## Quick Reference Charts, Cont’d.

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### Conclusion

We hope you have found this study of the characters of the kings of Judah and Israel helpful for both you and your student.
Quick Reference Charts

At the end of these lessons you will find quick reference charts that highlight a particular king, Hebrew name, first/last mention, length of reign, mother’s name (or father’s name) and contemporary king. These can be used to quiz the student.

Bible Marking

If you are Bible marking, you can use the information in this book to help your child with cross references (pink or red ink) or major subject notes (black ink). For example: At the top of the page in your Bible for the book of 1 Samuel, using black ink, you can write a brief summary of Saul, David or Solomon.

Once you have completed this book you can mark up 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, and 1 & 2 Chronicles with the information you have studied.

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The study of the Kings is essentially a study in leadership - a series of character studies of men of responsibility. The lessons for ecclesial leaders and "shepherds of the flock" are many and varied.

Israel and Judah were the ecclesia of God (I Chron. 29:23; Ex. 19:5-6; Acts 7:38; Jer. 3:14, 20; Rom. 11:1-5). As an ecclesia (though at times apostate) all Israelites stood related to the covenants. Each individual lived a life and developed a character which finally determined his eternal destiny. The lives and characters of the kings are recorded as a warning and exhortation to all subsequent generations of covenant bearers, whose future will be determined upon the same basis.

A divine estimation of each king is inserted in the record of their reigns, whether it was long or short. This is evidence that "The Judge of all the earth," whose "eyes run to and fro through the whole earth" was keenly interested in the ways and the actions of kings as they led his ecclesia and he made his final and irreversible assessment of them at the end of their reign (Heb. 13:17).

It is important to note that in studying the kings you can teach your children/students much about how to build their characters in service to the Lord. By reading about the successes and failures of each king, children/students can ask pertinent questions that are relative to their lives today. They can see the judgments rendered by Yahweh and learn from those judgments.

Questions and Answers

Questions are provided at the end of each character study. Some questions include beginner (ages 6-10), intermediate (ages 11-14), and advanced (ages 15+) categories so the student can answer questions appropriate for their age level (helpful if you are homeschooling children of different ages). Please feel free to use a notebook if you need additional space for your answers, or if you are using this booklet as a teacher’s guide and do not wish the student to mark in the book.
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Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth.
II Timothy 2:15

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Zedekiah

The tragic end of Judah which had been temporarily forestalled by the righteous reign of Josiah was hastened by the wickedness of firstly, Jehoiakim and then by his younger brother Zedekiah. "For through the anger of Yahweh it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon," suggests that Yahweh brought the judgment he proposed for Judah (because of Manasseh's evils) upon the head of these two kings who were equally worthy of it (II Kings 24:20).

Though the account of Zedekiah's reign is brief, a clear picture of his character emerges from the record. He followed the ways of Jehoiakim (II Kings 24:19) and was as treacherous as his older brother in his dealings with Nebuchadnezzar. A solemn oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar which preceded his installation as king was foolishly broken despite the fact that Nebuchadnezzar "had made him swear by God." Not only was Zedekiah rebellious to an earthly monarch, but he also rebelled against Yahweh: "And humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of Yahweh" (II Chron. 36:12). He was stiff-necked and hard-hearted in the face of many appeals to turn back to Yahweh and consequently was an ample type of apostate Judah (II Chron. 36:13 - Cp. verse 14-16).

During the persecution of Jeremiah recorded in Jer. 38, Zedekiah is revealed also as a weak man who feared his own people and was more concerned with his personal safety than the vindication and preservation of a righteous prophet of Yahweh. The final indictment of Zedekiah summarizes in two words the evil of his character: "And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end" (Ezek. 21:25).

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Zedekiah.

1. Who was Zedekiah’s older brother?______________________________
2. Who was the prophet during Zedekiah’s reign?_______________________
3. Describe the character of Zedekiah._______________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________

Saul

Israel's first king was a tragic figure who made a good start but finished life miserably in utter despair and hopelessness having been abandoned by God for his disobedience and rebellion.

The tragic failure of the man chosen by God to be Israel's first king in answer to their plea to Samuel, "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations" is the subject of Divine comment through the prophet Hosea chapter 13:9-11. Yahweh says, "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath." Israel had rejected their heavenly King and desired a visible monarch to lead them into war and judge them after the style of the surrounding nations. This was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Deut. 17:14. God therefore in anger gave them a king of the sort that they envisaged and when he had proven himself unworthy by repeated disobedience to specific Divine commandments, removed him "in his wrath."

In Hosea 13:9 the reason for Saul's failure is perhaps hinted at in the words "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." Saul had no one else to blame for his failure but himself. He was given every chance to succeed. All that was required of him was obedience, but he was unable to resist the voice of the people on the two occasions that his faith and obedience were tested by God. Following his rejection, he rapidly declined into a state bordering on insanity and characterized by repeated attempts to rid himself of his obvious successor.

Saul's decline is directly attributable to his pride. Following his rejection "from being king" (I Sam. 15:23) he clung to the throne almost as though it was an inherent right (I Sam. 20:30-31) and refused to recognize his divinely appointed successor. The last years of Saul's life were spent in sorrow and bitterness and the record of Samuel frequently portrays his schizophrenia as he pursued David with murderous intent and then on occasions was moved to protest his love for the man he sought to destroy.

An evil spirit had overtaken Saul as firstly he witnessed David's success in war and his own eclipse in the eyes of the nation. I Sam. 18:6-9 c/p I Sam. 8:19-20. And then watched him grow in stature as he "behaved himself wisely" in the affairs of state (I Sam. 18:12-16). It became obvious to all including Saul that "Yahweh was with David" and this only served to highlight the fact that God had abandoned Saul. The frequent frustration of his evil designs against David increased Saul's awareness of his isolation from God and finally culminated in his desperate bid to regain contact with the deceased Samuel through the medium of a witch.

The pathetic picture of "the anointed of Yahweh" groveling at the feet of a woman whose class he had sought to destroy at the commencement of his reign
and jealousy. How the words of the old prophet must have burned in the mind of Saul as he crawled across the Valley of Jezreel, back to his troops on Mt. Gilboa following his disastrous visit to Endor; "Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (I Sam. 15:22-23). The sad end of Israel's first king - death by his own hand - was testimony to Hosea's words, "O, Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." For a man who had destroyed himself by disobedience, rebellion and hatred this was the final act that sealed his eternal destiny.

It is not without significance that the name "Saul" does not appear in the records covering the history of the divided kingdom which constitute the scope of this present study. In fact it appears only once outside of the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles and that is in Isa. 10:29, where incidental reference to forget about the man who made such a disastrous job of being Israel's first king. So much did David overshadow Saul that he fades from the record into almost total insignificance. His effect upon the nation was extremely limited and with his death any influence for good or evil which he may have exerted disappeared completely.

While Saul's failure may have had little effect upon Israel's subsequent history, it is interesting to note the curious parallels between Saul and Jeroboam the first king of the northern section of the divided kingdom known as "Israel." Doubtless Jeroboam did not pattern himself after Saul, but in similar circumstances and moved by the same motives his life and character resembles that of Saul in many particulars. Compare the records of I Sam. 15:17-23 and I Kings 11:26-39; 12:25-33, and note that both are Divinely appointed and make a humble start. Both men failed when faced with a dilemma that required faith and turned to their own devices to secure their position and their power, which was threatened by the departure of their subjects. Both were men of pride with an obsession for power, manifesting stubbornness in the face of Divine rebuke. Both were idolaters who sacrificed without obedience. In contrast to Saul however the effect of Jeroboam's reign upon the history of Israel was nothing short of catastrophic, for he became known as "Jeroboam the Son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

"Bounding the view beyond were the mountains of Gilboa, scene of the defeat of Saul. To a mind filled with the history of Israel, those heights would call up the whole tragedy of the king who became haunted by the knowledge of his own rejection and filled with hatred of the successor whom God had chosen. It was the story of a man who by worldly standards was not irreligious, but who was lacking in the faith which could make the word of God a living reality in his life. Weakness in trust had in him its retribution; the ground of trust is removed, and as a result rebellion against the Divine judgment finds an outlet in the murderous pursuit of David; and "stubbornness" leads at last to the
Jehoiakim

As Judah rapidly declined in the face of the growth of Babylon in the east and the territorial ambitions of Pharaoh-necho of Egypt, the eldest son of Josiah came to the throne and hastened Judah's demise by his arrogant and cruel tyranny. Jehoiakim who had been passed over by the people as king was installed as a vassal by Necho in the place of his brother, Jehoahaz, whose reign lasted only 3 months. Necho required a man who would be prepared to harshly exact from the weakened nation the tribute demanded by him; he needed a man who would impassively bleed the nation dry in order to fulfill the obligations of his vassalage. In Jehoiakim he found that man.

The malevolence of Jehoiakim is highlighted in the record of Kings in two incidents. Firstly there was the harsh exaction of tribute from all the people of the land without consideration of the poor and needy; Secondly there was his treachery in his dealings with Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. However, it is to the prophecy of Jeremiah that we must turn to see the full extent of Jehoiakim's wickedness. In Jer. 22 Yahweh condemned Jehoiakim's wickedness for "building his house in unrighteousness." He coveted a spacious palace with luxurious embellishments and in order to obtain it he cruelly exacted unpaid labor from "the poor and needy" and even went to the extent of shedding blood to achieve his ambitions.

Only the influential intervention of Ahikam the son of Shaphan saved Jeremiah from the vengeance of Jehoiakim; Urijah another prophet of Yahweh was not so fortunate and was pursued and viciously murdered by the king for prophesying against Judah as Jeremiah had done. Cruelty, unrighteousness, covetousness and murder were crowned by arrogance towards Yahweh in the matter of the scroll dictated by Jeremiah to Baruch. The picture of Jehoiakim sitting by the fireside nonchalantly slicing pieces from the scroll and casting them into the first is the complete antithesis of Josiah's reverential trembling as the book of the law was read to him by Shaphan. It was fitting, therefore, that Jehoiakim should die ignominiously; unlamented by his people and that he should "be buried with the burial of an ass" (Jer. 22:19).

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Jehoiakim.

1. Who was Jehoiakim's father?_____________________________________
2. Name two incidents in the life of Jehoiakim._________________________ _______________________________________________________________
3. Who was the prophet during Jehoiakim’s reign?_______________________

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Saul.

Beginner:

1. What kind of man was Saul?_____________________________________
2. Why did Israel want a king?______________________________________

Intermediate:

3. What does the word “pride” mean?_________________________________
4. Did Saul follow the commandments of God? Why or why not?__________

5. Why did Saul dislike David so much?_______________________________ _______________________________________________________________
6. Why did Saul seek the advice of the witch of Endor?__________________

Advanced:

7. Write a brief description on why you think Saul was not a good king in the eyes of Yahweh.________________________________________________

seeking of consolation in the witchcraft which stands in antithesis to the God who has forsaken him" (Teaching of the Master, p. 15).
David

Without any doubt "the Beloved" is the greatest figure in the period of Israel's history from the judges to the times of Christ. In the records of the kings he is represented as a monumental figure who stood before Israel as Christ before the Ecclesia.

His name is mentioned 70 times in the record under study, most frequently in the context of a comparison between his reign and that of his successors. He is set forth as the prime example of what Yahweh desired in a king and consequently his character and reign became the standard by which all other kings were assessed (I Kings 14:8; 15:3-5).

Much could be said concerning this great man but we will limit this consideration to a brief review of his character.

David possessed what Saul lacked - the desire to obey God's appointments and submit to his will whatever the cost to himself. With David it was an inflexible rule that the Divine will always came before other considerations and because of this readiness to obey, God saw him as "a man after his own heart" (Acts 13:21-22). David's character had been formed early in life by his work as shepherd of his father's flock, an experience that had taught him many lessons, not the least of which was implicit trust in God's strength and providence (Psa. 23). The leading and tending of his father's flock was also a perfect training ground for a man who was to lead the nation whom Yahweh "the Shepherd of Israel" called the "sheep of his pasture" (Psa. 80:1; 79:13).

