a large family. He maintained a large harem, totaling seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines.

C. SOLOMON'S WISDOM

Early in his reign Solomon had a vision at Gibeon in which the Lord appeared to him and told him to ask what he would have. He confessed his weakness and ignorance and said, "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart" (I Kings 3:9). The Lord was pleased that he did not ask for riches or long life. The Lord promised that he would be the wisest of men and also that he would possess great riches and honor. He became known as the wisest man in the East, and his fame traveled far.

One of the examples of his wisdom is shown in how he settled the quarrel between two mothers. These mothers brought two babies before him, one dead and the other alive. They were quarreling over who was the mother of the live baby. Solomon soon settled the argument. He ordered a sword to be brought and the living baby to be divided. The true mother pleaded for the life of the baby and offered to have it given to the other woman. This was just one example of the wisdom that astonished the people.

Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs and composed 1,005 songs. He was learned in literature, botany, and zoology. Three books of the Bible were written by Solomon: Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes.

He also was a man of folly, which showed up in such contrast to his wisdom. His folly was revealed in five main areas:

1. Luxurious living
2. Marrying heathen women
3. Sanctioning idolatry
4. Excessive sensuality
5. Oppressing the people

D. SOLOMON'S KINGDOM

The time of David and Solomon was the Golden Age in the history of the Hebrews. Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon were weak, and Israel was the most powerful nation on earth. Jerusalem was the most magnificent city.

Saul and David were warriors, but Solomon was a mighty ruler. He was more interested in maintaining the boundaries of his country rather than expanding them. He fortified the key cities that protected the country such as Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer, Beth-horon, and Baalath. One of the means of defense was his use of the chariot. He had 1,400 chariots, 12,000 horsemen, and 4,000 horses. (See II Chronicles 9:25; I Kings 10:28).

Solomon maintained a program of labor conscription. He used a large number of Canaanites, but he also conscripted the Israelites themselves.

Solomon had far-flung trade relationships and made alliances with Egypt and Tyre. To seal these treaties, he married the king's daughter in each case. He constructed a fleet of ships that sailed from Ezion-geber to Ophir, which was probably the present country of India. These ships brought back gold, silver, hardwood, precious stones, and ivory. The trip took three years. (See I Kings 10:22.) He also carried on a trade in horses and chariots.

His alliance with Tyre (Phoenicia) was very important. Phoenicia had colonies around the Mediterranean and carried on extensive trade. Solomon received much help from Hiram, the king of Tyre, in building the Temple.

E. QUEEN OF SHEBA

Scripture References: I Kings 10:1-13; II Chronicles 9:1-12

One of the important foreign visitors who came to see Solomon was the Queen of Sheba. Sheba was probably the present country of Yemen. Solomon's ships had likely been stopping there to trade in spice and incense. Having heard about Solomon's great wealth and wisdom, the queen wanted to meet Solomon for herself.

She traveled some 1,200 miles, taking with her a large gift of 120 talents of gold. Solomon graciously entertained her and answered all her questions. When she saw the splendor of Solomon's palace and court, there was no more spirit in her. She said, "It was a true report that I heard . . . and, behold, the half was not told me" (I Kings 10:6-7). Solomon gave her all her desire, and she returned home satisfied.

F. SOLOMON'S BACKSLIDING

Scripture Reference: I Kings 11:1-13

Solomon loved wisdom, wealth, and women. It was his many foreign wives that brought about his loss of favor with God. Solomon was a capable and successful king, but he did not remain true to his commitments with God. In order to seal alliances with other nations, he married heathen wives who brought their idolatry with them. These women caused him to turn his heart to other gods. The sad tragedy of this is very great when we remember how God appeared to him on two occasions and blessed him so wonderfully.

He built high places for Ashtoreth and other heathen deities. Some of these high places remained in Israel for many years. His apostasy brought judgment upon Israel. The division of the kingdom and the captivity of the ten tribes and of Judah were the result.

G. THE VANITY OF THE WORLD

Solomon ruled for forty years (970-931 BC). It was a rule of prosperity and peace. It was a period of extensive building, trading, and international relations. Solomon, however, did not remain faithful to God's will; consequently, the real potential for Israel was not realized.

Solomon loved the world more and more and God less and less. He had everything that the world could offer. He had his palaces, gardens, gold and honor. Did this bring happiness to Solomon? In spite of all his wealth and fame, he was very unhappy. He wrote, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecclesiastes 1:14).

Whether Solomon repented at the close of his life, we do not know. Nevertheless, there is one bright thing we should remember. One of the last things he wrote was, "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).



Old Testament History II

Lesson Two



THE TEMPLE

TEXT: II Chronicles 1-9

A. SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

The Temple that Solomon built was the most costly and magnificent building upon earth at that time. It was built on the site of Araunah's threshing floor (see II Samuel 24:16-25), which was Mt. Moriah where Abraham had been commanded to sacrifice Isaac. (See Genesis 22:2.)

It was built similar to the plan of the Tabernacle but twice the size. Figuring the cubit to be a foot and one-half, the Temple was ninety feet long, thirty feet wide, and forty-five feet high. (See I Kings 6:2.) The Temple faced east, in front of which was a porch fifteen feet deep across the entire width. The west thirty feet was the Most Holy Place or Oracle. The east sixty feet was the Holy Place or House. A veil of blue, purple, crimson, and fine linen separated the Most Holy Place and the Holy Place. (See II Chronicles 3:14.)

The Temple was built of stone and paneled with cedar, overlaid with gold.

The ark was placed in the Holy of Holies along with the Mercy Seat overshadowed by cherubim. In here shone the mysterious light, the Shekinah, the symbol of the presence of God. Only the high priest could enter here, and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement. In the Holy Place were the altar of incense, ten golden lampstands standing five on each side, and the table of shewbread. (See I Kings 7:48-49).

Along the sides and rear of the Temple were three stories of side chambers for the priests.

In front of the Temple was the brazen altar of burnt offering, thirty feet square and fifteen feet high. This spot is now called the "Rock of the Dome" and is directly under the center of the present Muslim mosque.

To the south was the brazen laver, fifteen feet in diameter, eight feet deep and set on twelve brazen oxen. There were also ten smaller portable lavers.

There were two courts, an inner court and a great court. The inner court was for the priests and the great court was intended for the people. (See II Chronicles 4:9.)

B. THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Scripture References: I Kings 5-7; II Chronicles 2-4

David wanted to build the Temple but was forbidden because he was a man of war. However, God had revealed to him plans for the structure which he passed on to Solomon. Before he died, he gathered much material for it.

The actual building began during Solomon's fourth year and was completed seven years later. Solomon entered into a contract with Hiram, king of Tyre, to supply the cedar and to help prepare the stone needed. It required thirty thousand Israelites to cut the timber in the Lebanon forests. It took eighty thousand slaves to quarry and shape the stones. The logs were floated down the coast in rafts, picked up at Joppa. The stones were transported on the backs of seventy thousand slaves. The Phoenicians supervised the work, annually taking for their pay two hundred thousand bushels of wheat and one hundred eighty thousand gallons of olive oil.

C. THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

When the Temple was finished, Solomon called all Israel to come to the great feast when the Temple would be dedicated.

First of all, Solomon had the Ark of the Covenant brought from the tent where David had placed it. Since it was the ark constructed at Mt. Sinai, it represented God's presence. When it was placed in the Holy of Holies, the cloud of God's glory filled the building. (See I Kings 8:1-11; II Chronicles 5:1-14.)

Then Solomon preached a short sermon and followed with a longer prayer of dedication. When he finished, miraculous fire fell from Heaven to ignite the offering placed on the brazen altar.

One should note the song of thanksgiving with which the priests and musicians praised the Lord: "For he is good, for his mercy endureth forever." When the glory of the Lord filled the house, the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud.

One should also note and carefully study Solomon's prayer. He had made a platform four and one-half feet high. On this platform, he knelt and spread forth his hands. He prayed for forgiveness and that the Lord would always hear the prayers of His people.

D. GOD'S PROMISE AND WARNING

Scripture Reference: II Chronicles 7:14-22

Lesson Two

The Lord appeared to Solomon by night and told him that his prayer had been heard. The Lord said that He had chosen and sanctified the Temple that His name might be there forever.

In II Chronicles 7:14, we read the promise the Lord made to Solomon. This is a promise of forgiveness and restoration. There were, however, conditions attached that must be met by His people who are called by His name. The conditions were:

1. They must humble themselves.
2. They must pray.
3. They must seek the Lord's face.
4. They must turn from their wicked ways.

The Lord promised Solomon that if he would walk before Him as David walked, He would establish the kingdom.

Along with the promise, the Lord gave a serious warning. If Solomon forsook the Lord and worshiped other gods, He would pluck Israel up by the roots and He would cast the Temple out of His sight. Tragically, Solomon forgot the warning and the judgment came to pass as the Lord said.

E. OTHER BUILDINGS BUILT BY SOLOMON

Scripture Reference: I Kings 7:1-12

Solomon erected many other buildings. His own palace took thirteen years to build. He also built a "Hall of Judgment." In this building Solomon sat for judgment on a six-step throne of ivory overlaid with gold. He also built a special house for one of his wives, the daughter of Pharaoh. Throughout all his building projects, Hiram continued to help with material, workmen, and gold.



