

**Theme: The period of the kings in Israel**

### Day 1 1 Samuel 8:1-22 Israel rejects God as King by asking for a king

<sup>1</sup> When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as Israel's leaders. <sup>2</sup> The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba.

<sup>3</sup> But his sons did not follow his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.

<sup>4</sup> So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. <sup>5</sup> They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

<sup>6</sup> But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. <sup>7</sup> And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. <sup>8</sup> As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you.

<sup>9</sup> Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights."

<sup>10</sup> Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. <sup>11</sup> He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. <sup>12</sup> Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. <sup>13</sup> He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. <sup>14</sup> He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. <sup>15</sup> He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. <sup>16</sup> Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. <sup>17</sup> He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. <sup>18</sup> When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the LORD will not answer you in that day."

<sup>19</sup> But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. <sup>20</sup> Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."

<sup>21</sup> When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. <sup>22</sup> The LORD answered, "Listen to them and give them a king."

Then Samuel said to the Israelites, "Everyone go back to your own town."

### Day 2 1 Samuel 12:1-25 Samuel's farewell speech as judge of Israel

<sup>1</sup> Samuel said to all Israel, "I have listened to everything you said to me and have set a king over you. <sup>2</sup> Now you have a king as your leader. As for me, I am old and gray, and my sons are here with you. I have been your leader from my youth until this day. <sup>3</sup> Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the LORD and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes? If I have done any of these things, I will make it right."

<sup>4</sup> "You have not cheated or oppressed us," they replied. "You have not taken anything from anyone's hand."

<sup>5</sup> Samuel said to them, "The LORD is witness against you, and also his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand."

"He is witness," they said.

<sup>6</sup> Then Samuel said to the people, "It is the LORD who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your ancestors up out of Egypt. <sup>7</sup> Now then, stand here, because I am going to confront you with evidence before the LORD as to all the righteous acts performed by the LORD for you and your ancestors.

<sup>8</sup> "After Jacob entered Egypt, they cried to the LORD for help, and the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your ancestors out of Egypt and settled them in this place.

<sup>9</sup> "But they forgot the LORD their God; so he sold them into the hand of Sisera, the commander of the army of Hazor, and into the hands of the Philistines and the king of Moab, who fought against them. <sup>10</sup> They cried out to the LORD and said, 'We have sinned; we have forsaken the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths. But now deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve you.' <sup>11</sup> Then the LORD sent Jerub-Baal, Barak, Jephthah and Samuel, and he delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around you, so that you lived in safety.

<sup>12</sup> "But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was moving against you, you said to me, 'No, we want a king to rule over us'—even though the LORD your God was your king. <sup>13</sup> Now here is the king you have chosen, the one you asked for; see, the LORD has set a king over you. <sup>14</sup> If you fear the LORD and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the LORD your God—good! <sup>15</sup> But if you do not obey the LORD, and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you, as it was against your ancestors.

<sup>16</sup>“Now then, stand still and see this great thing the LORD is about to do before your eyes! <sup>17</sup>Is it not wheat harvest now? I will call on the LORD to send thunder and rain. And you will realize what an evil thing you did in the eyes of the LORD when you asked for a king.”

<sup>18</sup>Then Samuel called on the LORD, and that same day the LORD sent thunder and rain. So all the people stood in awe of the LORD and of Samuel.

<sup>19</sup>The people all said to Samuel, “Pray to the LORD your God for your servants so that we will not die, for we have added to all our other sins the evil of asking for a king.”

<sup>20</sup>“Do not be afraid,” Samuel replied. “You have done all this evil; yet do not turn away from the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. <sup>21</sup>Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless. <sup>22</sup>For the sake of his great name the LORD will not reject his people, because the LORD was pleased to make you his own. <sup>23</sup>As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. <sup>24</sup>But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you. <sup>25</sup>Yet if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will perish.”

### Day 3 1 Chronicles 17:1-14 God’s covenant promise to David

<sup>1</sup>After David was settled in his palace, he said to Nathan the prophet, “Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of the covenant of the LORD is under a tent.”

<sup>2</sup>Nathan replied to David, “Whatever you have in mind, do it, for God is with you.”

<sup>3</sup>But that night the word of God came to Nathan, saying:

<sup>4</sup>“Go and tell my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD says: You are not the one to build me a house to dwell in.

<sup>5</sup>I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought Israel up out of Egypt to this day. I have moved from one tent site to another, from one dwelling place to another.

<sup>6</sup>Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their leaders whom I commanded to shepherd my people, ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’”

<sup>7</sup>“Now then, tell my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. <sup>8</sup>I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name like the names of the greatest men on earth. <sup>9</sup>And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning <sup>10</sup>and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also subdue all your enemies.

“I declare to you that the LORD will build a house for you: <sup>11</sup>When your days are over and you go to be with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed

you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>12</sup>He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. <sup>13</sup>I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor. <sup>14</sup>I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever.”