David developed great skill as a shepherd and this prepared him well for the greater work of reuniting, leading and feeding God's flock who were in complete disarray and confusion after Saul's death. As the Psalmist records "He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes great with young He brought him to feed Jacob His people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands" (Psa. 78:70-72).

It is an interesting exercise to compare and contrast the anointing of Saul with that of David. Samuel found David diligently keeping his father's flock in Bethlehem (I Sam. 16:11) but he found Saul wandering aimlessly in a vain search for his father's lost asses (I Sam. 9:1-10). These incidents serve to characterize the subsequent reigns of Saul and David. One man who was never in control of the people he ruled, allowing them to rebel against "the commandments of Yahweh," the other skillfully guiding and uniting the flock of God and bringing the nation of Israel to unprecedented heights of glory.

Some idea of the enormous impact of David's life and reign upon the history of Israel is obtained by a consideration of the fact that many times Yahweh would have destroyed the nation of Judah and their king for their apostasy and evil idolatry but did not do so because of the "sure mercies of

Jehoahaz

The reign of Jehoahaz the second eldest son of Josiah was brief. Scarcely had the nation recovered from the shock of Josiah's death and accomplished the installation of Jehoahaz upon the throne before Pharaoh-Necho returned to Jerusalem to bring Judah under his heel. He obviously did not trust the young king as vassal and took him captive into Egypt, installing in his place his elder brother, Jehoiakim.

The fact that the people preferred Jehoahaz the younger to Jehoiakim the eldest son, and the rightful heir to the throne, illustrates that the characters of the two men were well known. Although the reign of Jehoahaz is described as being evil, it is clear that he was preferred to the arrogant and treacherous and tyrannical Jehoiakim. The only indication given of Jehoahaz's character is the divine assessment of his reign: "And he did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh according to all that his fathers had done." From this we may assume that he served false gods and manifested no faith in Yahweh during his brief tenure on the throne.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Jehoahaz.

1. Who was Jehoahaz’s father?______________________________________

2. Who took Jehoahaz captive?______________________________________

3. Why was Jehoahaz evil?_________________________________________
ceremonial observances were hollow, and while human observers may have thought they saw evidence of a genuine spiritual revival, Yahweh was not deceived: "And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly (mg. "in falsehood), saith Yahweh" (Jer. 3:10). The total lack of genuine response from the nation is beautifully illustrated in the description of the manner in which Josiah secured a covenant to serve Yahweh from the people assembled in Jerusalem. After reading the entire Pentateuch to the people, "the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before Yahweh to walk after Yahweh, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul..." Note how the word "their" in II Kings 23:3 is in italics indicating that it is not in the original text. A comparison with II Chron. 34:31 reveals the intended meaning of Yahweh's Chronicler: "with all his heart and with all his soul." This was Josiah's covenant: the people only entered into it for fear of the king. There were few who shared Josiah's zeal (Jer. 5:1).

In view of the incorrigibility of the people and the absence of a book of the Law until late in his reign the divine summary of Josiah is truly remarkable: "And like unto him was there no king before him that turned to Yahweh with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him" (II Kings 23:25). It was inevitable that this profound reverence and love of Yahweh's word should develop in Josiah a likeness to the Deity himself (Jer. 22:15-16).

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Josiah.

1. Who was Josiah's father?________________________________________
2. Why wasn't anything bad recorded about Josiah?_________________
3. On a sheet of paper, describe how Josiah felt when he had the book of the law read to him? Why would he feel like this?

Review

1. Can you name the last 5 kings we have just discussed?______________
2. Who was the last king of Israel?__________________

David, Cont’d.

David," the covenant which he had made with him in 2 Sam. 7 that "David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem" (I Kings 11:36; 15:4; II Kings 8:19).

"In beautiful contrast to Saul was the forefather of the Lord, whose faith was as true as a sheep's in its shepherd, and who, in spite of one great sin, remained in his contrition "the man after God's own heart." David is the most profoundly God-conscious man in the Old Testament" (Teaching of the Master, p. 15).

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about David.

Beginner:
1. What were the “sure mercies of David?”__________________________
2. Why was David “a man after God's own heart?”___________________

Intermediate:
3. What did David do before he was a king?________________________
4. Why was David’s one great sin forgiven?________________________

Advanced:
5. What qualities did David possess that made him a better king than Saul?___
6. Based on your answer to question 5, are these qualities we can attain?___

Review

1. Can you name the last 5 kings we have just discussed?______________
2. Who was the last king of Israel?__________________
The accession to the throne of Solomon the son of David was different in every way to that of his father and tragically for the nation the impact of his reign upon the subsequent history of Israel was also vastly different. David's legacy to the nation has already been referred to in the summary of his life and character. By contrast Solomon's legacy to the nation was the introduction of a corruption that finally brought about its dissolution.

Solomon has the unenviable distinction of being the first king to introduce idolatry into Israel and is the man held solely responsible for the division of the kingdom - God's ecclesia. Whereas David unified and established the kingdom, Solomon corrupted and divided it (I Kings 11:11).

A review of Solomon's life reveals some great achievements and some sad failures which are made all the more tragic because he had such a unique beginning and such wonderful circumstances and opportunities for success. We will only attempt to briefly review his achievements and failures.

The early part of his reign is marked by achievements and success which made him the greatest king of his time (I Kings 10:23). Never again did Israel reach to the heights of glory attained in Solomon's early years. He was known worldwide for his unsurpassed wisdom (I Kings 10:24) and for his many writings (I Kings 4:32). The magnificence and splendor of the temple completed in his seventh year made Israel the center of universal attention and wonder. Furthermore, his early years were characterized by absolute peace and prosperity for Israel and the total unification of the people as they basked in the benefits derived from his greatness, prosperity and universal acclaim. In all of these things Solomon was an ample type of the Lord Jesus Christ in that time when he shall sit upon the throne of David ruling over the humbled nations in righteousness and peace, and presiding over the worship of his father in "the house of prayer for all nations."

Solomon's failure was copybook, for in every particular of the demands made of a king under the law (Deut. 17:14-20) he failed. He was unheed of the warning not to return to Egypt to acquire horses and sent his servants to buy horses and much else as well (I Kings 10:28-29). He was unmindful of the commandment not to multiply wives to himself, and "loved many strange women" (I Kings 11:1-2; Neh. 13:26). Furthermore, he amassed enormous wealth so that silver became of no more value in Jerusalem than stones (I Kings 10:27).

Every king was commanded to concentrate his mind upon the Law of Yahweh and write out his own copy of that law (Deut. 17:18-20). Solomon however diversified his education and God gave him wisdom in all matters in which he sought out knowledge, according to his promise (I Kings 4:29-31). Solomon became an oracle in all the philosophies and wisdom of his time he played an important part in Josiah's development into manhood. Finally, the influence of Zephaniah the prophet cannot be underestimated. The opening verse of Zephaniah's prophecy is peculiar inasmuch as it traces his antecedents back four generations to one "Hizkiah" which is identical in the Hebrew to Hezekiah. It would appear that Zephaniah was a member of the royal household having descended from Hezekiah and therefore would have had easy access to the young king. The purge of idolatry by Josiah in his twelfth year may be attributed to the influence of Zephaniah, who roundly condemned the idolatry of Judah and the black-frocked Chemarims who promoted it.

Josiah "began to seek after the God of David his father" at the age of 16. It is a credit to him that he should commence a search to find Yahweh at such an early age but it is even more remarkable when it is considered that his quest was undertaken without "a book of the Law" which was not discovered until 10 years later. At the age of 20 he had gained sufficient knowledge from his mentors concerning the worship of Yahweh to realize the extent of the apostasy into which Judah had slumped during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon, and he instituted a purge of idolatry which was carried on for six years until a dramatic event occurred that shook him to his foundations and galvanized him into even more zealous activity.

The discovery of the book of the law during the cleansing and repairing of the temple in Josiah's 18th year had a profound effect on the young king. Few have ever "trembled" at God's word as he did when it was read in his hearing by Shaphan the scribe. Josiah immediately sprang into action in a desperate bid to avert the divine judgments on a guilty nation. A delegation returned from Huldah the prophetess with a message that confirmed his worst fears, and under the shadow of the impending judgment of God the character of Josiah shone brightly as he feverishly commenced a reformation that stood no chance of success, but had as its prime objective the salvation of the nation. Such was the character of Josiah. His own position was secure and his eternal well-being bid to avert the divine judgments on a guilty nation. A delegation returned from Huldah the prophetess with a message that confirmed his worst fears, and under the shadow of the impending judgment of God the character of Josiah shone brightly as he feverishly commenced a reformation that stood no chance of success, but had as its prime objective the salvation of the nation. Such was the character of Josiah. His own position was secure and his eternal well-being guaranteed but he did not slacken his efforts to redeem the nation from the judgment that was justly about to fall upon them. A renewed and more widespread purge of idolatry was preceded by a national gathering of the people at which Josiah secured by command and coercion a covenant from them to dedicate themselves to Yahweh. A Passover followed which became renowned for its unprecedented meticulousness in observing the requirements of the Law; but it was all to no avail.

The reformation of Josiah was a dismal failure because it failed to reach the hearts of the people. Circumspection was not accompanied by introspection. Profession was not matched by performance. The nation's
Josiah

Josiah is unique amongst the kings of Israel and Judah as the only one against whom nothing adverse is recorded. While Solomon's words are true: "For there is no man that sinneth not," the divine chronicler is silent upon the subject of Josiah's weaknesses and an unblemished record remains as a monument to a truly great man. His greatness was not in any way marred by his refusal to heed the warning of Pharaoh-necho, "Forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not." Why should Josiah be any more disposed to accept the claims of a godless Gentile king than was Hezekiah in the face of the blasphemous claims of Sennacherib? His death at the hands of Necho at the early age of 39 was in fulfillment of the promise made to him that he would be removed before the wrath of Yahweh descended upon Judah and Jerusalem, and was therefore in a sense of manifestation of divine mercy. The motive of Josiah in going out against Necho was clearly to prevent Judah from becoming the meat in the political "sandwich" between Egypt and Assyria. This final act of Josiah was true to character - he always put the welfare of the ecclesia before himself and it is this aspect of his character that features most prominently in a study of his life.

Josiah ascended the throne at the age of 8 after the assassination of his father Amon and the purge of the royal courtiers responsible for his death. It is obvious that a child of such tender age could not rule the kingdom alone nor undertake his own education in divine things, and therefore the guidance and education of the boy-king that was to develop in later years one of the most zealous and single-minded of Yahweh's servants must be attributed to others. Careful examination of the record reveals four people who may have played a part in shaping the direction of Josiah's life. Firstly there was his mother Jedidiah, "the beloved" "whom Yah had adorned" with the meek and quiet spirit of the holy women of old. Secondly the influence of Shaphan the faithful scribe is undoubted. He appears to have been very close to the young king and was clearly his most trusted and reliable servant. That he was considerably older than Josiah appears from the fact that he had a son, Ahikam who was a member of Josiah's delegation to Huldah. The subsequent history of Shaphan's sons in relation to the prophet Jeremiah illustrate that the faithful scribe had ruled his own house well and in the process had probably been responsible for the early education of Josiah.

Next to Shaphan was Hilkiah the high priest who was almost certainly the father of Jeremiah the prophet (Jer. 1:1). His faithfulness shines from the record and in view of the fact that much of the responsibility of ruling the kingdom fell upon the high priest in cases such as this it may be assumed that

excelling all the great men of the east. There was in this an insidious danger which soon manifested itself.

Solomon’s mind was occupied with matters that cannot be ascertained by searching. The origins of earth's creator, the reasons behind the established order of nature and the purpose of human existence (all matters of faith to men like David) vexed a philosophic mind and resulted in Solomon embarking upon a quest of experimentation with every lust and whim of the flesh (Eccl. 1:17; 2:1-11). Never before or since has there been a man as full as Solomon and as a consequence able to fulfill every desire of the flesh. He did so and concluded that it was all "vanity and vexation of spirit."