Old Testament History II

Lesson Three



THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

TEXT: I Kings 12:1-24; II Chronicles 10

A. KING REHOBOAM

Solomon was succeeded by his son Rehoboam. Rehoboam's mother was the Ammonite princess Naamah. (See I Kings 14:21.)

Rehoboam was illiterate and domineering. The historian Josephus called him a proud and foolish man. Like his father, he had luxurious habits. He had eighteen wives, sixty concubines, twenty-eight sons, and sixty daughters. He was forty-one years of age when he became king and reigned for seventeen years.

B. KING JEROBOAM

Jeroboam was the first king of the northern kingdom. His father was Nebat, an Ephraimite.

He was a capable man. He had been employed by Solomon and was in charge of the workmen building the Millo.

He was met by Ahijah, the prophet, who tore his new garment into twelve parts and gave Jeroboam ten. He explained that these ten parts represented the ten tribes over which he would rule. Solomon heard of this and sought to kill Jeroboam who fled to Egypt where Pharaoh gave him protection.

After Solomon's death, Jeroboam married an Egyptian princess and returned to Israel to become king over the northern ten tribes.

C. REVOLT UNDER REHOBOAM

Scripture Reference: II Chronicles 10

Very soon after Solomon's death, a revolution divided the nation.

Rehoboam must have been aware of the dissatisfaction of the northern tribes. Normally they would all have assembled at Jerusalem for the inaugural ceremonies. Because of the unrest, Shechem was selected because it was centrally located.

Jeroboam also attended the meeting, having returned from Egypt. The tribes, with Jeroboam as leader, requested relief from the heavy load of taxation they had

endured under Solomon. Rehoboam requested three days to consider their request. He consulted the older men who had experienced the heavy load under Solomon. These men advised Rehoboam to be kind and ease the burden. They assured him that he would win the true loyalty of everyone.

Rehoboam then turned to the young men who apparently desired a continuation of the lavish court. They advised him to say, “My little finger shall be thicker than my father’s loins.” The young men’s advice was taken, and Rehoboam told Israel when they assembled on the third day, “My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions” (II Chronicles 10:11).

The cry went forth, “Every man to your tents, O Israel.” When Rehoboam saw what had happened, he sent his chief tax collector, Adoram, to them. This man was stoned to death, and Rehoboam retreated to Jerusalem. He assembled an army of 180,000 men, but God forbade him to fight. He then began to fortify a number of cities and reigned over the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

D. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO KINGDOMS

The tribes of Judah and Ephraim had been jealous of each other since the days of Egypt. Judah was the largest and had been favored with being in the lead position. Ephraim had descended from Joseph, and Joshua had been of this tribe. The rivalry of these two tribes showed up at various times. It was revealed at the crowning of David and at Absalom’s rebellion.

The division was only an outbreak of an old condition. If Rehoboam had been wise, he would have taken care not to make matters any worse.

The northern kingdom with its ten tribes was more powerful than the southern kingdom; however, the latter was stronger spiritually.

E. THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

The kingdom of Israel continued for about 250 years. It was overthrown by the Assyrians under Shalmaneser in 721 BC.

The capital of the northern kingdom was first at Shechem and then at Samaria.

Nineteen kings reigned, representing nine ruling families. Eight kings were either assassinated or committed suicide. All of these kings, from Jeroboam to Joshea, were idolaters.

The prophets to Israel were Jonah, Amos, Hosea, and Micah.

In recent years, the northern kingdom has been spoken of as “The Ten Lost Tribes.” James knew their identity, for he addressed his epistle to them. (See James 1:1).

F. TWO GOLDEN CALVES

Jeroboam was a religious apostate. He feared that if the people returned to Jerusalem to worship, they would favor a reunion of the two kingdoms. To guard against this, he established new worship centers at Dan and Bethel. He erected gold images of calves at each place. He built temples to house the images and founded a non-Levitical priesthood. He substituted the Feast of Tabernacles with an annual pagan festival.

Frequently, his apostasy is linked with his name. “Jeroboam, who did sin, and made Israel to sin.” Jeroboam opened the door for Baal worship. The nation was never completely delivered from the idolatry introduced by Jeroboam.

On one occasion, he was rebuked by an anonymous prophet, but Jeroboam was only angry and did not repent.

G. THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

The kingdom of Judah continued for almost four hundred years under twenty kings from Rehoboam to Zedekiah. Many of these kings were pious. During this time, there were three revivals during the reigns of Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

The prophets that were sent to the kingdom of Judah were Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Zephaniah, Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk.



Self Help Test: Old Testament History II

The Divided Kingdom

1. Contrast the lives of Rehoboam and Jeroboam.
2. Why did the ten tribes revolt against Rehoboam?
3. Which tribes remained loyal to Rehoboam?
4. Contrast the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel.
5. Why did Jeroboam establish the golden calves at Bethel and Dan?

Old Testament History II

Lesson Four



ELIJAH

TEXT: I Kings 17, 18, 19

A. THE PROPHET ELIJAH

Elijah was one of the most remarkable characters of the Old Testament. His entire story is one of great fascination. Little is given of his background except what is stated in I Kings 17:1: “Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead.”

Gilead was the country east of the Jordan River, a high plateau of two thousand feet elevation. It was here in the wild hills and ravines of Gilead that Elijah became acquainted with the true God of Israel. It was here that the fierce zeal of his prophetic ministry was nurtured.

It is claimed that his clothing consisted of a girdle of skin around his loins. He also wore a mantle or cape of sheepskin and his long hair hung down his back.

His sudden appearance to King Ahab must have been somewhat frightening. He dramatically prophesied of drought: “There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word” (I Kings 17:1).

B. THE IDOLATRY OF ISRAEL

At the time of Elijah, Israel was wholly given to idolatry. King Ahab had married a Phoenician wife, Jezebel, who was a champion of foreign culture.

Jezebel had the altars of Jehovah torn down and heathen ones built. She was responsible for the hatred and persecution of the true prophets. Jezebel introduced the idolatrous worship of Baal into Israel and the licentious orgies of the goddess Ashtoreth. It was a very dark hour for Israel.

C. THE BROOK CHERITH

Scripture Reference: I Kings 17:3-7

It was to be expected that Ahab would seek to take Elijah’s life. The Lord instructed Elijah to go eastward to the Brook Cherith to hide. Each morning and evening God sent ravens with bread and meat to feed him. Throughout Israel there was a drought accompanied by famine, but Elijah was miraculously fed until the brook dried up.

D. THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH

Scripture Reference: I Kings 17:8-24

Elijah had hid from Ahab during the forty-two months of the drought. Ahab hunted for him everywhere, even in foreign countries. (See I Kings 18:10.)

After the Brook Cherith had dried up, God told Elijah to go to Zarephath where a widow would sustain him. Zarephath was a Phoenician town situated between Tyre and Sidon. The last place to expect Elijah to find safety would be in Phoenicia, Jezebel's native country and from where the idolatrous worship of Baal came.

The widow woman was apparently an Israelite who believed in God. She was extremely poor and lived alone with her son. Elijah found her gathering a few sticks to make a fire to prepare her last meal. At Elijah's request, she provided for Elijah first, and the miracle of the meal and oil being replenished took place. As long as Elijah remained there, the widow and her son had food to eat.

While Elijah was in her home, another miracle took place. The son became ill and died. Elijah prayed and stretched himself upon him three times. He prayed again and the son revived. (See I Kings 17:17.)

E. CONTEST ON MT. CARMEL

At the end of the drought, there was very little vegetation still growing. King Ahab and his steward, Obadiah, were searching for grass when Elijah suddenly appeared to Obadiah. Obadiah was a believer in God and had supported a hundred young prophets in hiding. Obadiah was persuaded to tell Ahab that Elijah had appeared. The king and the prophet met and Elijah proposed a contest to see whether Baal or God was the true God.

The contest took place on Mt. Carmel. Four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of the groves were on one side and Elijah alone on the other. He challenged the people to accept the God who could answer by fire. Throughout the day, the Baal worshipers called frantically on their god, but to no avail.

When it came Elijah's turn, he took some very simple steps in preparing the altar. It would be profitable to study these steps, for they are the same steps that need to be taken to bring revival in any generation:

1. The altar of the Lord was repaired—PRAYER
2. The altar was built with twelve stones. Elijah ignored the division in the nation—UNITY
3. He called upon the name of the Lord—THE NAME OF JESUS IS ESSENTIAL

Lesson Four

4. He dug a trench around the altar—SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD
5. Wood was placed in order—CALVARY
6. A bullock was placed on the altar—SACRIFICE AND SHEDDING OF BLOOD
7. Twelve barrels of water were poured on the altar—WATER BAPTISM

It only took a short, majestic prayer for the fire to fall to consume the sacrifice. The people were convinced and cried, "The Lord, He is God." At Elijah's command, the prophets were taken to the foot of the mountain and slain.

Elijah now prayed for rain. He sent his servant to look for clouds. The seventh time the servant reported a cloud like a man's hand. He sent his servant to warn Ahab to hasten back to Jezreel. As Ahab rode back, the prophet girded up his gown and ran before the chariot all the way to Jezreel, a distance of about sixteen miles.

F. ELIJAH IN THE WILDERNESS

Scripture Reference: I Kings 19:4-8

Jezebel vowed vengeance and Elijah fled for his life. In the wilderness, he was discouraged and despondent. He sat under a juniper tree and despaired of his life. An angel touched him and bade him eat. A cake was baked on some coals and there was a cruse of water. Twice he was ordered to eat, and with the strength of that food, Elijah went for forty days.

G. ELIJAH AT HOREB

Scripture Reference: I Kings 19:9-21

At Horeb, Elijah lodged in a cave. Here he experienced a mighty wind, an earthquake, and fire. Then he heard the still small voice of the Lord. He was commissioned to anoint Hazael as king of Syria, Jehu as king of Israel, and Elisha to be his own successor. Elijah was assured that there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed their knees to Baal.

He first found Elisha plowing in the field. He cast his mantle upon Elisha. Elisha went back to kiss his father and mother. He killed his oxen and fed the people. He then followed Elijah until Elijah was caught away.

H. NABOTH'S VINEYARD

Scripture Reference: I Kings 21:1-24

When Jezebel took Naboth's vineyard for Ahab and had Naboth murdered, Elijah met the king in the vineyard and rebuked him. Elijah prophesied that the dogs would lick Ahab's blood in the same spot that Naboth died.

I. ELIJAH IS TRANSLATED

Scripture Reference: II Kings 2:11

Elijah and Enoch were the only two men who were caught up to Heaven without dying.

As Elijah and Elisha walked along, a chariot and horses of fire parted them and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into Heaven.

Later Elijah appeared to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. (See Matthew 17:3, 4.) Some believe that Elijah will be one of the two witnesses in Revelation 11.

Certainly this prophet was one of the greatest characters of the Old Testament, yet he was a man of like passions as we are. (See James 5:17.)



Old Testament History II

Lesson Five



ELISHA

TEXT: II Kings 2-9

A. THE PROPHET ELISHA

Elisha was the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah. His father was a farmer and appeared to be quite wealthy since he had twelve yoke of oxen plowing in the field at one time.

He began his ministry during the reign of Jehoram and continued through the reigns of Jehu and Jehoahaz. He died during the reign of Joash. He was God's prophet for Israel for a period of fifty years. Elisha was gentle and diplomatic. While Elijah was a man of the wilderness, Elisha lived in the cities and dressed like other people.

Elijah was a man of moods, but Elisha was self-controlled and even tempered. He was interested in the needs of the people, and many of his miracles were to heal and give relief to persons in need.

The request that he might have a double portion of Elijah's spirit apparently was granted, for there are more than twice as many miracles recorded under his ministry as Elijah's.

During his ministry, Elisha witnessed the worship of Baal coming to an end in Israel.

B. ELISHA'S CALL

Scripture Reference: I Kings 19:16-21

At Horeb, God directed Elijah to anoint Elisha as his successor. He found Elisha plowing with a yoke of oxen. Elijah threw his rough mantle over Elisha's shoulders and strode on. Elisha delayed in answering the call only long enough to give his parents a farewell kiss and preside over a feast with his people. He slaughtered the oxen and used his plow for fuel to cook the meat. He thus cut the ties that bound him to his former life.

Seven or eight years passed before Elijah's translation. During that time, Elisha was undoubtedly Elijah's minister, for he is described as pouring water on Elijah's hands. (See II Kings 3:11.) During this time, he was also Elijah's disciple, learning and helping Elijah in every way.

When it was revealed that Elijah was going to be caught away, Elisha refused to be discouraged by those who tried to tell him that he was following Elijah in vain. He accompanied Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel, to Jericho and to the banks of the Jordan. Elijah smote the waters with his mantle, and the two walked across on dry ground.

Because Elisha saw him go, a double portion of Elijah's spirit was given to him. The mantle fell on Elisha, and he took it, smote the waters of the Jordan, and crossed over on dry ground. When the sons of the prophets saw it, they exclaimed, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha."

Each one of us should ask whether or not we are among the spectators of God's power or whether we are where the action is. Are we among the sons of the prophets looking on from a distance, or are we receiving our portion of God's spirit?

Another question might be asked today. It is not necessary to ask, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" It would be more appropriate to ask, "Where are the Elijahs of the Lord God?" We certainly need true prophets of God today.

C. THE SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS

One of Elisha's main interests was the training of young prophets. Elijah had likely established schools at Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho. Elisha expanded this ministry. His purpose was to train dedicated men to be true prophets, which were so greatly needed in sinful, idolatrous Israel.

Emphasis may be placed today upon the same ministry. There is nothing greater than the work of Bible schools training young ministers.

D. THE MIRACLES OF ELISHA

In the record of Elisha's ministry, there is a total of some eighteen incidents. We shall be briefly studying eight of the most familiar.

1. The Cursing of the Children (II Kings 2:23)

As Elisha went to Bethel, some children made fun of his baldness. They cried out, "Go up, thou bald head." Elisha cursed them in the name of the Lord. Two female bears came out of the forest and attacked them. The Bible does not state that the children were killed, but they were clawed and torn.

There is much disrespect shown today. This is a good lesson to learn that we must always show proper respect to men of God.

2. Widow's Oil Increased (II Kings 4:1-7)

This miracle teaches some important lessons in receiving the Holy Ghost. Oil is a symbol of the Holy Ghost. The oil met this woman's need and paid her debts.

Let us examine the steps the widow took:

- a. She understood her great need and was greatly burdened and concerned.
- b. She knew where to go. She went to the man of God for help.
- c. She obeyed explicitly.
- d. She took empty vessels. There is no room for oil if there is something else in the vessels. Likewise, our hearts must be emptied of worldliness and sin.
- e. She shut the door. Thus the world was shut out. If we will learn the lesson of closing our closet doors, we too can witness the flowing of oil.

3. The Shunammite's Son Raised from the Dead (II Kings 4:8-37)

This is a very beautiful story. This Shunammite woman is spoken of as being a great woman. (See II Kings 4:8.) She was very kind and hospitable to Elisha. Whenever he passed by her house, he went in and ate. Finally, she spoke to her husband, and they made him a prophet's chamber with a bed, table, stool, and candlestick.

One day Elisha wanted to do her a favor. His servant, Gehazi, informed him that she had no child and that her husband was old. Elisha told her that she was going to have a son. This happened according to Elisha's word. When the boy was old enough to go to the field with his father, he apparently suffered sunstroke and died.

The mother hastened to Elisha and caught him by the feet. Elisha sent Gehazi on ahead with his staff. When Elisha arrived, he closed the door and prayed. He then stretched himself upon the boy and put his mouth to the boy's mouth. The boy's body grew warm; he sneezed seven times and then opened his eyes.

4. Poisonous Pottage Healed (II Kings 4:38-41)

There was a famine in the land, and the sons of the prophets ate whatever herbs that could be found. Upon one occasion, a poisonous plant was put into the pot of pottage. One of the prophets cried out, "There is death in the pot!" Elisha threw in some meal and the food was healed of the poison.

5. Food Multiplied during the Famine (II Kings 4:42-44)

We are familiar with the story of our Lord multiplying the loaves and fishes and feeding five thousand. A similar miracle took place under the ministry of Elisha. A man brought to him a gift of food, twenty loaves of barley and ears of corn. This food was set before one hundred men. The food was multiplied so that all ate until they were satisfied.

6. Naaman Healed of Leprosy (II Kings 5)

This is possibly the most familiar of all Elisha's miracles. The following points of this story should be carefully noted.

- a. This took place because of the faithful witnessing of a little maid who worked for Naaman's wife.
- b. The high office and wealth of Naaman made no impression upon Elisha. He left him standing at his door and gave him the simple instruction of bathing seven times in Jordan.
- c. Naaman almost lost the blessing because of the simplicity of it. Obedience, however, brought deliverance. So it is with the gospel. People stumble over the simplicity of it, but obedience brings salvation,
- d. Elisha refused any reward. This should teach us that one cannot put a monetary price tag on the gift of God.
- e. The judgment that came to Gehazi because of his greed and lying should not be overlooked. These are the sins of our present age and bring judgment upon all who are guilty.

7. The Lost Axe Head Recovered (II Kings 6:1-7)

While the sons of the prophets were cutting wood to build a house, a borrowed axe head fell into the river. Seeing the distress of the man, Elisha threw a stick into the water, and the iron axe head came to the surface.

8. The Defeat of the Syrians (II Kings 6-7)

On many occasions, the Syrians attacked Israel. Elisha was able to warn the king each time. The Syrians then tried to capture Elisha but were struck blind.

One of the greatest miracles is recorded in II Kings 7. The Syrians attacked Samaria, and the city was reduced to terrible straits. The people were starving and began to eat their own children. When the king blamed Elisha, Elisha prophesied that there would be abundance the very next day. One of the officers of the king laughed at him, and Elisha said that he would see but not eat thereof.

The Syrians fled when they heard a noise of chariots and horses. The message that the four lepers carried to the city constitutes a gospel sermon: "This Day Is a Day of Good Tidings."

E. SUMMARY OF ELISHA'S MINISTRY

The fifty-year ministry of Elisha was very eventful. He completed the tasks assigned to Elijah of anointing Hazael and Jehu as king of Syria and Israel respectively.

His story does not end at his death. After he was buried, a corpse was placed beside him. The bones of Elisha were touched and the man came to life.

The Bible student will do well to study carefully the details of the life of this great man of God.

Self Help Test: Old Testament History II

Elisha

1. Describe Elisha:
 - a. His background

 - b. His personality

2. Describe Elisha's call to the prophetic ministry.

3. Describe four of Elisha's miracles.
 - a.

 - b.

 - c.

 - d.