It was inevitable that under these circumstances apostasy would result, and in due course "his wives turned away his heart," and he served the gods of the surrounding nations, introducing a corrupt form of worship into Israel which remained for 350 years until the days of Josiah when it was finally eradicated completely (I Kings 11:7).

Yahweh was enraged by Solomon's apostasy because it came about despite two unique appearances to him, warning him against "going after other gods" (I Kings 11:9-10).

Finally, God once again appeared to Solomon to inform him that the kingdom would be rent from him except for the tribe of Judah (for David's sake), and that he would be held solely responsible (I Kings 11:11-13). For the phrase, "Forasmuch as this is done of thee," Young's Literal Translation has, "Forasmuch as this is with thee," which is clearly a subtle reference to the very Law which Solomon had ignored. In the Law of the King (Deut. 17:14-20) which Solomon had broken in every particular, the king was instructed to copy out the book of the Law, to which is then added the words, "and it shall be with him," verse 19, that he may daily ponder its message and remember its demands upon him. Instead of finding this Law with Solomon Yahweh found idolatry and rebellion against the provisions of the law governing the kings.

The last words of Solomon reveal that he eventually came to a full realization of his disregard for the Law of the King, for he uses the language of Deut. 17:14-20 and quotes directly from it in Eccl. 12:8-14 saying, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole (or complete) man."

Go to Questions and Answers on the next page...
Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Solomon. Fill in the blanks where you need to.

**Beginner:**
1. What did Solomon ask God to give him so he could rule his people?_____

2. How many years did the temple take to build?_______________________

**Intermediate:**
3. Why did Solomon’s own house take longer to build? What might this say about Solomon’s character?___________________________________________________________________________

**Advanced:**
4. Solomon was the first king to introduce idolatry into Israel. How did he do this?___________________________________________________________________________

5. Why did each king have to hand write a copy of God’s law?___________________________________________________________________________

6. Did Solomon finally realize what he had done wrong in his reign? Provide scriptural proofs.___________________________________________________________________________

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Amon

The repentance of Manasseh near the end of his reign was too late to save Amon from an upbringing in the ways of the most corrupt idolatries. As a child he had known nothing else but the superstitions and immoralities practiced by his father and the nation. Jerusalem was full of idols and the youthful Amon acquired a taste for the impure rites associated with pagan idolatry. This remained with him throughout his short reign until his death by assassination at the age of 24.

When the repentant Manasseh died, Amon acceded to the throne and immediately set about restoring the idolatry his father had removed. It may be assumed from the fact that Amon met death at the hands of his own palace courtiers who had also served his father, that he was a disagreeable individual who did not endear himself to his associates. It was as well that such an evil character was removed, before the child Josiah was adversely affected by his father's ways.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Amon.

1. Who was Amon’s father?________________________________________

2. What kind of childhood did Amon have?____________________________

3. How did Amon die?_____________________________________________
judge of all the earth" may well forgive Manasseh on the principle of Ezek. 18:21-22, but he could not overlook the consequences of his corruptions.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Manasseh.

Beginner:
1. Who was Manasseh’s father?_____________________________________

Intermediate:
2. Describe Manasseh’s character early in his reign._____________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
3. Which prophet was a victim of Manasseh’s cruelty?___________________

Advanced:
4. Why does it say that Yahweh may well forgive Manasseh on the principle of Ezekiel 18:21-22? Explain these verses._______________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
5. What were some of the consequences of Manasseh’s reign?_____________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Rehoboam

The epithet "Rehoboam - the Indiscreet" points to the leading characteristic of the son of Solomon who presided over the division of the Kingdom (I Kings 11:12). He was born one year before Solomon ascended the throne and grew up knowing nothing but the prosperity, peace and opulence of his father's reign. This fact undoubtedly contributed to his lack of character development, his indiscretion and his lack of sympathy for the common people. When at the age of 41 the crucial moment arrived and confirmation of his sovereignty over the whole kingdom depended upon a correct reading of the temper of the people and a wise decision to ameliorate their conditions of service, he manifested all the characteristics of a man who had been brought up as a spoiled child, living in the lap of luxury and ease, growing up a stranger to hardship and work, and believing his position and status in life to be an inherent and inalienable right.

Rehoboam's inexperience and complete lack of political finesse and discretion stood in sharp contrast to the political acumen and cunning of Jeroboam the champion of the common people. He was simply no match for the experienced and campaign-hardened Jeroboam. God had clearly foreseen that Rehoboam by his own folly and greed would bring about a set of circumstances resulting in the division of the kingdom (I Kings 11:11-13, 35-36). During his reign Rehoboam encouraged the growth of his father's idolatry and heathen abominations flourished in Jerusalem and Judah. Even the lascivious worship of Ashtoreth was allowed to exist by the side of the worship of Yahweh and the worst immoralities were tolerated (I Kings 14:22-24). Two basic reasons for his idolatry may be suggested. Firstly his mother was an Ammonitess (a "strange woman" whom Solomon had married even before he ascended the throne) and this is twice emphasized (I Kings 14:21,31). Her influence upon Solomon and the young Rehoboam was corrupting (I Kings 11:5). Secondly, the example of his father had a telling effect upon him. It was Solomon who had taught him to "train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6), yet Solomon turned to idolatry setting his son an example which he was quick to follow.

The only wisdom manifested by Rehoboam during his reign was the thoughtful manner in which he dispersed his family throughout the cities of Judah and trained his sons in the affairs of state (II Chron. 11:18-23). This reveals that he had learned something from the disastrous events at Shechem.
Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Rehoboam.

Beginner:
1. Would you consider Rehoboam to be a spoiled young man? Why? _________________

2. Who was Rehoboam’s mother? ________________________________

Intermediate:
3. Why did Rehoboam forsake the counsel of the elders and listen to his friends? ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________

Advanced:
4. Did Rehoboam encourage his father’s idolatry? _________________

5. What was the only show of “wisdom” displayed by Rehoboam in his life? _________________
   ________________________________

6. Based on what you know about Rehoboam, would you consider him a good king? ___
   ________________________________

Manasseh

Manasseh the son of Hezekiah was without any doubt the worst king of Judah. The only mitigating factor was that near the end of his life he repented of his idolatry after a brief captivity in Babylon. By then, however, it was too late to reverse the effect of his idolatry and corruptions upon the ecclesia of God which went into captivity because "Yahweh turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal" (II Kings 23:26). The effect of Manasseh's idolatry upon the people was utterly demoralizing as the failure of Josiah's desperate reformation testifies. The greater part of Judah had become incorrigibly established in immorality and devious superstitions and nothing could be done to salvage them from it.

Not only did Manasseh literally murder thousands of God's servants during his reign but he must also be held responsible for the eternal loss of many hundreds of thousands of lives as a result of his corrupting and defiling idolatries. A deliberate campaign of corruption and organized idolatry was commenced in Judah aimed at destroying every vestige of Hezekiah's reforms. Tragically this campaign was entirely successful and what resistance did remain to it was quickly eliminated by a brutal campaign of murder as all who stood for the principles espoused by Hezekiah were massacred until blood flowed in the streets of Jerusalem. Tradition holds that one of the victims of Manasseh was Isaiah the prophet who was "sawn assunder" after having taken refuge in a hollow tree trunk. The destruction of the prophets and Yahweh's servants signaled the end for Judah because the moral fiber of the ecclesia was gone and virtually nothing remained upon which a reformation could be based.

The total demoralization of the people and the complete absence of righteousness outside of the palace and the temple is clear from the words of Yahweh through Jeremiah the prophet in the days of Josiah, the reformer: "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it" (Jer. 5:1).

As Manasseh came to the throne at the age of twelve it must be assumed that the men who guided him in the early years of his reign were responsible for directing him along an evil path, but that Manasseh responded with alacrity to the influences brought upon him during the formative years is obvious. When he attained maturity he needed no guidance in undertaking his campaigns of corruption and murder which were only halted by divine intervention resulting in his incarceration in the dungeons of Babylon. It remains to be seen whether Manasseh's repentance was genuine and sustained to the end of his life. "The
Hezekiah, Cont’d.

and then sent messengers to Isaiah seeking his intercession. Yahweh quickly answered through Isaiah with an encouraging message of support, and when Sennacherib sent a letter to Hezekiah warning him not to trust in Yahweh he went up to the Temple and laid it before Yahweh and offered a truly wonderful prayer of faith and confidence in his God.

It was at the height of this crisis that Hezekiah was stricken with a form of leprosy and was informed by Isaiah that it would be fatal. More adverse circumstances can scarcely be imagined - Judah was in the middle of an invasion by the world's most powerful monarch, who was about to march on Jerusalem the last stronghold of the nation; the king whose unswerving faith had sustained the nation in the face of this threat was now about to die, and moreover the house of David was on the brink of extinction because Hezekiah had no son who could carry on the Davidic line. In the face of this overwhelming adversity Hezekiah, lying stricken upon his death-bed turned to the only source of help that he knew could reverse the situation. The spontaneity and intensity of his supplication to Yahweh and the complete genuineness of his words and his bitter tears were only subsequently matched by the last words of the Lord upon the cross. Yahweh immediately responded to Hezekiah's prayer because his suffering servant had revealed absolute integrity and complete trust in him under the severest trial.

Hezekiah recovered, the Assyrians were overthrown and Hezekiah amassed great wealth and was internationally celebrated as a result of these dramatic developments. Yahweh had done "great things," for Hezekiah "whereof he was glad." "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem." What a wonderful God is Yahweh - his treatment of his servants is predicated upon their response to Him. Hezekiah's plaintive cry for help produced magnificent blessings, but his pride brought Yahweh's wrath upon him and the nation.

Hezekiah soon recovered from this lapse into self-reliance and humbled himself so that the wrath came not upon them in his days. He died as he had begun - a man full of faith and trust in Yahweh.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Hezekiah.

1. What “great things” did Yahweh do for Hezekiah?
2. Why was Hezekiah stricken with leprosy?

Jeroboam

The first king of the northern kingdom of Israel left an indelible mark on the history of God's Ecclesia - he became known as "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin" (this Divine epitaph is found 21 times in the record of Kings and Chronicles). Few men have been given the opportunities presented to Jeroboam and few men have so blatantly abused them as he did. He was chosen by God as a man with the potential to lead Israel away from the idolatry of Solomon, back to the faithfulness of David's reign (I Kings 11:31-39).

He must have possessed great potential to develop after David's pattern, for God promised him "a sure house" long before he became king (I Kings 11:38). No other king could claim such promises as were made to Jeroboam before his accession. However, the promises were conditional upon faith and obedience and these qualities were soon to be put to the test, and sadly for Israel, Jeroboam was found wanting.

The first indication of the ambition that was to destroy Jeroboam appears in I Kings 11:40: "Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam." Why? Who told Solomon that Jeroboam was to be his successor? We know that only Ahijah and Jeroboam knew God's intentions (I Kings 11:29; "they two were alone"). The record is explicit on this point, however, I Kings 11:26 says Jeroboam preempted the Divine timetable for the transition of power. He did not take God at His word and failed to wait for the death of Solomon (I Kings 11:34-35).

Ambition had proved stronger than faith and soon blinded him altogether. Indiscretion quickly followed as Jeroboam fled into Egypt to escape Solomon, and became familiar with the gods of that country, and in particular with Apis (the young bull). Unquestionably the apostasy of Jeroboam in introducing the worship of the golden calves into Israel can be traced to his experiences in Egypt. Upon the death of Solomon he quickly returned to Israel, anticipating the fulfillment of Ahijah's prophecy. Jeroboam was an industrious and capable man, endowed with the ability to lead men (I Kings 11:26-28). Despite his long absence he immediately assumed the role of negotiator for the discontented amongst the Ten Tribes, and from this position as leader of an influential minority he rapidly advanced to become the champion of the people, and their popular choice as king.