Old Testament History II

Lesson Six



THE KINGS OF ISRAEL

A. THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

The kingdom of Israel consisted of the ten tribes that broke away under Jeroboam. The name Israel is sometimes used for the Jews as a whole, but in the records of the kings, it is usually used for the ten tribes.

This kingdom of Israel lasted for almost 250 years under the reign of nineteen kings belonging to nine different families. All of these kings were idolaters. It was not said of any of these kings that they “did right in the sight of the Lord.”

The overthrow of Israel by the Assyrians under Shalmaneser took place about 722 BC.

After the Israelites were carried into Assyria, people were brought from different parts of the Assyrian Empire to occupy the country. At first, they worshiped idols, but later they turned to the worship of Jehovah mixed with their worship of idols. The Samaritans of the New Testament were descendants of this mixed race.

The kingdom of the ten tribes was never restored.

B. THE KINGS OF ISRAEL

During the history of the kingdom, there were nineteen kings belonging to nine families or dynasties. The longest reign was that of Jeroboam II who reigned for forty-one years. The shortest reign was that of Zimri who reigned for seven days.

Because of idolatrous worship, there was much violence. Seven kings met death by violence: Nadab, Elah, Tibni (see I Kings 16:21, 22), Jehoram, Zachariah, Shallum, and Pekahiah.

Here is the list of the kings of Israel with the length of time each reigned:

First Dynasty	Jeroboam I	22 years
	Nadab	2 years
Second Dynasty	Baasha	24 years
	Elah	2 years
Third Dynasty	Zimri	7 days

Lesson Six

Fourth Dynasty	Omri	12 years
	Ahab	22 years
	Ahaziah	2 years
	Jehoram	12 years
Fifth Dynasty	Jehu	28 years
	Jehoahaz	17 years
	Jehoash	16 years
	Jeroboam II	41 years
	Zachariah	6 months
Sixth Dynasty	Shallum	1 month
Seventh Dynasty	Menahem	10 years
	Pekahiah	2 years
Eighth Dynasty	Pekah	20 years
Ninth Dynasty	Hoshea	9 years

A total of 241 years, seven months and seven days.

C. JEROBOAM I

Scripture Reference: I Kings 11:26-40; 12:1-14:20

Israel's first king was a religious apostate. He was the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite. His mother's name was Zeruch. One version states that she was a harlot. His wife was Anu, an Egyptian princess.

Fearing a continuation of religious pilgrimages to Jerusalem, he made two calves of gold and set them up at Bethel and Dan. He founded a new priesthood and started popular pagan festivals.

In the twenty-one times that Jeroboam's name is mentioned, his apostasy is linked with it: "Who did sin, and made Israel to sin." His example of idolatry was followed by every king of Israel.

D. NADAB

Scripture Reference: I Kings 14:20; 15:25-31

Nadab was Jeroboam's son and followed his father's bad example. He was murdered within two years.

E. BAASHA

Scripture Reference: I Kings 15:27-16:7

Baasha's name means "wicked," and he was true to his name. To protect his throne, he massacred all the relatives of Jeroboam.

F. ELAH AND ZIMRI

Scripture Reference: I Kings 16:5-20

Elah was a drunkard and was known as a "debauchee." While drunk, he was murdered by Zimri who conspired against the king. Zimri reigned only one short week, for he was not accepted by the people. He was rejected because of his treason. Zimri set fire to the palace and died in the flames.

G. OMRI

Scripture Reference: I Kings 16:15-28; 20:34

The Bible states that Omri did worse than all the others that were before him. (See I Kings 16:25.) He moved the capital to Samaria where he built a new palace. Samaria now became the capital, and sometimes the northern kingdom was called Samaria because of the capital.

H. AHAB

Scripture Reference: I Kings 16:29-22:40

Ahab was Omri's son and succeeded him as king. His father had arranged his marriage with Jezebel, a Phoenician woman who dominated her husband. Ahab was one of the strongest and, at the same time, one of the weakest kings. Baal worship was introduced, and everything possible was done to destroy the worship of the one true God.

I. AHAZIAH

Scripture References: I Kings 22:51; II Kings 1:18

Ahaziah was a weak king and followed in the steps of his wicked parents. During his reign, the Moabites successfully rebelled. He fell from the lattice of his apartment and died after reigning two years.

J. JEHORAM

Scripture Reference: II Kings 1:17, 2; 6; 9

Jehoram was also called Joram. Ahaziah had no children so Jehoram, Ahaziah's brother, succeeded him. During Jehoram's reign, the translation of Elijah took

place. The king deeply respected the warnings and miracles of the prophet Elisha. The healing of Naaman and the overthrow of the Syrian hosts also took place during his rule.

Jehoram was wounded in battle with Syria. Jehu was anointed king by one of the sons of the prophets. He set out for Jezreel and killed Jehoram on the very land Ahab had taken from Naboth. He had Jezebel flung from a window, and she was eaten by dogs.

K. JEHU

Scripture Reference: II Kings 9-10:36

Throughout Jehu's twenty-eight year reign, he was a bloody king. His character was revealed by the way he drove. He was a furious driver and a ferocious man. He abolished the worship of Baal but allowed the worship of golden calves to continue. His purge of Baalism created serious political problems with the Phoenicians. He was forced to pay tribute to the Assyrian king.

L. JEHOAHAZ

Scripture Reference: II Kings 13

Jehu was succeeded by his son, Jehoahaz. During his reign, Hazael of Syria reduced Israel to little more than the hill country of Ephraim. Because of oppression, he prayed unto God for help, and God promised deliverance which came during his son's reign (II Kings 13:4, 5).

M. JEHOASH

Scripture Reference: II Kings 13:10-25

Jehoash is also called Joash. He attacked Syria and regained the cities that had been lost by his father.

He respected Elisha and paid respect to him during his final illness. It was at this time that Elisha gave him an object lesson with the arrows.

During the last years of his reign, he attacked Amaziah of Judah, plundered Jerusalem and the Temple, and carried off palace treasures.

N. JEROBOAM II

Scripture Reference: II Kings 14:23-29

Jeroboam II, the thirteenth king, was the son of Joash. He regained the territory lost to the Syrians. His reign was one of expansion and prosperity.

During his reign, both Amos and Hosea prophesied that Israel would be taken into captivity.

O. THE FINAL REIGNS

A state of anarchy followed the death of Jeroboam II. One king after another was murdered.

Hoshea was the last king. Shalmaneser, the Assyrian king, threatened Israel. Hoshea agreed to pay him tribute. After a time, the tribute was withheld and Hoshea looked to Egypt for help. Shalmaneser invaded and ravaged the land. The Israelites were taken captive.

Self Help Test: Old Testament History II

The Kings of Israel

Fill in the blanks with the following words:

9	10	19
250	722 BC	apostate
Assyria	Assyrians	furious
Hoshea	Jehoash	Jezebel
Phoenicia	Rehoboam	Samaria
Shalmaneser	worse	

1. The kingdom of Israel consisted of the _____ tribes which revolted against King _____.
2. The kingdom of Israel lasted almost _____ years.
3. The kingdom was overthrown by _____, king of _____ in _____.
4. The Samaritans were descendants of a mixed race of a Jewish remnant of Israel and _____.
5. Israel had _____ kings which belonged to _____ dynasties.
6. Jeroboam I was a religious _____.
7. Omri did _____ than all the kings before him and moved the capital to _____.
8. Ahab was married to _____, a woman from _____.
9. Jehu's _____ driving characterized his personality.
10. Elisha gave _____ the object lesson of the arrows.
11. _____ was the last king of Israel.

Old Testament History II

Lesson Seven



THE KINGS OF JUDAH

A. THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

The kingdom of Judah continued for almost four hundred years (975-588 BC) or 133 years longer than Israel. Like Israel, there were nineteen kings, but they ruled for longer periods of time. All the kings of Judah were of one dynasty and were lineal descendants of King David. About half of these kings were good, and for that reason the kingdom continued longer than Israel. The longest reign was Manasseh's fifty-five years. The shortest reign was Jehoahaz's three months (Maclear, *A Class Book of Old Testament History*).

The kingdom of Judah continued 468 years after David began to reign, 387 years after the division of the kingdom, and 133 years after the destruction of the kingdom of Israel (Maclear).

The prophets who ministered during this period of time were Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Zephaniah, Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk. The prophecies of these men were literally fulfilled.

During this period, the character of the nation was greatly influenced by the character of the king. The nation was blessed and enjoyed peace and prosperity when the king was pious and faithful.

B. FOUR PERIODS OF TIME

The history of the kingdom of Judah was divided into four periods of religious decline and three revivals.

1. **First Period:** Between the reigns of Rehoboam and Jehoshaphat—about eighty-six years.
2. **Second Period:** Between the reigns of Joash and Hezekiah—about 207 years.
3. **Third Period:** Between the reigns of Manasseh and Josiah—about eighty-eight years.
4. **Fourth Period:** Between Jehoahaz and Zedekiah—about twenty-three years.

C. REHOBOAM

Scripture References: I Kings 12:20-24; 14:21-31

After Rehoboam's rejection by the northern tribes, he tried to bring the entire nation under his control. This move was stopped by the advice of the prophet Shemaiah.

Many priests and Levites came from the northern kingdom and supported the one who gave outward regard to the worship of Jehovah. Like his father, Rehoboam had many wives who led him into idolatry. As punishment, the Lord permitted Shishak, king of Egypt, to attack him and plunder both the palace and the Temple.