This rapid progress speaks volumes concerning Jeroboam's character. He was a persuasive individual; a natural leader with an irresistible personality that captivated the hearts of a work-worn, sorely burdened people who were looking for someone to espouse their cause and argue it, before the king-elect.
He was in every sense "the people's man," a socialist who contended for the people (see the meaning of his name: Yarobam - "the people will contend"), but who also had an eye for the achievement of strong personal ambitions. The apostasy of Jeroboam demonstrates a complete absence of faith, and is directly attributable to his ambition to retain power over his subjects. His idolatry, tampering with Divine appointments and attempted blackmail of the man of God from Judah, all resulted from this singular motive. He has gone down in history as the man who initiated a religious system in Israel that finally destroyed it (II Kings 17:21-23).

There are some remarkable comparisons between the lives of Saul and Jeroboam - both had humble beginnings and great potential; were Divinely appointed but lacked faith; turned to disobedience and became idolators, stubbornly resisting any attempts to turn them from their evil ways. The problem in the lives of both men was identical; pride and ambition.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Jeroboam.

Beginner:
1. Was Jeroboam a good man? 

Intermediate:
2. What phrase was always used when speaking of Jeroboam in the Scriptures? 
3. Based on your answer in question 2, how did Jeroboam do this? 

Advanced: On a sheet of paper, answer the following questions.
4. What does the word “ambition” mean? Is it a good thing?
5. Write a brief character description of Jeroboam using words from this lesson.

Review

1. Can you name the last 5 kings we have just discussed?

2. On a sheet of paper, briefly describe why you think the Kings of Judah and Israel became so wicked after the reign of Solomon.
Hezekiah

Hezekiah was the greatest king of Judah and Israel since David the beloved of Yahweh had occupied the throne of Israel 270 years earlier. The fact that he was the son of Ahaz and came to the throne while Judah was steeped in idolatry and moral corruption only serves to emphasize his greatness. Hezekiah is unique among the kings of the divided kingdom and the divine chronicler provided a full account of his reign and achievements. In the greater part of the three accounts of his reign he is presented as a wonderful type of the Lord Jesus Christ, the suffering servant of Yaweh.

The singular most important characteristic of Hezekiah that made him stand out from all his predecessors except David was his implicit trust in Yahweh: "He trusted in Yahweh God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him." This indomitable faith in Yahweh carried Hezekiah through many great and severe trials and preserved his integrity to the end of his life. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God," hence it is not surprising to find affixed to the statement concerning his faith quoted above, the following words: "For he clave to Yahweh and departed not from following Him, but kept his commandments, which Yahweh commanded Moses." The word of God was the source of Hezekiah's faith and it is clear that he had turned to it in spite of the corrupt practices of his father Ahaz.

Hezekiah patterned his life upon his father David and waited eagerly for the time when he would have the power to set about reversing Ahaz's apostasy and re-establishing the Temple services and the worship of Yahweh as it existed in the days of David. He utterly repudiated the policies of Ahaz and it is not without significance that his mother's name was Abijah - "Yah his father."

The first thing that Hezekiah did upon ascending the throne, evidently on the first day of his reign, was to open the doors of the house of God, which Ahaz had shut up. This was an act that symbolized the character of his entire reign. He opened the doors of the ecclesia to all who would enter upon the basis of faith and truth. Hezekiah set out to recover Judah from apostasy and in doing so involved both the stranger and the remnant of Israel in the north. He desired to see all who were willing to respond, brought into fellowship with God and enjoying the benefits of "peace and truth in his days."

Following his accession near the turn of the year Hezekiah immediately assembled and sanctified the priests and Levites in a desperate bid to cleanse and repair the Temple in preparation for the Passover on the 14th of Abib. They had two weeks to perform all the necessary tasks but because of the filthy

Abijah

The reign of the son of Rehoboam lasted only 3 years but was marked by constant warfare and rapid progress in the building up of Judah's armed forces. Abijah was a man of war - a belligerent character who was not prepared to adopt the "cold war" tactics of his father against Jeroboam but boldly took the war to Jeroboam in an attempt to recover the lost 10 tribes, despite the fact that his army was outnumbered 2 to 1.

The record concentrates attention on only one aspect of Abijah's life - his war against Jeroboam. Aggressiveness and belligerency characterize his short reign and in seeking a reason for this, attention must focus on the extraordinary words of I Kings 15:6. The context is the reign of Abijah and the record states "there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life," and then significantly concludes in verse 7 with the statement, "and there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam." Warfare was the heritage left to Abijah by Rehoboam his father. From the days of his early childhood right through his development into manhood and up to the time of his accession to the throne he had known nothing else but the bitterness and hatred of Rehoboam who from the division of the kingdom to his death (17 years) had maintained a continual state of war with Jeroboam.

Abijah was a product of his home life; a young man who carried on the hatred of his father for the house of Jeroboam. There is a lesson in this - where a home is filled with bitterness, resentment, vindictiveness and revengefulness as was the house of Rehoboam, the inevitable result will be the development of the same characteristics in the children who are brought up in that atmosphere. The principle is, "train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6), words spoken to Rehoboam by his father Solomon and therefore well known to him.

A close examination of Abijah's oration to Jeroboam and his army upon Mt. Zemarim recorded in II Chron. 13:4-12 reveals that he was an intelligent man with an understanding of the requirements of the Law of Moses and its relationship to Israel's national life. Note for example his reference to "a covenant of salt," verse 5; a phrase which only occurs in Num. 18:19 in respect to the priesthood of Aaron and his family. However, even in this speech it is obvious that his mind had been occupied more with the way that Jeroboam had contravened the Law rather than the way that Judah might recover itself from the apathy and laxity which had characterized Rehoboam's attitude to it.

In the final analysis Yahweh judged Abijah as a wicked king who had followed in the sins of his father and failed to follow the example of David his forefather whose heart was "perfect" or a safe repository for divine things, and
Abijah, Cont’d.

for whose sake Yahweh preserved David's seed on Judah's throne (I Kings. 15:3-5).

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Abijah.

Beginner:
1. Who was Abijah’s father? __________________________

Intermediate:
2. What does it mean to be “aggressive?” __________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

Advanced:
3. What does the word “belligerent” mean? __________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
4. What was Abijah’s home life like? Is this why he behaved the way he did? Explain. __________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
5. Did Abijah understand The Law of Moses? __________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
6. Why did Abijah fight so furiously with Jeroboam? __________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

Hoshea

Hoshea the last king of Israel is distinguished both by name and attitude to Jeroboam's idolatry. It is significant that a Hoshea (or Joshua - an Ephraimite, Num. 13:16) led Israel into the land and another Hoshea led them out of it. It is also ironical that at the end of Israel's polity a king should finally emerge who rejected the idols of Jeroboam, when all preceding kings had assiduously pursued it for the same reasons as Jeroboam - political survival, yet Hoshea was the king who presided over the dissolution of Israel.

Nevertheless, Hoshea was worthy of the judgment which fell upon his kingdom. While he may not have pursued Jeroboam's idolatry he was an unrighteous and evil man, not at all disposed to manifest faith in Yahweh. Perhaps his lack of interest in Jeroboam's calf worship was due to the fact that it was not of little consequence in preserving his kingdom from the effect of Israelites going up to Jerusalem to worship. Of far greater import now was the ominous presence of the super-power Assyria to the north which threatened to swallow up the emaciated kingdom of Israel.

As a vassal of Shalmaneser king of Assyria, the only observable characteristic of Hoshea in the record emerges and that is his treachery. Having submitted himself to Shalmaneser he undertook covert negotiations with the king of Egypt in an attempt to toss off the Assyrian yoke. The conspiracy was exposed and Hoshea was incarcerated in an Assyrian prison, never to be heard from again.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Hoshea.

1. What does Hoshea’s name mean? __________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
2. What is the only observable characteristic of Hoshea? __________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
An insight into Pekah's character comes not from the record of Kings but from the prophecy of Isaiah to Ahaz king of Judah in Isa. 7. Isaiah's prophecy relates to the invasion of Judah by Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel, and the most noticeable thing about it is the contempt shown for the two confederate kings by Yahweh: "Fear not...for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah." Not once does Yahweh mention the name of Pekah but calls him "the son of Remaliah." It is clear that Pekah was a hateful man; an ambitious ruler of a severely weakened kingdom, who abandoned all principles in order to confederate with an equally weakened Syria for the sake of political survival. His bitter hatred of "the house of David" was known by Yahweh who determined to defend Judah and destroy Pekah.

### Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Pekah.

1. Define Pekah’s character as described above._______________________________________________________________
2. Why is Pekah described in the Book of Isaiah?______________________________________________________________

### Review

1. Can you name the last 5 kings we have just discussed?________________________________________________________
2. Why did some of these kings have such limited descriptions about them?___________________________________________
3. How could these kings have avoided the evil that came upon them?______________________________________________

The third king of Judah in David's lineage was a remarkable man and the complete antithesis of his father Abijah. Though a resourceful man, prepared for war, he was not a lover of war like his father. Rather was he a lover of righteousness for which Yahweh gave him peace. The contrast between father and son is beautifully portrayed in the words of II Chron. 14:1 which speaks of the death of Abijah and the accession of Asa and concludes: "In his days the land was quiet ten years."

By far the most outstanding feature of Asa's character was his zeal and courage in commencing a reformation that sought not only to remove idolatry from Judah and restore respect for the Mosaic system, but had as its final objective the revival of the things of God in the hearts and minds of all the people of Judah. The complete success of this national revival is a measure of Asa's strength of character and zeal.

Following closely behind his courage and zeal comes his faith and complete trust in Yahweh during times of war, for the first 35 years of his reign. The war against the invading forces of Zerah and Ethiopian is a magnificent example of faith and trust, reminiscent of David's faith before the menace of Goliath the Philistine.

The preparation of Judah's defenses in a time of peace provides another fine example from the life of this outstanding ruler. He understood that war is inevitable in our life in the Truth. He did not seek it but he prepared for it and when the Truth's enemies attacked the ecclesia of God he was ready to resist them. However, when war did come he did not rely solely on his own preparations and strength but threw himself upon Yahweh. It is an immutable principle that divine providence can only work in the lives of men who are prepared to act on their best judgment and allow divine guidance to manipulate their affairs to accomplish the desired purpose. God cannot work through inactive, lethargic, and apathetic men to accomplish his purposes. Understanding this, Asa worked in cooperation with God to defend the ecclesia.

The great victory of faith by Asa over the Ethiopians produced one of the most encouraging exhortations delivered by a prophet of Yahweh to his people; "Yahweh is with you while ye be with him..." (II Chron. 15:1-7). From this developed the greatest spiritual revival since the days of David - a reformation that was only equaled again during the reign of Hezekiah. The result was a period of 20 years peace and quietness in Judah.
Tragically, the life of Asa ended on a sour note. The 20 year peace had dulled the lively faith of his earlier years, and when the war-like Baasha of Israel attacked Judah he immediately sought the help of Benhadad, king of Syria - contrast this with his reaction to the attack by Zerah the Ethiopian. Yahweh rebuked Asa through Hanani the prophet whom Asa then took and placed in stocks while at the same time oppressing those who sympathized with Hanani. For this act Yahweh smote Asa with a disease in his feet, being poetical justice for binding the feet of the prophet.

In his distress Asa (his name means "physician") who had done so much to heal Judah's "sickness" by the power of God, sought to human physicians to cure his ills. This was a revelation of the spirit of self-reliance that had clouded his last years and brought him to the grave a disappointing figure in view of the greatness of his early years.

The divine assessment is given in I Kings 15:11: "He did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh." Any assessment of his failures in later life must take into account the words of I Kings 15:14 and II Chron. 15:17: "The heart of Asa was perfect all his days."

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Asa.

Beginner:
1. Who was Asa’s father?
2. Did Asa like war?
3. What does the phrase “the land was quiet ten years” mean?

Intermediate:
4. What character features were Asa’s most outstanding?

Advanced:
5. What does the phrase “Yahweh is with you while ye be with him” mean?
6. Why did Yahweh rebuke Asa later in his life?
7. Would you say that Asa was a good king?

Obscurity shrouds the brief reign of the son of and successor of Menahem. Little is recorded of him except that he, like all his predecessors, persisted in the idolatry of Jeroboam.

The absence of any account of his acts may indicate that he was an inactive and colorless man, who achieved nothing noteworthy during his short tenancy of Israel's throne. His assassination by Pekah in the palace of Samaria and his unawareness of a conspiracy against him lend weight to this view. Only one thing is certain - Pekiah will always be obscure because of his evils against Yahweh.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Pekiah.

1. What does the absence of any description of Pekiah’s acts indicate about his character?
2. Define the word “obscure.” Why will Pekiah always be obscure?
Menahem

The account of Menahem's reign is brief but adequate to reveal him as a brutal murderer and a harsh exactor. He assassinated Shallum and then cruelly disposed of his followers in his hometown of Tiphsah. In accomplishing this task he distinguished himself by becoming the only king of Israel or Judah to adopt the Assyrian practice of "ripping up" women carrying children. He committed this abominable crime in the revengeful spirit of a frustrated tyrant "because they opened not to him."

Apart from his adherence to Jeroboam's idolatry the other important thing recorded of him is that under the burden of a heavy tribute placed upon him by Tiglathpileser, he exacted the required sum from the wealthy men of Israel in order to establish himself in power.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Menahem.

1. How would you define Menahem’s character?
2. What was one of the important things recorded of him?

Nadab

Little is known of the son of Jeroboam that would permit a firm character assessment, but to the extent which the meaning of his name may provide a clue that accords with the divine assessment of his reign, it is possible to suggest that Nadab's leading characteristic was a liberal attitude to the things of God.

All that is known of him is that he was satisfied to continue the idolatry of his father without modification despite the accumulating evidence that Yahweh had turned His face against the house of Jeroboam. Unlike Abijah his deceased brother, Nadab was an exact replica of his father and fully deserved the punishment which fell upon Jeroboam's house.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Nadab.

1. Who was Nadab’s father?
2. What does it mean to have a “liberal attitude” toward the things of God?
3. What do we know about Nadab?
Baasha

Baasha was an ideal choice as Yahweh's judge to remove Jeroboam's house in accordance with Ahijah's prophecy (I Kings 14:10-11). It is fitting that he was the son of another Ahijah (I Kings 15:27). Ruthless ambition motivated this man to seek the throne of Israel and so he became an effective instrument of judgment in God's hands.

Although Baasha reigned for 24 years, little is recorded of him except the cruel and ruthless manner in which he disposed of Jeroboam's posterity, and the warlike stance that he adopted towards Judah. He was obviously a cold, unfeeling man, driven only by considerations of personal status and profit.

Perhaps the most significant thing recorded of Baasha is the unheeding manner in which he continued the apostasy of Jeroboam despite the judgment that had been poured out upon his house. Both in the words of Jehu the prophet and in the closing summary of his reign in I Kings 16:7 it is clear that Baasha was condemned because of his failure to reflect upon the reasons why God had destroyed Jeroboam's house. If that house had been destroyed because of idolatry and apostasy, then Baasha should have realized that he too would be destroyed if he perpetuated Jeroboam's apostasy.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Baasha.

**Beginner:**
1. Who was Baasha’s father?
2. How long did Baasha reign?

**Intermediate:**
3. What does it mean to have “ambition?”
4. What was the most significant thing recorded about Baasha?

**Advanced:**
5. What were the reasons that God destroyed Jeroboam’s house?

Shallum

Shallum is one of the many figures to emerge in the record as Israel entered the turbulent period of its final years as a kingdom. The death throes of this once great nation as portrayed in Kings is truly a tragic spectacle. Israel was torn to pieces by political feuding as ambitious and cruel men strove together to obtain supreme power. Most who achieved their aim met violent deaths at the hands of other aspirants to the throne.

Shallum was no exception. He was assassinated after one month and the only thing highlighted in the record is the brevity of his reign. Nothing is said concerning his character or his brief reign, but we may assume from the account of his conspiracy and assassination of Zachariah that he was an ambitious, cold-blooded murderer who sought power for its own sake.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Shallum.

1. Why do you think there is nothing written about Shallum regarding his character?
2. Why do you think his reign was so brief?
Zachariah

The dynasty of Jehu lasted nearly 100 years in accordance with the promise that his sons would reign in Israel to the fourth generation. Zachariah the son of Jeroboam II came to the throne and within 6 months was assassinated by Shallum. He was no more and no less deserving of divine punishment than his fathers, for all had been evil kings who "departed not from the sins of Jeroboam." The only reason they had been preserved was that Yahweh faithfully fulfilled his promise to Jehu.

Zachariah died justly because of his sins and apostasy; it was simply his misfortune that he was the fourth generation from Jehu. His predecessors, who were equally worthy of a similar death, were fortunate to arrive on the scene earlier than he.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Zachariah.

1. Why was Zachariah assassinated?

2. What was Yahweh’s promise to Jehu?

Elah

Only one incident in the life of Elah has found its way into the inspired record of the kings of Israel and Judah, and that event was his assassination by Zimri, captain of his chariots.

While the army of Israel was besieging Gibbethon, Elah was drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, his palace steward. He is revealed as a man who was apathetic to the national interests of Israel because of his love for the titillating pleasures of strong drink. His complacency brought about his demise because it allowed men like Zimri, Omri and Tibni to conspire against him among the army of Israel in his absence.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Elah.

Beginner:
1. What one incident is recorded of Elah?

Intermediate:
2. What does God say about being a “drunkard?” Can you find some scriptures?

Advanced:
3. What does the word “complacency” mean? Can we be complacent? Explain.

Review

1. Can you name the last 5 kings we have just discussed?

2. On a sheet of paper, briefly describe who you think was the worst king.

3. Name some things these kings could have done to be better servants to Yahweh.
Zimri

Zimri is distinguished among the 39 kings of Israel and Judah as the man with the shortest reign - 7 days; and as the man remembered by Jezebel for his treason (II Kings 9:31).

Reckless and cruel ambition was again used by Yahweh to accomplish the destruction of Baasha's house even as He had raised up Baasha to destroy Jeroboam's house. Zimri was a reckless opportunist who eagerly sought the monarchy but without first gaining adequate support from Israel's armed forces. His coup was premature because when the bulk of the army, who were besieging Gibbethon heard of Elah's death and Zimri's accession they promptly installed Omri as king and marched on Tirzah to overthrow the usurper.

The glory of the monarchy so murderously craved by Zimri was short-lived - within 7 days he was dead by his own hand. The nature of his death illustrates his character. He committed suicide in the manner of the nihilist, virtually saying to Omri: "If I cannot sit on the throne and occupy the palace of the king at Tirzah, then neither will you." So he burnt the palace over himself. Zimri was a reckless, petty and blood-thirsty fool with an ambition that far outweighed his intelligence to accomplish it.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Zimri.

1. How is Zimri distinguished among the 39 kings of Judah and Israel?______________________________________________________________

2. Why didn’t Zimri’s reign work out?______________________________________________________________

Ahaz, Cont’d.

Before these developments, however, the faithlessness of Ahaz in its incipient form was revealed in his encounter with the prophet Isaiah at the Virgin's fountain described in Isaiah 7. Yahweh sought to convert Ahaz and to encourage him to manifest faith in him. It was God's intention to protect and defend Judah and no better grounds for faith could have been offered than the divine assurances of help against Pekah and Rezin. Ahaz was encouraged to seek a sign from Yahweh to confirm his intention to defend Judah, but Ahaz hypocritically declined the invitation. His rejoinder, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt Yahweh" is not a manifestation of humility, but rather of unbelief. Ahaz simply did not believe in Yahweh and to ask a sign would have been to acknowledge the claims of a God whose existence and power he doubted. The final words of Isaiah's prophecy concerning Pekah and Rezin had foreshadowed such a denouement: "If you trust not, surely you cannot be trusted." This is a divine principle - the trusting can be trusted; the faithful can be relied upon. The subsequent years were to reveal the truth of this principle.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Ahaz.

1. Why was Ahaz one of the worst of Judah’s rulers?______________________________________________________________

2. On a sheet of paper, describe what you think this statement means: “If you trust not, surely you cannot be trusted.”

Review

The following questions are based on what you have just read.

1. Can you name the last 5 kings we have just discussed?______________________________________________________________

2. How could some of the problems of these last 5 kings been avoided?______________________________________________________________
Ahaz

Ahaz must be rated amongst the worst of Judah's rulers. He was the complete antithesis of his father Jotham and was so perfidious throughout his reign that there are times when the divine chronicler appears almost incredulous at the extent of his apostasy. The exclamation "This is that king Ahaz," (II Chron. 28:22) fully illustrates how far Ahaz went in frustrating and antagonizing Yahweh. In all his ways he was utterly obnoxious to Yahweh. Not only was Ahaz distinguished by such exclamations concerning his personal faithlessness, but perhaps more importantly he was memorialized as the great defiler of God's ecclesia: "For Yahweh brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked and transgressed sore against Yahweh" (II Chron. 28:19).

This statement is most illuminating because of its reference to Ahaz as "king of Israel," which of course he was not. It is clear that the spirit guided Yahweh's chronicler to refer to Ahaz in this way to reveal that Ahaz had reduced Judah to the level of Israel in his sight. Ahaz was no better and in many ways was more corrupt than the wicked kings of Israel. Under his leadership Judah was indistinguishable from Israel, which was in its last stages of decay and dissolution.

Furthermore, the phrase "he made Judah naked" provides the key to Ahaz's character. Rotherham translates: "for he had given the rein in Judah." Where there is no faith the flesh completely dominates human life. Ahaz was totally devoid of faith and gave himself over to the most corrupt forms of idolatry in order to satisfy fleshly lusts. In doing this he opened the flood-gates of the corruption that simmered beneath the surface during his father's reign (II Chron. 27:2). He gave the people what they sought, open "religion" with no restraints.

The effect of this wholesale idolatry was to shut the doors upon eternal life for an entire generation and this was symbolized by his act of shutting the doors of the house of God and preventing the activities of the Levitical priesthood. Judah's legitimate worship ceased and was replaced by Ahaz's own abhorrent system adopted from Syria. Not only did he shut the temple doors, but he also ransacked it for the holy vessels in order to bribe Tiglathpileser of Assyria to assist him against Syria and Israel. Following his reverses in his conflict with the latter and his failure to secure Assyria's help he sent to Damascus to obtain the design of its altars so that he could establish an altar in Jerusalem in order to worship Syria's gods. He removed and repositioned the laver and the altar of burnt offering in the temple court and set up his Syrian altar in their place. His reasoning was that if the gods of Syria had helped them in defeating Judah, they would help him if he worshipped them. Such was the incredible perfidy of Ahaz.

Omri

The father of Ahab became the most powerful influence on the kingdom of Israel since Jeroboam the first king. He established a dynasty which lasted nearly 50 years and had a profound influence on the destiny of the nation. It was Omri who built the city of Samaria which was the capital of Israel until the Assyrian captivity. It was Omri who brought up and educated Israel's worst king - Ahab: and doubtless played a part in forging the political alliance with Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, which led to Ahab taking in marriage Jezebel his daughter. This was an arrangement which was to have immeasurable consequences for Israel and Judah.

Omri was a politically successful man because he was self-motivated and determined. He possessed a self-interested initiative and was evidently a man capable of immense influence in the lives of other people. This is the impression gained from the brief record of his life and one important reference to him in Micah 6:16.

Micah records, "For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab." This is a divine commentary upon Omri - he was a man of ideas and of schemes; albeit evil schemes. From these ideas he formulated principles and statutes which were readily grasped and acted upon by Ahab his son. The power and influence of Omri's statute-making is revealed in a curious description of Athaliah his granddaughter (II Chron. 22:2-3). She is here spoken of as the daughter of Omri, not as the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. The reason becomes apparent when in verse 3 it is recorded that Ahaziah "also walked in the ways (or works, Mic. 6:16) of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his counselor to do wickedly." Athaliah was her son's statue-maker, hence she is termed the daughter of Omri.