Rehoboam died at the age of fifty-eight.

D. ABIJAM (ABIJAH)

Scripture Reference: I Kings 15

Abijam reigned three years. He had fourteen wives, twenty-two sons, and sixteen daughters. He declared war against Jeroboam and recovered some of the border cities of Israel. His reign was one of religious apostasy. Cult images of various types were venerated and ritual prostitution was practiced.

E. ASA

Scripture References: I Kings 15:9-15; II Chronicles 14-16

Asa was the son of Abijam who ruled for forty-one years. He was a good king. He was the godly son of a godless father. Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all of his days. The first ten years were occupied in religious reforms and in abolishing idolatry. In later years, his faith weakened. He lost territory to Baasha, king of Israel, and appealed to Ben-hadad of Damascus for help. The prophet Hanani rebuked him and was imprisoned for three years.

Asa suffered from a serious foot disease and turned the government over to his son, Jehoshaphat.

F. JEHOSHAPHAT

Scripture References: I Kings 22:2-33; 41-50

Jehoshaphat was a contemporary of three kings of Israel, Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jehoram. He was a godly man and reigned for twenty-five years. The kingdom regained much of its former prosperity and was encouraged in the true worship of God. His greatest errors were in making alliances with Ahab and Ahaziah. From this came the grave mistake of marrying the crown prince, Jehoram, to Ahab's daughter, Athaliah. With this marriage a dark age began. It would be some time before a good king would reign again.

G. JEHORAM

Scripture Reference: II Kings 8:16-24

Jehoram reigned for eight years, and this was a low place in Judah's history. Dominated by his wife, Athaliah, he built a Baal temple in Jerusalem. He assassinated his brothers. The Edomites cut off the sea route to Arabia, and the Arabs from the south plundered the palace and carried off his harem. All of his sons, except Ahaziah, were killed in battle. Jehoram died at the age of forty.

H. AHAZIAH

Scripture Reference: II Kings 8:25-29

Ahaziah was also called Jehoahaz. He reigned only one year. He was influenced by his mother who encouraged Baal worship and an alliance with his uncle, Jehoram of Israel. He was killed by Jehu while visiting Jehoram.

I. ATHALIAH

Scripture Reference: II Chronicles 24:7

Athaliah ruled for six years. She was a tyrant. She had all the royal seed (her grandchildren) slain and then took the throne. One child, Joash, escaped. When Joash was six years old, the high priest showed him to the captains of the guard. He was proclaimed king, and Athaliah was slain.

J. JOASH

Scripture References: II Kings 11, 12

Joash was also called Jehoash. He was the son of Ahaziah and Zibiah, a woman of Beersheba. Later he married two wives and had several sons and daughters. He reigned for forty years. The high priest, Jehoiada, was his guardian. As long as the priest lived, Joash did what was right. After Jehoiada's death, he lapsed into idolatry. He bribed Hazael with treasures from the house of the Lord. Finally he was murdered in bed by one of his own servants.

K. AMAZIAH

Scripture Reference: II Kings 14

Amaziah was the son of Joash and reigned twenty-nine years. He began well but ended badly. He defeated the Edomites but carried home their gods. He began to worship these gods. He was assassinated.

L. UZZIAH (AZARIAH)**Scripture Reference:** II Kings 15

Uzziah came to the throne when he was sixteen and reigned for fifty-two years. He was a capable administrator and was talented in engineering. He tried to assume the ministry of the priest by offering incense on the golden altar. He was stricken with leprosy and spent his last years in seclusion.

The prophet Isaiah received his call during the year of Uzziah's death.

M. JOTHAM**Scripture Reference:** II Kings 15:32-38

Jotham's record is clean. There was no sin laid to his charge. He reigned sixteen years, and the kingdom prospered.

Isaiah and Micah prophesied during his reign.

N. AHAZ**Scripture References:** II Kings 16; II Chronicles 28

Ahaz reigned sixteen years and had the reputation of being the most wicked and idolatrous of all the kings of Judah. He burned his own children as sacrifices in his idolatrous worship. It was a good thing that he died at the early age of thirty-six. Otherwise Judah might have been taken captive at this time.

O. HEZEKIAH**Scripture Reference:** II Kings 18-20

Hezekiah carried out a great reformation. The high places of idol worship were destroyed. The Temple was reopened, and the Passover was celebrated.

In the fourteenth year of his reign, Hezekiah refused to pay tribute to Sennacherib, king of Assyria. Sennacherib prepared to invade Judah. He went into Egypt to wage war. When he returned, the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrian warriors, and Sennacherib retreated.

At this time, Hezekiah had a serious illness. He earnestly prayed, and the Lord added fifteen years to his life.

P. MANASSEH

Scripture Reference: II Kings 21:1-9

Manasseh was the son of Hezekiah. He was born during Hezekiah's added fifteen years. He became king at the age of twelve and reigned for fifty-five years. He destroyed the faith that his godly father had established and revived all the abominations his father destroyed. Manasseh was the worst of the Jewish kings.

Black arts flourished and all forms of evil were indulged in. The Temple was polluted with images to Baal. Manasseh's children were burned in honor of Baal, and he shed much innocent blood. Tradition states that he killed Isaiah by placing him inside a hollow tree and sawing him asunder. (See Hebrews 11:37.)

He was taken captive with hooks by the king of Assyria. At Babylon he experienced genuine repentance. When he was allowed to return to Jerusalem, he tried to abolish idolatry, but his reform efforts were not very successful.

Q. AMON

Scripture Reference: II Kings 21:18-26

Amon was the godless son of Manasseh. He copied all his father's sins. He was assassinated after reigning only two years.

R. JOSIAH

Scripture Reference: II Kings 22:1-23:10

Josiah became king at the age of eight. At the age of sixteen, he devoted his time to the work of God and commenced reformation at the age of twenty. With a hatchet, he began the destruction of the images of idolatry. The Book of the Law was discovered, and Josiah had it read to the people. The Temple was cleansed and a Passover held. He was slain in battle as he fought with Egypt.

S. THE FINAL DECLINE

Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, reigned only three months and then was carried away captive into Egypt.

It was during the reigns of the final three kings that the captivity took place, and we shall study regarding them in the following lesson.

Self Help Test: Old Testament History II

The Kings of Judah

Fill in the blanks with the following words:

400	150	dynasty
fifteen	Habakkuk	Hezekiah
Isaiah	Jehoahaz	Jeremiah
Joash	Josiah	leprosy
Manasseh	Temple	Uzziah

1. The kingdom of Judah lasted almost _____ years, or almost _____ years longer than Israel.
2. The kings of Judah were from one _____.
3. _____ had the longest reign, while _____ was the shortest.
4. Among the prophets who ministered to the nation of Judah were _____, _____, and _____.
5. As long as Jehoiada, the high priest, lived, _____ did that which was right.
6. _____ tried to offer incense on the golden altar and was stricken with _____ as a judgment from God.
7. _____ carried out a great spiritual reformation and God added _____ years to his life.
8. The law of God was found in the _____ during the reign of _____.

Old Testament History II

Lesson Eight



THE CAPTIVITY

A. THE CAPTIVITY FORETOLD IN PROPHECY

1. At the Time of Hezekiah

When a delegation from the king of Babylon came with a present for Hezekiah, in his eagerness to make a worldly alliance, Hezekiah showed them all the treasures of his house. The prophet Isaiah rebuked him and prophesied: “Behold, the days come that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon” (II Kings 20:17, 18).

Over one hundred years passed before this prophecy was fulfilled. This shows how judgment for our sins may fall upon our children.

2. The Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 11:11; 39:6, 7)

This prophecy of Isaiah is recorded and repeated in his book of prophecy. Also see Isaiah 6:11, 12.

3. The Prophet Micah

Scripture Reference:

“And thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered” (Micah 4:10).

Here Micah definitely stated that the place of captivity would be Babylon.

4. The Prophet Jeremiah

Scripture Reference:

“And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon” (Jeremiah 25:11, 12).

Here Jeremiah stated the length of time that the Jews would be in captivity.

B. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

Scripture Reference:

“And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God” (Daniel 1:2).

We should take note of the expression “and the Lord gave.” This was an act of judgment upon the part of God. God’s judgment came upon Judah, not only because of Hezekiah’s sin, but because of the idolatry that was brought in by the many wicked kings who ruled similarly to Manasseh.

C. BABYLON’S RISE TO POWER

At this time in history, Assyria began to decline in power and became weak. Assyria’s two main cities, Assur and Nineveh, had fallen, and Assyria’s army fled westward to Haran. In 610 BC Haran fell to Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, which all but finished the Assyrians. In 609 BC Necho, the king of Egypt, marched north to meet the Babylonians. He did not succeed in taking Haran, but the Egyptians remained dominant in the West for another three years.

Early in 605 BC, the Battle of Carchemish occurred on the Euphrates. The Babylonians were under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar. He revealed great genius and sent the Egyptians fleeing in headlong defeat. From this point, Babylon became the new world leader.

D. THE FIRST PHASE OF THE CAPTIVITY—605 BC

Jehoiakim was appointed king of Judah by Pharaoh and reigned eleven years. He was godless and reckless. During his reign, he heard the prophecies of Jeremiah warning of the coming judgment. Upon one occasion, he took a knife and cut the scroll into pieces and threw it upon the fire. Jeremiah prophesied that he would be buried as an ass, and that was fulfilled.

When Nebuchadnezzar made great conquests in Syria, Jehoiakim professed loyalty to him. Later Jehoiakim shifted his loyalty to King Necho of Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and took many captives, including Daniel and his companions. Jehoiakim was taken in chains to Babylon.

At this time, Nebuchadnezzar carried off the vessels of the house of God and the members of the nobility of Judah to Babylon. If Jehoiakim had taken heed to the fearless preaching of the prophet Jeremiah, this might not have happened.

While Nebuchadnezzar was busy in his conquests, he was interrupted by the sudden death of his father. He hurried back to Babylon to be crowned king.

E. THE SECOND PHASE OF THE CAPTIVITY—597 BC

Jehoiachin was the son and successor of Jehoiakim and reigned only for three months and ten days.

In 597 BC Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem again. This time he took captive Jehoiachin, his mother, his wives, 3,000 princes, 7,000 men of might, and 1,000 artisans. (See II Kings 24:14-16.) Among them were Ezekiel and Mordecai. Jeremiah evaded capture and urged the exiles in Babylon to be good citizens. (See Jeremiah 29:1-10.)

F. THE THIRD PHASE OF THE CAPTIVITY—586 BC

Nebuchadnezzar appointed Zedekiah to be king of Judah who ruled for eleven years.

After eleven years, Zedekiah listened to wrong advice instead of listening to Jeremiah. He revolted against Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar's army was soon back outside Jerusalem's walls. This time Nebuchadnezzar burned the Temple, destroyed the city of Jerusalem, and deported all but the poorest to Babylon. (See II Kings 24:14-16.)

Zedekiah was taken captive, watched the execution of his sons, had his eyes gouged out, and was carried to Babylon.

At this time, the Temple, palaces, and public buildings were destroyed. Jerusalem lay in ruins.

G. THE CAPTIVITY

There was much suffering at the time of this last siege. Prisoners were maimed, impaled, and skinned alive.

Once they were settled in Babylon, the Jews were not heavily oppressed by their conquerors. They engaged in business, built houses, and held high positions in the land. The prophet Ezekiel constantly encouraged them.

Self Help Test: Old Testament History II The Captivity

1. Fill in the blanks with the following words:

70	Assyrians	Babylon
Egyptians	Ezekiel	good
Isaiah	Jeremiah	Micah

- a. _____, _____, and _____
prophesied concerning the captivity of Judah.
- b. Jeremiah prophesied that the duration of the captivity would be _____ years.
- c. _____ came to be the world's leader by defeating the _____ in 610 BC and the _____ in 605 BC.
- d. Jeremiah urged the captives to be _____ citizens in Babylon.
- e. The prophet _____ encouraged the Jews during the captivity.

2. Describe the three phases of the captivity.

- a.
- b.
- c.

Old Testament History II

Lesson Nine



THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE

A. BABYLON'S BEGINNING

The place that the Babylonian Empire has had in the history of God's people can never be understood without going back to its beginning. It began with Nimrod and the Tower of Babel about 100 years after the Flood and 326 years before the call of Abram.

1. Nimrod

The story of Nimrod is found in Genesis 10:8-10. Nimrod was Ham's grandson; his father was Cush. Nimrod is a type of Antichrist. The name *Nimrod* means "rebel." This points forward to one of the titles of the Antichrist given in II Thessalonians 2:8, "The Lawless One." Nimrod's rebellion was to lead a movement in revolt against God.

Three times in this passage, and also in I Chronicles 1:10, it states that Nimrod was mighty. In Genesis 10:9, he is described as being a "mighty hunter before the Lord." This infers that he pushed his own designs in defiance of his Creator.

2. The Tower of Babel

Genesis 10:10 states, "And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel." Here we have the first mention of Babel. In the language of that time, *Babel* meant "the gate of God," but afterward, because of judgment, it meant "confusion." Here we find that Nimrod had a kingdom and therefore was "king." Not only did he start a new kingdom, but he instituted a new and idolatrous worship.

"Let us build us a city" - This refers to a political system, a world empire.

"Let us build us a tower" - This refers to a religious system, a religion of good works, reaching Heaven without any help from God. It was a system of deifying man. It was Cain's religion beginning again.

"Let us make us a name" - This refers to a desire for fame and power. Salvation was to come in their name. However, God had a name through which there would be salvation (Jesus), and it was not yet God's time to reveal that name.

Everything about Babel was in opposition to God. It was because of this that judgment fell, and God scattered them.

Let us ever remember that the root of all sin is rebellion, and the result is always the same: confusion and a scattering.

B. THE BEGINNING OF THE BABYLONIAN RELIGION

In Revelation 17 is a picture of the false idolatrous religion of the last days: a harlot sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, a politico-religious system of great power. Genesis 11 records the beginning of this false religion.

After the Fall, God clothed our first parents and instituted the true plan of salvation and worship. We find this continued by Abel, Noah, and other men of faith. Following the Flood, God instituted the principle of human government, a system by which God would maintain law and order, and preserve peace and harmony.

Both of these two institutions were of divine origin. God ordained, however, that these two institutions, religion and government, would be kept separate until Jesus Christ would come and unite the principle of priest and king in one person. Until that time came, these two institutions were to be administered by different individuals. The king must come from the tribe from Judah, and the priest must come from the tribe of Levi. In the New Testament, Jesus confirmed this principle when He said, "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." This is the separation of church and state.

Nimrod married a girl by the name of Semiramis who bore a son called Tammuz. Going back to the promise of Genesis 3:15, Semiramis claimed that she was the woman of the promise and that her son was the seed of the woman. Although they had turned their backs upon God, they could not eliminate the knowledge that had come down to them. Semiramis set herself up as the high priestess of the Babylonian religion. It was a religion that centered in the worship of the mother and the child. The sign of this religion was a "mother-child" who held a baby in her arms. The religion was known as the "mother-child" cult. Semiramis took for herself the name "the Queen of Heaven" and taught that access into the presence of God was through her high priestess ministry. She became a mediatrix between God and man.

When Tammuz came to young manhood, he was slain while hunting a wild boar. Semiramis gathered a number of virgins, and after a forty-day period of prayer and fasting, Tammuz was supposed to be resurrected from the dead by the power of his mother, "The Queen of Heaven." That forty-day period became an annual time of mourning throughout Babylon. At the conclusion, they had a feast in honor of Semiramis and Tammuz. They made the egg a sacred symbol of life out of death. On the birthday of Tammuz, they erected evergreen trees as the symbol of eternal life.

This religion spread to Phoenicia, Egypt, and Greece, but Babylon continued to be the center of this false religious system until her destruction. The system then moved to Pergamos and from there to Rome. After the professed conversion of

Constantine, this pagan religion that began with Nimrod was superimposed upon the Christian church.

C. THE CITY OF BABYLON

Babylon was the “wonder city” of the world. It was located in the cradle of the human race near the Garden of Eden region. Babylon was situated in central Mesopotamia on the river Euphrates, some fifty miles south of modern Baghdad, capital of Iraq.

It was within easy reach of the Persian Gulf. Being situated on an important caravan route, it was in contact with all the most important centers of the Near East. During the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BC), it was probably the largest and most elaborate city in the ancient world.

Nebuchadnezzar’s objective was to make his capital the most notable city in the world. He constructed new canals, erected magnificent buildings, and laid out extensive parks. A permanent water supply assured fertility for the surrounding areas.

The city occupied an area of two hundred square miles and was built on both sides of the Euphrates which divided the city into two almost equal parts. It was protected by a double brick wall, reinforced with towers.

Ancient historians have written that its walls were fifty-six miles around, fourteen miles on each side, 300 feet (200 cubits) high, eighty feet (fifty royal cubits) thick, extending thirty-five feet below the ground. There were 250 towers on the wall, guardrooms for soldiers, and gates of brass. The walls were protected by wide and deep moats filled with water. (See “Babel, Babylon:’ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. II.)

Both banks along the Euphrates were guarded with a brick wall. There was one bridge one-half mile long, and thirty feet wide with drawbridges that were removed at night. There was a tunnel under the river fifteen feet wide and twelve feet high.

In the days of ancient warfare, the city was simply impregnable.

The hanging gardens of Babylon were one of the seven wonders of the world. There were terraces supported by arches on which were carefully tended gardens laid out at different levels.

D. THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE

The Babylonian Empire was the most powerful empire that had existed up to that time. It was sometimes called the Neo-Babylonian Empire. This was the empire

that broke the power of Assyria and swept westward, destroying Judah and conquering Egypt.

The Babylonian Empire lasted seventy years (606-536 BC), and Daniel was there from its rise to its fall.

Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest Babylonian king and one of the greatest monarchs of all time. He reigned for forty-five years. He extended the power of Babylon over most of the then known world.

In the second chapter of the prophecy of Daniel, we read where Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar in interpreting his dream, "Thou art this head of gold." Of all the Gentile kingdoms that were to come, Babylon was the greatest. The Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar was the beginning of what is known as the "times of the Gentiles."

Babylon fell to Cyrus, king of Persia, in the year of 536 BC. In the same year, Cyrus authorized the return of the Jews to their own land.

Although the kingdom of Babylon fell, the influence of Babylon is still with us. The religious system of Babylon is predominant in the religious world, and the apostate church receives its name from Babylon. (See Revelation 17.)