Omri left an indelible mark on the history of his nation - His reign was a turning point in that history and commenced an even greater period of apostasy than that which had existed from the days of Jeroboam. Tragically, the statutes of Omri also found their way into Judah and ushered in one of Judah's darkest periods in the years subsequent to the reign of King Jehoshaphat.
Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Omri.

Beginner:
1. Who was Omri’s son?___________________________________________
2. How long did Omri’s dynasty last?_________________________________

Intermediate/Advanced:
3. On a sheet of paper, briefly describe the character of Omri.
4. How can we avoid a character like Omri’s?__________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Jotham.

1. Was Jotham a successful leader?___________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

2. What was the most important feature of Jotham’s life? _________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

The career of Jotham was relatively short but enormously successful. He came to the throne as a coregent with his father Uzziah, who was forced out of public life through the leprosy contracted in the temple as a result of his presumption. It appears that Jotham's sole reign lasted only about 6 years, but throughout his short reign he followed the example of his father's early years and sought Yahweh, who in turn blessed him.

The history of Jotham's reign is very short but sufficient is recorded to clearly indicate that Jotham was one of Judah's finest rulers. Like his father he was successful at home and abroad; his military campaigns and internal projects to fortify Judah were all divinely blessed until he "became mighty." The only deficiency of his reign was that his dedication to Yahweh was not shared by the majority of the people of Judah. After the divine estimation of Jotham the record concludes ominously: "And the people did yet corruptly." Jotham's personal integrity was beyond question but he appears to have been unaware of the desperate need for a reformation in the ecclesia. This had to wait till the reign of Hezekiah, his grandson.

The most important feature of Jotham's life was that his success was directly related to his godliness. The account is explicit: "So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared (established or fixed) his ways before Yahweh his God." The grounds upon which present and ultimate success are predicated have not changed; "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. 66:2).
son of David who occupied the throne of Yahweh in Jerusalem. He had been uniquely blessed by Yahweh; the kingdom of Judah was at rest enjoying the bounty of his agricultural programs. Furthermore, his military campaigns had subdued the surrounding nations who now stood in awe of Judah's strength. Might it not be conceivable that he, Uzziah, had fulfilled at least in measure the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the work of Israel's Messiah.

Only such a sense of self-importance could explain the boldness of Uzziah in entering the temple to offer incense upon the incense altar before the veil. It is clear from the record of this act of presumption that he considered himself to be equal to the priests who challenged him because he disputed with them before the incense altar. So inflated had his opinion of himself become that he considered himself to be above the divine stipulations concerning entry into the sanctuary. He was so completely confident of his personal standing before Yahweh that he saw no need for a mediator. It is clear that Uzziah had begun to think that he was the "Messiah."

Judgment upon his presumption was rapid. Before Uzziah could express his wrath to the company of priests who had pursued him into the temple, the dreaded scourge of leprosy appeared in his forehead = a sign from Yahweh of the source of his problem. There was corruption in his thinking. So Uzziah lived out his days with Leprosy in his forehead; the symbol of corrupt thinking and a defiled conscience, and was completely cut off from all contact with the temple by virtue of his uncleanness. It is highly significant that as the would-be "Messiah" died in his corruption, Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 12:41 - reference to Isa. 6) and said of him: "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple."

In summary, the epithet, "The Presumptuous Pragmatist" was chosen to encapsulate the character of Uzziah because he was a man who believed that practical success justified claims clearly contradictory to divine laws. It took some 40 years for his attitudes to be so clouded by self-esteem and for the grounds of humility to be removed, but in the end his character was revealed and his last recorded "act" has probably sealed his eternal destiny.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Uzziah.

1. On a sheet of paper, explain what II Chron. 26:5 means when it says, “as long as he sought Yahweh, God made him to prosper.” Is there a lesson for us?

2. What led to Uzziah’s downfall?

Ahab has the unenviable distinction of being known as the worst king to sit upon the throne of Israel. He owes much of that distinction to the influence of his wife, Jezebel, who stirred him up to do evil (I Kings 21:25-26).

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to suggest that Jezebel was responsible for all of Ahab's evils. The record clearly reveals Ahab as a strong and determined individual who did not lack either courage or enterprise. Couple that with the education and guidance he received from his father Omri "the statute-maker" and it is obvious that Ahab would have been an evil king like his father without the influence of Jezebel. She had the effect of moving him to far greater evils than he might have committed by himself and was responsible for the introduction of a new and destructive element that reduced Israel to a stronghold of Paganism.

The inspired Historian almost appears incredulous as he penned the words of I Kings 16:31, "And it came to pass as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him." Baal worship had been eradicated from the land by Israel under Joshua, and though it had reappeared for brief periods during the times of the judges it had virtually been extinct during Israel's history as a monarchy. Now the god of the Amorites and Canaanites was once again firmly entrenched in the land from which his former devotees had been forcibly evicted. It is for this reason that reference is made to the fulfillment of a prophecy made by Joshua, in the record of Ahab's reign (I Kings 16:34).

Jericho was the first city to fall to Israel and as such it represented the fall of the entire land to Israel. With its fall the doom of Baal and his devotees was signaled. It is significant that Jericho was rebuilt during the reign of Ahab and that reference to it should be placed immediately after the condemnation of Ahab's vile Baal worship and evil idolatries. We are being informed in a curious way that as far as Yahweh was concerned the Amorites and Canaanites were once again in control of the land of Canaan. They were there in the form of Ahab and his house, and the Baal worshipers of Israel.

Considerable space is devoted to the reign of Ahab in the record of the Kings, largely because of his association with Elijah the prophet and Jehoshaphat king of Judah. In all the accounts considered in these notes he emerges as a man fixed in the ways of idolatry and wickedness and only occasionally and momentarily moved to recognition of Yahweh and pangs of conscience under the influence of Elijah. Despite the many opportunities given to Ahab to reform and the miracles performed to convince him of
Ahab, Cont’d.

Yahweh’s existence he stubbornly continued in his evil ways. Only the condemnation of his house delivered by Elijah in Naboth’s vineyard produced any sign of remorse in Ahab but even this was short-lived.

Ahab died by the Divine hand, fully deserving the reputation he had as Israel's worst king. The manner of his death and the washing of his chariot in the pool of the harlots was a fitting end for such a man. He had given himself over to Jezebel the harlot of Zidon - in the end, his life blood was washed into the cesspool that harbored all the filth and corruption of the very priestesses he had installed to conduct his immoral Baal worship in Samaria.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Ahab.

Beginner:
1. Who was Ahab’s father?_________________________________________
2. Was Ahab solely responsible for his actions? Why or why not?___________
   _________________________________________________________________
3. Who was the prophet during the time of Ahab?_______________________

Intermediate:
4. Based on what you know of Ahab and Jezebel, briefly describe why this marriage was not a positive role model?_____________________
   _________________________________________________________________
5. What was “Baal worship?”_______________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
6. What was the first city to fall to Israel and why was it rebuilt during Ahab’s reign?__________________________________________

Advanced:
7. Why was so much space devoted to Ahab in the record of the Kings?____
8. Why was Ahab recorded as the worst king to sit upon the throne of Israel?__

Uzziah

Uzziah is one of the most interesting, but also one of the most tragic, figures of the period of the kings. Like his father Amaziah, and his grandfather Joash he began well and the greater part of his reign witnessed great achievements and success, but the last years of his life were spent in abject misery as a result of one serious act of presumption against Yahweh.

Uzziah was a self-motivated man. He was industrious and totally dedicated in his efforts to establish the kingdom of Judah. He always had a project in hand and throughout the early part of his reign was never idle in his attempts to build up the ecclesia of God. His achievements with divine help ranged from Dramatic victories over the Philistines and Arabians in the south to the establishment of an agricultural society in Judah, with formidable defenses of international renown.

The greatness of Uzziah’s achievements and fame is repeatedly emphasized in II Chron. 26:1-15, and the reason for it is provided in verse 5 and again in verse 15: "as long as he sought Yahweh, God made him to prosper," and: "and his name spread far abroad; for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong." Uzziah sought Yahweh and as a consequence his initiative and determination were rewarded with divine blessings that produced remarkable and unique results. There is a lesson in this for the servants of God in all ages. However, there is another important reason why the record is at pains to highlight the magnitude of Uzziah's accomplishments.

Unmitigated success sometimes develops self-confidence and self-esteem; this was the effect it had upon Uzziah as is amply expressed in II Chron. 26:16: "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction.” "Pride cometh before a fall" and the fall of Uzziah was great indeed. For something close to 40 years he had enjoyed enormous success in every project to which he had put his hand, and was uniquely blessed by Yahweh so that his name was widely known and respected. At the height of his success the prophet Isaiah commenced his ministry with the message of Isa. 2: "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks.” Isaiah's message was that "Judah and Jerusalem" should attain greatness and international respect through the success of Israel's Messiah. Uzziah had conquered the surrounding nations, was internationally famous and had built Judah into an agricultural society of considerable greatness in those days.

The question that began to occupy the mind of Uzziah was, "when Messiah cometh, shall he do greater works than this man?"He after all, was the
**Jeroboam**

Yahweh's historian has only recorded the military exploits of Jeroboam II as he set about recovering the territory lost to Syria during the reigns of Jehu and Jehoahaz. The only other thing noteworthy concerning him is that he, like all his predecessors continued the idolatry of "Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin."

It is evident that Jeroboam was a capable and determined warrior and military tactician. His strength as a military leader was used by Yahweh to restore Israel to a measure of viability as a kingdom in what must have been a final attempt to recover His backsliding people from a deeply ingrained apostasy.

Jeroboam II was not the man, however, who could lead Israel in a spiritual reformation. The object in undertaking his military campaigns was purely political and self-centered. He owed his military success and the unusual length of his reign to the faithfulness of Yahweh who had promised Jehu that his children would sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation (II Kings 10:30).

**Questions and Answers**

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Jeroboam.

1. What does it mean to be a dedicated warrior and military tactician?_______

2. What does it mean for a person to be “self-centered?”________________

**Jehoshaphat**

This king has gone down in the annals of Israel's history as one of its finest rulers. Few kings ever rose to the heights attained by Jehoshaphat and few experienced his success and national acclaim. He excelled in the leadership of men and was unsurpassed as an organizer and educator of the people in divine things, for which he was mightily blessed. Under his leadership and guidance Judah became a powerful and prosperous nation, greatly feared by their neighbors. And yet in spite of all this Jehoshaphat must be held responsible for making a marriage alliance with the house of Ahab that almost brought Judah to total disaster. The trouble into which his persistent attempts to confederate with Israel, brought Judah during his reign and following his death leave a dark shadow on an otherwise unblemished record.

Jehoshaphat is therefore something of an enigma. A great man with clear and positive objectives within Judah, who nevertheless ignored the dangers of compromise with the house of Ahab. A wise king who saw the need to educate all his people in the things of God so as to fortify them against the gentile evils introduced into Israel, but who strangely reversed his policy of separation from Israel and by a marriage alliance introduced into Judah the corrupt offspring of Ahab and Jezebel, apparently not realizing that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." He was a powerful military warrior who sought and received divine help, but was seemingly unaware that both his military power and divine help would leave him when he made an alliance with Yahweh's enemies. In short, Jehoshaphat was a man who fixed his heart to serve Yahweh, but who appears to have never fully appreciated the principles that govern true fellowship, as a result of which his own standing before God was constantly jeopardized.

There were two distinct phases in the life of Jehoshaphat as there was in the life of Asa his father. The record presents these in an interesting way in the early verses of II Chronicles 17 and 18. In the former, the language used is of a man ascending to great heights through a policy of separation from Israel and strong defense at home. In the latter the emphasis is upon descent - "Jehoshaphat went down" through a policy of compromise with Ahab and integration with Israel's military forces. The record of II Chronicles 17 is a moving account of a man who "soared" to great heights in the truth through complete trust in Yahweh, coupled with a sensitivity to the dangers of the world about him and the need to fortify the ecclesia against those dangers by the spiritual education of every member. The latter phase of his reign saw a complete change of policy and is marked by a gradual decline through the marriage alliance with the house of Ahab, which eventually culminated in
Jehoshaphat, Cont’d.

Athaliah the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel seizing complete control of the ecclesia. On no less than three occasions did Jehoshaphat seek to confederate with Israel in military and trading ventures and each occasion was a disaster for Judah - only the intervention of Yahweh through Elisha prevented the third alliance from becoming a total disaster. The great lesson of Jehoshaphat's life is therefore, that compromise with error and idolatry inevitably leads to disaster, despite original strength. The key to success is to be found in the example of Jehoshaphat's early years.

In summary, Jehoshaphat was a righteous and dedicated servant of Yahweh who walked uprightly all his days and left a rare example for subsequent generations and kings of Judah. Note Elijah's estimation of Jehoshaphat (II Chron. 21:12). The most important feature of his reign was the diligent and thorough manner in which he sought to educate the ecclesia in spiritual things.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Jehoshaphat.

Beginner:
1. Why was Jehoshaphat one of Israel’s finest rulers?

Intermediate/Advanced:
2. What does the phrase “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” mean?

3. Why did Jehoshaphat’s reign start to decline?

4. What was the great lesson of Jehoshaphat’s life? Is this a lesson for us?

Jehoash

The inspired record of Kings is concerned only with one incident during the reign of Jehoash and that is the last prophecy of Elisha the prophet. The picture of Jehoash that emerges from a study of this incident is of a man who was conscious of Elisha's standing before Yahweh but who could not bring himself to manifest Elisha's conviction in him. In the sorrowful circumstances of the impending death of the old prophet, Jehoash was moved to tearfully address him with the words used by Elisha himself at the departure of Elijah: "O, my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof."

Jehoash stood in awe of the great prophet and recognized his importance to the nation, but he just did not possess sufficient faith to make the most from the last prophecy of the "saviour" (II Kings 13:5) that Yahweh had sent to Israel.

Commanded to strike the ground with the "arrows of deliverance from Syria" he indifferently smote 3 times and stopped. Elisha was wroth for he knew that the promised deliverance would now be cut short because of the failure of Jehoash to fully enter into this enacted symbolism. It revealed him for what he really was: a man lacking conviction in Yahweh and hence indifferent to a deliverance promised through an aged, sick and dying prophet.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Jehoash.

1. Who was the prophet during Jehoash’s reign?

2. Describe Jehoash’s character.

3. Why did Jehoash fail to fulfill the prophecy?

4. What is a lesson for us from this incident?
Jehoahaz

Little is recorded of the son of Jehu, Yahweh's avenger, that enables a full character assessment to be made. Jehoahaz was content to walk in the idolatry of Jeroboam as was his father who had been anointed by Elisha to destroy the vile Baal worship of Ahab and Jezebel. He was therefore of the same stamp as all the other kings of Israel, who for the sake of political expediency promoted the idolatrous calf-worship of Bethel and Dan.

The subservience of Israel to the surrounding nations, which had commenced during the last years of Jehu, grew more intense in the reign of Jehoahaz as Yahweh delivered them into the hands of Hazael and Benhadad of Syria in retribution for their stubborn idolatry and apostasy. In the extremity of his oppression by Syria, Jehoahaz was moved to seek Yahweh and was heard by him because Yahweh had compassion on Israel which was rapidly declining towards total dissolution.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Jehoahaz.

Beginner:
1. Who was Jehoahaz’s father?______________________________________

Intermediate/Advanced:
2. What does it mean to be “subservient” to the surrounding nations?____
3. Why was Jehoahaz moved to seek Yahweh?__________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

Review

1. Can you name the last 5 kings we have just discussed?_______________
2. On a sheet of paper, briefly describe why you think Athaliah was allowed to rule. Why was her wickedness not stopped sooner?

Ahaziah

The brief reign of the eldest son of Ahab was characterized by continual misfortune. External peace was shattered with the revolt of the vassal kingdom of Moab, and disaster struck at home when Ahaziah fell from a balcony of his palace and was fatally injured. On his death-bed Ahaziah reveals himself to be a genuine product of Ahab and Jezebel by sending to the center of the pagan god Baal-zebub for information regarding his future. Such demonstrations of infidelity and idolatry were to be expected from the children of Jezebel, but it was nevertheless an appalling state of affairs that such a man should sit on the throne of Israel once occupied by David, the beloved. How low Israel had fallen through the apostasy of Ahab and his unholy alliance with Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians.

So infuriated was Yahweh with the infidelity of Ahaziah that he intervened through Elijah and passed the death sentence upon him. So he died of the injuries sustained in the fall from the balcony of his palace - a fitting end for a man who ignored the law of Deut. 22:8 which provided for a safe place upon the housetop where prayer to Yahweh could be offered; but instead sent to offer his prayers before the pagan god of the dung-heap.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Ahaziah.

1. Who was Ahaziah’s father?_______________________________________
2. Was Ahaziah an idol worshipper? Why?____________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
3. How did Ahaziah die?___________________________________________

Review

1. Can you name the last 5 kings we have just discussed?_________________
2. What were some things that made Ahab such a wicked king?__________
Jehoram (Israel)

Whereas Ahab's eldest son Ahaziah had vigorously pursued his father's Baal worship, Jehoram the younger son who acceded upon the accidental death of his brother, was a "moderate" in idolatry, by comparison. He removed the idol to Baal from Samaria and reinstituted the more innocuous but no less evil idolatry of Jeroboam. Although both were abhorrent to Yahweh, Jehoram probably considered his action to be a grand gesture of conciliation to Judah and to Yahweh the God of Jehoshaphat.

His approach to Jehoshaphat for military assistance after the revolt of the king of Moab, reveals him as a diplomat of some skill and confirms the view that he considered his rejection of Baal as a concession to Judah which would permit a military alliance to be established with Jehoshaphat. The message sent to Jehoshaphat seeking his help is couched in diplomatic terms and casually assumes that no impediment to an alliance existed. Following the debacle of Ramoth-Gilead and the stern rebuke of Jehoshaphat for his alliance with Ahab it might have been expected that never again would Jehoshaphat need to be admonished with the words: "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate Yahweh" (II Chron. 19:2). However, now that Baal worship had been officially rejected in Israel by Jehoram, perhaps Jehoshaphat considered that the situation was different. Whatever may have been Jehoshaphat's feelings, he foolishly entered into a military alliance with Israel that almost ended in disaster.

The campaign against Moab is the only event in which an insight into Jehoram's character is offered. He is revealed as a man who recognized Yahweh but placed no faith in him. As soon as adversity threatened the welfare of the confederate armies he ascribed the misfortune to Yahweh. Not for one moment did he entertain the obvious fact that the troubles experienced were directly attributable to his evils and that of his father's house.

Yahweh revealed what he thought of Jehoram in the encounter that king had with Elisha at the height of the crisis in the wilderness of Edom, saying through the prophet: "What have I to do with thee? Get to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother...surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee."

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Amaziah.

Beginner:
1. Who was Amaziah’s father?

Intermediate:
2. What were the two leading characteristics that shaped Amaziah’s destiny?

Advanced:
3. What does the word “mediocre” mean? Can we be “mediocre” in the Truth? How can we avoid it?

4. Describe Amaziah’s character before God.
Amaziah

The epithet "The offensive infidel" seems at first sight too severe an indictment of a king who is assessed by Yahweh's recorder with the words, "he did that which was right in the sight of Yahweh, but not with a perfect heart." This divine estimation of Amaziah relates to his early years in which he was content to walk in the ways of his father Joash, though not with the singleness and integrity of David. This early period of his reign was characterized by mediocrity and it was clear that his true character had yet to be revealed. When the real Amaziah emerged he manifested himself with such rashness, arrogance and infidelity that Yahweh sought to destroy him.

A review of Amaziah's life reveals two leading characteristics that shaped his destiny - infidelity and arrogance. Mediocrity in the Truth is not a sound basis for ultimate success. The man who is not fully committed to Yahweh will eventually be tested to see if the foundation of his life is firm. That test came to Amaziah in his war with Edom. In what is an incredible display of infidelity to Yahweh, Amaziah defeated Edom with divine help and then took their gods as his own. Surely it must have occurred to him that the gods of Edom had been powerless to save their devotees from his hand. Amaziah, however, rejected Yahweh who had given him the victory over Edom and chose to serve the impotent idols of the conquered.

Arrogance is a product of pride and Amaziah is revealed as a very proud man. Although he was prepared to accept the advice of the first prophet sent to him to warn him of the dangers of hiring mercenaries from Israel; the second encounter after his victory over Edom is a classic demonstration of pride and arrogance. Before the prophet of God could conclude his words he was rudely and abruptly interrupted by Amaziah, who using his power and authority, taunted and threatened the prophet in order to silence him. From that time on Yahweh sought to destroy him and significantly used Amaziah's own arrogance and pride to that end.

Confident after his victory over Edom, Amaziah challenged Jehoash of Israel to war and in circumstances divinely guided was defeated and utterly humiliated. Disgraced in the eyes of his own people and reduced to powerlessness by Jehoash, Amaziah lived on for 15 years until a conspiracy among the people gathered sufficient momentum and he met an ignominious death at Lachish. This was a fitting end for a king who had by rashness and arrogance alienated himself from both his God and his people.

Amaziah is distinguished among the kings through his remarkable ability to offend people. Thoughtlessness resulted in offense to the mercenaries of Israel; ruthlessness to the captives of Edom outraged the remnant of that nation;

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Jehoram (King of Israel).

1. Who was Jehoram’s father?________________________________________

2. Describe the character of Jehoram._________________________________
The righteousness of Jehoshaphat was sharply contrasted with the wickedness of Jehoram, his son, in the circumstances surrounding the accession of the latter to the throne. True to his character, Jehoshaphat bestowed the crown upon his eldest son according to the law of the firstborn, but not satisfied with this Jehoram brutally murdered his younger brethren in order to remove all rivals to the throne. That he was moved to commit this vile crime by his wife, Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, is beyond dispute. Murder was always considered as a justifiable political expedient by Jezebel and her offspring in order to secure power, and that clearly was the object of Jezebel and Athaliah in becoming involved in the affairs of Judah.

Jehoram was only a pawn in the plans of Jezebel and her daughter to take control of the affairs of both kingdoms. The subsequent actions of Athaliah confirm that she harbored the ambition of ruling Judah. Jehoram allowed himself to be manipulated to this end and is portrayed in the record as a man who had little or no control of the affairs of his family or the kingdom, although he manifested shrewdness in matters of self-interest and self-preservation.

The history of Jehoram is a long list of disasters as one problem after another came upon him until he was finally smitten by a dreaded disease which brought him to a premature and excruciating death. He fully deserved such an end because of the evils he introduced into Judah. Backed by Athaliah he embarked upon a deliberate campaign to pollute the minds and corrupt the practices of his people, thus undoing all the work of his father, Jehoshaphat. It is recorded that he seduced Judah to commit adultery by introducing the vile and immoral "worship" of Baal into his kingdom.

So incensed was Yahweh with the evils of Jehoram that he moved Elijah, who had earlier been removed from the scene in the dramatic circumstances recorded in II Kings 2, to send a letter of condemnation to him proclaiming his impending doom.

Jehoram was a man of the flesh whose evils were made immeasurably more gross through the influence of Athaliah and his mother-in-law (Jezebel), than they might have been had not Jehoshaphat foolishly forged a marriage alliance with Ahab. The consequences of this marriage alliance for Jehoram, his brethren and the nation of Judah were nothing short of catastrophic and plunged God's ecclesia into one of its darkest periods. Clearly the lesson of this disaster is two-fold:

1. Fellowship boundaries which are established by departure from the Truth, doctrinally or morally must not be crossed except where evidence clearly exists that the doctrinal and moral deviations have been eradicated, and

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### Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Joash.