Self Help Test: Old Testament History II

The Babylonian Empire

1. Who was the founder of Babylon? Of what is he a type?
 - a.
 - b.
2. Describe the beginning of the Babylonian religion.
3. Describe the city of Babylon
4. How long did the Neo-Babylonian Empire last?
5. Who was the greatest of the Babylonian kings?
6. Who came to power at the fall of Babylon?

Old Testament History II

Lesson Ten



DANIEL

TEXT: Daniel 1-12

A. DANIEL, THE MAN

Daniel was born into an unidentified family of Judean nobility at the time of Josiah's reformation. His lineage was of the tribe of Judah, and one could probably trace his ancestry back to King David. A noble birth and an educated background are seen in his being chosen in the first deportation. Josephus, the historian, wrote that Daniel and his three friends were related to King Zedekiah.

Daniel was a handsome, brilliant young man of strong convictions. He was absolutely unswerving in his own religious convictions and refused to compromise even to save his own life. He was honest and truthful at all times.

Since he was both a statesman and a prophet, his life could be compared to Moses. The fact that he kept his life untarnished while a captive in a heathen country would remind us of Joseph.

His name means "God will judge." *Dan* means "to judge" and *el* means "God."

Daniel lived until he was at least ninety years of age and lived throughout the seventy years of captivity.

B. DANIEL, THE PROPHET

Scripture Reference:

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet" (Matthew 24:15).

Jesus called Daniel "the prophet." To deny this would be to deny our Lord. Daniel was one of the greatest prophets. He predicted many future events that have already become history.

Sir Isaac Newton said, "To reject Daniel is to reject the Christian religion."

Josephus wrote that when Alexander the Great came to Jerusalem in the year 332 BC, he was shown the prophecies of Daniel in which he was described. Alexander was impressed with it.

Daniel prophesied of the times of the Gentiles. Without the prophecy of Daniel, certain passages in the New Testament, such as our Lord's Olivet Discourse and the Book of Revelation, could not be understood.

C. DANIEL, THE CAPTIVE

Daniel and his three friends were among the select youthful hostages taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC, the third year of King Jehoiakim. (See Daniel 1:1, 3.)

For three years Daniel was trained in all the wisdom of the Chaldeans. (See Daniel 1:4, 5.) He was given a new name, *Beltshazzar*. The names of his three friends were also changed.

Daniel (God will judge or God is my judge) was changed to *Beltshazzar* (whom Bel favors).

Hananiah (beloved of the Lord) was changed to *Shadrach* (illuminated by the sun god).

Mishael (who is as God) to *Meshach* (who is like Venus).

Azariah (the Lord is my help) to *Abednego* (the servant of Nego).

The purpose of this was to wean them away from their native land and religion. However, changing a man's name does not change his character, and these young men were loyal to God throughout.

They were made eunuchs. This is evident, for they were turned over to the prince of the eunuchs. This meant that they would have no sons to carry on their name.

Daniel's first great test came quickly. He was given meat that had been offered to idols and intoxicating drink. Daniel could have been bitter about his condition and fatalistic about the future. He could have reasoned that there was no purpose in keeping true to God. But Daniel did no such thing!

"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat" (Daniel 1:8). He kept his dedication to God and maintained his separation from the world. It was for this reason that he, like Joseph, could be promoted to the highest office in the land, next to the king himself.

D. DANIEL, THE STATESMAN

The dream that God gave Nebuchadnezzar in the second year of his reign was extremely important. It has been called the "ABC of prophecy." It was because of Daniel's interpretation of this dream that he was promoted to be ruler over the province of Babylon and chief of the wise men. He held this position for a long time,

for years later Nebuchadnezzar referred to him as the master of the magicians. (See Daniel 4:9.)

At the time of the Persian conquest when Daniel was eighty years of age, he was retained in a position of high responsibility. He was one of the three presidents over the governors of Persia's 120 provinces.

This speaks well of Daniel's ability as a statesman. God blessed him with a long, successful life because he had never compromised his dedication to God's will.

E. DANIEL, THE HERO

Undoubtedly the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews referred to him in Hebrews 11:33, "stopped the mouth of lions."

It was Daniel's habit to pray three times each day with his windows opened toward Jerusalem. When the decree went forth that he would be thrown to the lions if he asked petitions of anyone other than King Darius, Daniel's courage and faithful devotion was clearly revealed. Daniel prayed "as he did aforesaid." His prayer did not change.

Through this experience of spending a night with hungry lions, Daniel became a great hero of the Old Testament.

F. DANIEL, THE BELOVED OF GOD

The ninth chapter of his prophecy is one of the greatest chapters in the Bible.

Here we find recorded that Daniel sought God by prayer, supplications, fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. As he prayed, this godly man searched his heart and confessed his sins. In answer to his prayer, God sent Gabriel with the answer to his enquiry regarding the future of Daniel's people. Along with the answer, Gabriel told Daniel, "Thou art greatly beloved" (Daniel 9:23).

Certainly Daniel had a special place in the heart of God. He was the beloved of God!

Self Help Test: Old Testament History II

Daniel

1. Describe Daniel's background and personality.
2. Who were Daniel's three friends?
3. What did God use to promote Daniel to the position of ruler of the province of Babylon and chief of the wise men?
4. Describe Daniel's prayer life and his reaction to the king's decree regarding prayer.
5. What was Gabriel's message to Daniel (Daniel 9:23)?

Old Testament History II

Lesson Eleven



THE RETURN FROM EXILE

A. THE LENGTH OF TIME FORETOLD

Scripture Reference:

“For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place” (Jeremiah 29:10).

The prophet Jeremiah had accurately foretold the length of the captivity. It was this prophecy of Jeremiah that caused Daniel to seek God in prayer and fasting as recorded in Daniel 9. It appears that Daniel might have greatly influenced Cyrus in his decree.

B. KING CYRUS

The document heralding a new era for the Jews came not from a Jewish law-giver or prophet but from the decree of a Gentile king.

Cyrus the Great captured Babylon in 538 BC. He was a descendant from an old Persian family of royal ancestry. He was a brilliant conqueror and became ruler of the largest empire in history up to that time.

Cyrus was noble in character. He was prudent, modest, and religious minded. He considered himself a liberator and instituted a policy of repatriation for the captive people. The Hebrews were encouraged to return to their homeland and rebuild their Temple.

The edict of Cyrus (see Ezra 1:1-4) came in his first year of reign. The main terms of this edict may be stated thus:

1. The Temple at Jerusalem was to be rebuilt.
2. The cost was to come from Cyrus’s own treasury.
3. There were certain specifications that had to be met regarding the building of the Temple.
4. All Jews who wished to do so could return home.
5. Jews who wanted to remain in Babylon were to assist with financial contributions.
6. Gold and silver vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar were to be returned to Jerusalem.

C. ZERUBBABEL

The first return took place shortly after this edict of Cyrus was issued.

The first migration was under the leadership of Sheshbazzar called a “prince of Judah” (Ezra 1:8). Other leaders were Zerubbabel and Joshua (Jeshua), the high priest. As Daniel felt obligated to remain at his post, he was not among the number.

It is indicated in Ezra 2 that the number in the first migration was 42,360 besides 7,337 servants, nearly 50,000 in all. As the majority was of the tribe of Judah, they became known as Jews. The majority of the captives, however, remained in Chaldea, Persia, and Media.

The trip of seven hundred miles took four months. One year later they began to rebuild the Temple. This work was under the direction of Zerubbabel and Joshua. They first erected the altar and shortly after observed the Feast of Tabernacles. Then they began work on the Temple itself. They laid the foundation and then celebrated. Some wept when they remembered the glory of the first Temple and realized that this one could not compare.

The Samaritans (a mixed race of Israelites and foreigners) asked permission to help but were refused. When they could not join in building, they gave much opposition. Finally the work stopped and the Temple remained little more than a foundation for sixteen years.

D. KING DARIUS

Darius was one of the greatest of the Persian rulers, a descendant of Cyrus. Between the reigns of Cyrus and Darius, the work on rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple had stopped.

During the second year of Darius’s reign, Haggai and Zechariah urged that the work be resumed. Darius discovered the original decree of Cyrus favoring the Jews and permission was granted for the work to be resumed. Money was taken from the public treasury to finance the project. Haggai and Zechariah had rebuked the people for building their own homes and not the Temple.

The building was finished and the Passover observed. This was in the sixth year of Darius (see Ezra 6:15), twenty years after the work had started.

About the time the Temple was completed, the Babylonians rebelled and the city was destroyed. It soon was so desolate as to be scarcely recognized, fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 13:19-21.

E. EZRA

During the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes, the second return took place. This was led by Ezra, a descendant of Aaron. He was an able teacher of the Law. (See Ezra 7:6, 10.)

This second return took place about eighty years after Zerubbabel and the first company had returned. The group who accompanied Ezra was much smaller than the first. When Ezra discovered that there were no Levites in the party, he delayed until thirty-eight Levites were persuaded to join.

Ezra's chief objective was to fully reestablish the law of Moses. Before leaving, the people assembled, proclaimed a fast and called on God for protection and blessing. The journey took four months.

Ezra received many privileges from Artaxerxes. He could take as many Jews who desired to go. He had the privilege of receiving gold and silver from the Jews and also from the king for the Temple. He could purchase animals for sacrifices. The Temple's personnel were to be exempt from taxation. Ezra was given the authority to appoint magistrates in Judah to enforce the laws of Jehovah with power of life and death over the guilty.

Ezra's greatest contribution was the editing and publishing of the Book of the Law. As he read it to the people in the original Hebrew, he explained its meaning to them.

At this time the practice of building synagogues began. Here the Law was read and expounded. About this time, the "traditions of the fathers" began to be observed.

F. THE PROBLEM OF INTERMARRIAGE

Scripture Reference: Ezra 9:1-15

One of the greatest problems facing Ezra was the intermarriage of many Jews with idolatrous wives. Some of the Levites and priests were even involved.

When Ezra was told of this, he rent his clothes and pulled hair from his head. He offered a prayer of confession. The people were deeply moved and were convicted. It was decided that the marriages should be dissolved. Details were worked out how this difficult task should be carried out.

Each case was judged separately. Such separation caused much heartbreak, but it was completed in three months.

Self Help Test: Old Testament History II

The Return from Exile

Mark true or false.

- _____ 1. Cyrus the Great captured Babylon in 605 BC.
- _____ 2. David prophesied the length of the captivity.
- _____ 3. Cyrus encouraged the Jews to return to their homeland and to rebuild the Temple.
- _____ 4. The Jews had to pay for the repairs to the Temple.
- _____ 5. Zerubbabel allowed the Samaritans to help with the rebuilding of the Temple.
- _____ 6. Nebuchadnezzar replaced Cyrus on the throne of Persia.
- _____ 7. Haggai and Zechariah prophesied during the post-exilic period and encouraged the people to rebuild the Temple.
- _____ 8. Ezra was a descendant of Aaron and was an able teacher of the Law.
- _____ 9. One of the greatest problems that faced Ezra was the intermarriage of Jews with idolatrous wives.
- _____ 10. The journey from Babylon to Jerusalem took one year.

Old Testament History II

Lesson Twelve



NEHEMIAH

A. NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah was a cupbearer to King Artaxerxes who reigned as king of Persia during the period of 465-425 BC. Nehemiah was a trusted official. There is very little recorded about him apart from the book that bears his name. He was a man of prayer, courage, and perseverance.

One of Nehemiah's brethren, Hanani, brought word of the ruined condition of Jerusalem. Undoubtedly Hanani believed that Nehemiah could help because authority was needed from the king to overcome the local opposition. Ezra had been in Jerusalem for thirteen years, but he was mainly occupied as a priest, teaching the people.

Nehemiah was overcome with grief and immediately went to pray. (See Nehemiah 1:4; 2:4.) He spent four months in prayer before he made his request known to the king. He waited for the right opportunity to approach the king. In the spring of 444 BC the opportunity came. Artaxerxes noticed the sadness of Nehemiah and asked the reason. Nehemiah told him of the condition at Jerusalem and asked permission to go to help. The king not only granted his request but assigned soldiers to accompany Nehemiah.

B. THE THIRD RETURN

A number of Jews went with Nehemiah, returning to Jerusalem during the twentieth year of Artaxerxes's reign (444 BC). There is no record just how many Jews accompanied Nehemiah. It would seem that there was a large number, although not as large as the two former migrations.

C. BUILDING THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM

Arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah found the walls in rubble, completely dilapidated. He spent three nights inspecting the walls so that he might acquaint himself with the true condition. When he had all the facts, he met with the Jerusalem leaders and presented his plans. There was a good response. Workers were recruited from both inside and outside Jerusalem. They were assigned various sections of the wall on which to labor.

The work moved forward rapidly, but severe opposition arose. The other nations who lived nearby, especially Samaria, benefited from Judah's weakness. The leaders of this opposition were Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem. Nehemiah divided the workers into two groups. One group worked at building the walls; the other group bore arms.

Each night a heavy guard was posted. The wall was completed in fifty-two days, and Jerusalem was once again a fortified city 142 years after it had been destroyed.

D. NEHEMIAH'S SECOND TERM

Nehemiah served as governor in Jerusalem during two terms. He was governor the first time for twelve years, and then he returned to his former position in the Persian Court. After being in the Persian capital for a short time, he was commissioned the second time to be the governor at Jerusalem. There seems to be no record stating just how long Nehemiah served this second time.

E. NEHEMIAH'S WORK AND REFORMS

1. Security

After the wall was completed, Nehemiah placed Hananiah in charge of security. He had one-tenth of the population move to Jerusalem. This gave Jerusalem greater security.

2. Remission of Debts (Nehemiah 5:1-9)

Nehemiah took action to remit the debts of the poor people. Some of the wealthy took advantage of the heavy Persian taxes and poor crops to loan the poor money. When they could not pay their debts, the wealthy then took possession of their property. Nehemiah appealed to the people to stop this practice and restore what they had taken. Nehemiah set a personal example by refusing to accept a salary for being governor.

3. Reading God's Law (Nehemiah 8-10)

Nehemiah encouraged the people to assemble to hear God's Word read. This was done by Ezra. The Feast of Tabernacles was kept, followed by a public confession of sin. A covenant to keep God's law was signed by Nehemiah and the leaders.

4. Dedication of the Walls (Nehemiah 12:27-47)

The walls were formally dedicated. The people formed two processions and marched in opposite directions around the walls, meeting together at the Temple. The singing and praises to God could be heard for a great distance.

5. Collection of Tithes

Nehemiah insisted that the people tithe. Certain rooms were set apart to receive the tithes. He ordered that the tithes would be brought with great care.

6. Keeping the Sabbath

There was much laxity in respecting the Sabbath. Many of the Jews worked and did business on the Sabbath. Nehemiah closed the city gates and prohibited all merchandising on the Sabbath Day.

7. Mixed Marriages Ended (Nehemiah 13:23-28)

In spite of Ezra's efforts, the sin of mixed marriages still existed. Nehemiah did not have the marriages dissolved, but the people had to swear that there would be no more mixed marriages.

F. OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY ENDED WITH NEHEMIAH

By Nehemiah's time, seventeen centuries had passed since the call of Abraham. The Old Testament records no more history after Nehemiah. Now there are four hundred silent years until the time of Christ. The Old Testament closes during the period of time that the Persian Empire ruled the Middle East.

The efforts of the Persian kings to conquer Greece were never successful. Ultimately Alexander the Great appeared on the scene. He conquered Tyre and took Egypt. Then he struck at the Persian Empire and won the Battle of Arbela. The empire of Cyrus lasted about two hundred years.

Alexander died young, and his empire was divided among four generals.

Ptolemy was given Palestine, and the Jews fared well. The translation of the Scriptures into Greek was started during this time. This version became known as the Septuagint.

Alexander's general, Seleucia, was given Syria and soon acquired nearly all of Asia. The cities of Seleucia and Antioch were built.

During the reign of the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus the Great, Palestine was taken and added to the Syrian kingdom. This became one of the darkest periods in the history of the Jews. Antiochus Epiphanes slew forty thousand Jews and sold forty thousand as slaves. He desecrated the Temple by sacrificing a sow on the altar. He later made a terrible massacre and demolished the city and its walls.

For a period of time, there was glorious deliverance which came with the Maccabees. This lasted for about one hundred years before Palestine was conquered by the Romans who were in power when Jesus was born.

Missionary Spotlight: Philip and Pauline Tolstad

Philip G. Tolstad and Pauline (Polly) Mason Tolstad were pioneer missionaries to Uruguay (1952-1963). They were the first missionaries appointed by the United Pentecostal Church to a country in South America south of Colombia. They arrived in Uruguay in August 1952 and opened the countries of Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and southern Brazil to the Oneness message through the '50s and early '60s.

Philip was raised in an Apostolic home, mostly in Kansas and Washington State. His parents received the Holy Ghost and Jesus Name Baptism in 1929 in Levenworth, Kansas. He heard God call him by an audible voice when he was five years old to be a missionary to South America.

After World War II he attended Apostolic Bible School in Tulsa, Okla-

homa. First he was an evangelist; then they established the church in



Billings, Montana, before being appointed to Uruguay.

Pauline "Polly" Mason Tolstad was raised in Chelsea and Tulsa, Oklahoma, and was an instructor/dean (1936-50) at Apostolic Bible College. They married in June 1950.

The first service in Montevideo, Uruguay, was on October 11, 1952, with

nine people present. Facing many difficulties and attacks they forged out a church. For six years the work struggled as they stood against spiritual darkness and denominational traditions. In 1958 the Holy Ghost was poured out in a great revival and spread to every corner of the country. From that humble beginning, the revival church grew to a headquarters church and eight branch churches. The outpouring of the Holy Ghost brought great unity and power that brought a great

move of the supernatural power in miracles and healings.

Returning home from the mission field in October 1963, they founded the Forest Avenue Pentecostal Church in Amsterdam, New York. They also pastored in Twin Falls, Idaho; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and Auburn and Olympia, Washington. In 1979, the

Tolstads began to evangelize and help the smaller churches in the Midwest. In 1992, they went on to help start a Christian school in Sophia, Bulgaria.

The Tolstads had three children. Philip is a missionary in Uganda. Ted

pastored in Oregon before his early death due to cancer. Daughter Lynn lives in Washington State.

Philip G. Tolstad went to be with the Lord, May 12, 2005. Pauline joined him July 30, 2006.

— Philip L. Tolstad,
Kampala, Uganda
August 11, 2010

Recommended Reading:
Pauline Mason Tolstad,
Open Door to South America (Eureka Springs, AR: Ozark Mountain Press).