**Beginner:**
1. Who was Joash's father?_____________________________________
2. Who reared Joash during his youthful reign?_____________________

**Intermediate/Advanced:**
3. Why did Joash stop caring for the things that Jehoiada had taught him?______________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
4. What would make Joash slay Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada?_______________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
The sensual pleasures associated with the idol-worship in the high places had not been forgotten and the princes of Judah sought a return to the open "religion" of the high places with all its subtle attractions for the flesh. Jehoiada would not have tolerated such a thing and they knew it, but now he was gone and they were sure that the Truth did not run as deep in Joash as it had in his uncle. They were right and Joash succumbed to their pressure and immediately proceeded to undo all the good of his early years.

Yahweh sent prophets to warn Joash of the consequences of his apostasy but he and the princes of Judah were unmoved until the spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, who had become the High Priest upon the death of his father. So vehemently did Zechariah condemn the rulers of Judah for their apostasy that they conspired against him and secured his death by commandment of the king. Joash had turned full circle - from a child totally dependent upon Jehoiada he had now become a ruthless murderer through the influence exerted upon him by the princes of Judah. The result was the death of a man (his own cousin) who was endeavoring to uphold the same principles which his father had taught Joash. This fully illustrates how shallow his character was and reveals him as a man who was easily influenced to do good or evil, depending on the prevailing attitudes of those with whom he was associated.

Joash the boy-king and Zechariah the High Priest elect had shared the same home and received the same education from Jehoiada. They were cousins and it is possible that they had grown up together. Yet in the crisis Joash "remembered not the kindness" of Jehoiada without whom he could not have reigned, but "slew his son." Thus the record presents him as being callously ungrateful as well as being shallow.

The demise of Joash was fitting. A small army from Syria decimated Judah's forces and slew the princes who had been partners in Joash's crimes. The invading forces left Joash weakened and helpless and this tragic king met death at the hand of those upon whom he was dependent in his distress - his own servants.

Go to Questions and Answers on the next page...

2. Selection of a marriage partner is a crucial decision in determining the direction of any person's life. Unity of mind and purpose in the things of the Truth are essential for success. It was because Jehoshaphat ignored both of these principles, that Judah was plunged into apostasy.

Jehoram was a self-seeking murderer; a corrupter of his people and a man moved by his wife to commit the grossest of evils. He died as he had lived - in the corruption of his flesh. The inspired record summarizes the end of Jehoram by saying: "He departed without being desired."

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Jehoram (King of Judah).

Beginner:
1. Who was Jehoram’s father?__________________________
2. Why did he murder his younger brethren?__________________________
3. Who was Jehoram’s wife?__________________________

Intermediate:
4. Was Athaliah evil? Explain.__________________________
5. What did God tell Elijah to do to Jehoram?__________________________

Advanced:
6. What does the Scripture mean when it says, “He departed without being desired”?__________________________
Ahaziah

The youngest son of Jehoram reigned only 1 year, and was completely overshadowed in all that he did by his infamous mother, Athaliah. Being the only survivor of Jehoram's sons he was installed on the throne of Judah as a puppet by Athaliah, who had not yet resolved to seize supreme power for herself. She dominated her 22-year-old son and counseled him to do wickedly after the ways of the house of Ahab. The only thing recorded concerning Ahaziah's character is that he was willing to walk in the counsel of his mother, and abandon himself to gross evils as his father had done.

Ahaziah was inseparable from the house of Ahab. He was a true son of Jezebel (his grandmother) and it was therefore fitting that he should receive divine retribution along with the rest of Ahab's house. Upon his visit to Samaria to see his convalescing uncle with whom he had recently joined in war against Syria, he was found by Yahweh's avenger, Jehu, who struck him down. As the record simply states: "The destruction (treading down) of Ahaziah was of God by coming to Joram."

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Ahaziah.

Beginner:
1. Who was Ahaziah’s father? Who was his grandmother?

Intermediate/Advanced:
2. What does it mean to be “overshadowed” by someone?

3. What is the only thing recorded concerning Ahaziah’s character?

Review

1. Can you name the last 5 kings we have just discussed?

2. On a sheet of paper, briefly describe your feelings about King Jehoshaphat.

Joash

Joash is one of the great tragedies of the period of the kings. His early reign under the spiritual guidance of Jehoiada marked a turning point in Judah's histories. The dark days of Athaliah's rule and the supremacy of Ahab's house in the affairs of the royal house of Judah came to an abrupt end with the death of "that wicked woman" and the accession at the age of seven of the sole and rightful heir to David's throne. The firm and wise hand of Jehoiada the high priest guided both the young king and the nation to a return to the purity of the Truth and faithful service to Yahweh which had suffered dreadfully through neglect under the successive reigns of Jehoram, Ahaziah and Athaliah. These had promoted the idolatrous Baal worship of the house of Ahab. All went well until the death of Jehoiada and then the real character of Joash was revealed with tragic results for him and the nation.

Jehoiada the High Priest was the uncle of Joash by his marriage to Jehoshabeath the sister of Ahaziah, the young king's father. During the early years of Joash's reign he was virtually king, as the young child would have been incapable of ruling Judah from the age of seven. In his capacity as "king-priest" Jehoiada was the strength and the conscience of God's ecclesia as it slowly recovered from the apostasy of Joash's predecessors. While Jehoiada stood behind Joash he reigned well and the nation responded to his reforms and his efforts to repair the temple. Princes and people alike willingly and joyfully contributed to the repairing of the temple and such was Joash's enthusiasm for the project that he was moved to censure his uncle for what he interpreted as procrastination.

However, Joash's zeal and enthusiasm for Yahweh were shallow and short-lived. When the towering presence of Jehoiada was removed by old age, the young king who had been dependent upon his uncle all his life was suddenly thrust upon his own resources, and when the first test came he was found wanting. The moral conscience of the nation was gone and the princes of Judah who had responded to the imposing stature of Jehoiada in divine things knew that Joash did not possess the same depth of character nor the old priest's unshakable faithfulness to Yahweh. They perceived that Joash was not an individual in his own right and that he had been entirely dependent upon his mentor and guide for direction and strength. Sensing that the time was right to uncover their real sympathies they approached Joash with a proposal to reintroduce the idolatrous and fleshly worship of Asherah which Jehoiada had removed.
Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Athaliah.

Beginner:
1. Who were Athaliah’s parents?

Intermediate:
2. Why was Athaliah called “that wicked woman?”

Advanced:
3. What is significant about Athaliah reigning “six” years?
4. How would you characterize the reign of Athaliah?
5. Should women be in positions of power like Athaliah was? Why or why not?

Jehu

Jehu is one of the most curious characters to appear in the record of the kings. He manifested an unquenchable zeal for Yahweh while undertaking the mission of wiping out Ahab's house, but as soon as he came to the throne he casually reintroduced the apostasy of Jeroboam and completely ignored the Law of Yahweh concerning Israel's worship. In order to ascertain his character, attention must therefore be focused on what motivated his professed zeal for Yahweh.

Jehu massacred in succession Jehoram, Ahaziah, Jezebel, seventy sons of Ahab, forty-two princes of Judah and many thousands of Baal worshippers gathered by his decree to a special conference in Samaria. The cool and calculated ruthlessness with which he accomplished the vengeance of Yahweh upon Ahab's house is a clear indication of the real essence of Jehu's character. Yahweh commended him for destroying the house of Ahab (II Kings 10:30), but not for the attitude he adopted in accomplishing it. Jehu relished blood shed and derived great satisfaction from the destruction of his fellow Israelites as is revealed in the death of Ahab's seventy sons whose heads he piled up in two heaps at the gate of Jezreel (II Kings 10:8-11). His zeal for Yahweh was really only a cloak for a blood-thirstiness unequaled in the history of the kings; hence Yahweh declared that He would in turn "avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu" (Hos. 1:4).

However, before Jehu was given an opportunity to manifest his blood-thirstiness he appears as a man of considerable ingenuity in maneuvering himself into a position of absolute authority over the army of Israel. He was one of the captains of Jehoram who had been left to maintain the siege of Ramoth-Gilead while the king retired to Jezreel to recover from wounds received in battle. In the absence of the king, a messenger from Elisha arrived to anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi king over Israel (I Kings 19:16). The secretive manner of this anointing provided the backdrop for one of the most interesting revelations of character in the kings. The hasty departure of Elisha's messengers was followed by inquisitive questions from Jehu's fellow captains as to the origin and purpose of the messenger. Jehu's reply: "Ye know the man, and his communication," is a calculated move to gain a psychological advantage over his fellows and to condition their minds to accept the revelation that he had been anointed king. It was a delicate situation masterfully handled by Jehu who is revealed in the record as a shrewd man in all the accounts of his dealings with people.
Jehu, Cont’d.

Consider the way Jehu handles the arrival of Elisha's messenger at the camp (II Kings 10:5), and it will be seen that Jehu was carefully working out a stratagem to seize control of the army. When the messenger came in, looked at Jehu and said, "I have an errand to thee, O captain," Jehu replied, "Unto which of all us." This was not a genuine display of humility but a calculated self-effacement to ingratiate himself with his equals so that his ambition to seize power could be concealed until exactly the right moment. He was carefully preparing the ground for a rise to the supreme authority of the monarchy which he knew was available to the man who fulfilled the prophecies of Elijah against the house of Ahab. He had heard Elijah pronounce the doom of his master's house (II Kings 9:25-26, 36), and since that time had been waiting for the opportunity to fulfill his ambition of ruling Israel. The first step was control of the army and this he ingeniously secured without bloodshed. The incumbent of the throne and his house were not to be so fortunate when Jehu then moved to secure the monarchy.

Jehu was known by the characteristic driving of his chariot. It appears he drove neither at full tilt or at walking pace while traversing the countryside, but rather at the canter which was the most uncomfortable way possible. As the watchman put it: "He drives like a madman." This was perhaps a testimony of his character - an ambitious man, eager to accomplish the task before him and fulfill his desire to reign, but able to suppress his eagerness only until his plans could be worked out and the doors opened for him to proceed. He then went forth with murderous haste and furious agitation to remove Ahab's house from the land of Israel.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are based on what you have just read about Jehu.

1. Would you consider Jehu to be both a good and an evil king? Why? __________________________________________________________________________

2. Describe Jehu’s character. __________________________________________________________________________

3. What does it mean to be a “shrewd” man? __________________________________________________________________________

Athaliah

The epithet "That wicked woman" is the divine summary of Athaliah the daughter of Jezebel (II Chron. 24:7). She is distinguished in the record of Kings for two acts that amply sum up the achievements of her rule. The murder of all the children of the royal household excepting the baby Joash, who narrowly escaped death through the intervention of the faithful Jehoshabeath, illustrates the murderous contempt of Athaliah for Yahweh and the seed of David, who were to occupy the throne in accordance with the promise made to David. During her career, firstly as the wife of Jehoram and the dominating mother of Ahaziah, and then as sole ruler of Judah she manifested utter contempt and bitter hatred of the things associated with Yahweh and His covenant with David, and sought to expunge the Truth from the minds of the people of Judah. In enticing the people away from the things of God she was effectively committing "murder" on a massive scale after the pattern established in the brutal slaying of the royal seed.

The second thing noted of Athaliah was that she "had broken up the house of God" and dedicated all of its vessels of service to Baalim. This was true of the temple, but also of the nation as a whole who constituted "the house of God." Athaliah worked to break up God's ecclesia and to turn its living "vessels of service" to the worship of Baalim. It was as well for Judah that she only partially succeeded in fulfilling this objective, for surely Yahweh would have terminated the history of Judah as a kingdom much sooner than he did.

The appalling condition into which Judah had fallen because of Jehoshaphat's foolish policies towards the house of Ahab is fully revealed during the six dark years of Athaliah's reign. How low Judah had slipped, that a vile and corrupt woman, the daughter of Jezebel, the most hateful woman in scripture, should sit on the throne once occupied by David and Solomon. Not even the idol-conditioned and spiritually apathetic people of Judah were able to tolerate such a state of affairs and rejoiced when Jehoiada overthrew the hated usurper, and had her slain after six years in which he was preparing the child Joash to be brought forth to the people. It is significant that Athaliah reigned six years - the number of man and the flesh - and that upon her death the record states "all the people of the land rejoiced; and the city was quiet;" both the land and the people were enjoying a welcome sabbath (the seventh year).