### Day 4 2 Samuel 11:1–12:25 King David (1011–971 B.C.): sin and forgiveness

<sup>1</sup>In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king’s men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup>One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, <sup>3</sup>and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, “She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” <sup>4</sup>Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. <sup>5</sup>The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, “I am pregnant.”

<sup>6</sup>So David sent this word to Joab: “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent him to David. <sup>7</sup>When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. <sup>8</sup>Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet.” So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. <sup>9</sup>But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master’s servants and did not go down to his house.

<sup>10</sup>David was told, “Uriah did not go home.” So he asked Uriah, “Haven’t you just come from a military campaign? Why didn’t you go home?”

<sup>11</sup>Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord’s men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!”

<sup>12</sup>Then David said to him, “Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. <sup>13</sup>At David’s invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master’s servants; he did not go home.

<sup>14</sup>In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. <sup>15</sup>In it he wrote, “Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die.”

<sup>16</sup> So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were.

<sup>17</sup> When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died.

<sup>18</sup> Joab sent David a full account of the battle. <sup>19</sup> He instructed the messenger: "When you have finished giving the king this account of the battle, <sup>20</sup> the king's anger may flare up, and he may ask you, 'Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Didn't you know they would shoot arrows from the wall?' <sup>21</sup> Who killed Abimelek son of Jerub-Besheth? Didn't a woman drop an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?' If he asks you this, then say to him, 'Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.'"

<sup>22</sup> The messenger set out, and when he arrived he told David everything Joab had sent him to say. <sup>23</sup> The messenger said to David, "The men overpowered us and came out against us in the open, but we drove them back to the entrance of the city gate. <sup>24</sup> Then the archers shot arrows at your servants from the wall, and some of the king's men died. Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead."

<sup>25</sup> David told the messenger, "Say this to Joab: 'Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.' Say this to encourage Joab."

<sup>26</sup> When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. <sup>27</sup> After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.

<sup>1</sup> The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. <sup>2</sup> The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, <sup>3</sup> but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

<sup>4</sup> "Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."

<sup>5</sup> David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! <sup>6</sup> He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

<sup>7</sup> Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. <sup>8</sup> I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have

given you even more. <sup>9</sup> Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. <sup>10</sup> Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'

<sup>11</sup> "This is what the LORD says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. <sup>12</sup> You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'"

<sup>13</sup> Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. <sup>14</sup> But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the LORD, the son born to you will die."

<sup>15</sup> After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill. <sup>16</sup> David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and spent the nights lying in sackcloth on the ground. <sup>17</sup> The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them.

<sup>18</sup> On the seventh day the child died. David's attendants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, "While the child was still living, he wouldn't listen to us when we spoke to him. How can we now tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate."

<sup>19</sup> David noticed that his attendants were whispering among themselves, and he realized the child was dead. "Is the child dead?" he asked.

"Yes," they replied, "he is dead."

<sup>20</sup> Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate.

<sup>21</sup> His attendants asked him, "Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!"

<sup>22</sup> He answered, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.' <sup>23</sup> But now that he is dead, why should I go on fasting? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."

<sup>24</sup> Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and made love to her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The LORD loved him; <sup>25</sup> and because the LORD loved him, he sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah.

**Day 5 2 Chronicles 20:1-23**  
**King Jehoshaphat (870–846 B.C.):**  
**may look on how God conquers**

<sup>1</sup> After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat.

<sup>2</sup> Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, “A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar” (that is, En Gedi). <sup>3</sup> Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. <sup>4</sup> The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.

<sup>5</sup> Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard <sup>6</sup> and said:

“LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. <sup>7</sup> Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?

<sup>8</sup> They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, <sup>9</sup> ‘If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.’

<sup>10</sup> “But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them. <sup>11</sup> See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. <sup>12</sup> Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”

<sup>13</sup> All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.

<sup>14</sup> Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly.

<sup>15</sup> He said: “Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. <sup>16</sup> Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. <sup>17</sup> You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.’”

<sup>18</sup> Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD. <sup>19</sup> Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

<sup>20</sup> Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful.” <sup>21</sup> After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: “Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever.”

<sup>22</sup> As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. <sup>23</sup> The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

**Day 6 <sup>BS</sup> 2 Chronicles 26:1-23**  
**King Uzziah (768–750 B.C.):**  
**a good beginning, but a bad end**

<sup>1</sup> Then all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in place of his father Amaziah. <sup>2</sup> He was the one who rebuilt Elath and restored it to Judah after Amaziah rested with his ancestors.

<sup>3</sup> Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-two years. His mother’s name was Jekoliah; she was from Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done. <sup>5</sup> He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. As long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success.

<sup>6</sup> He went to war against the Philistines and broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod. He then rebuilt towns near Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines.

<sup>7</sup> God helped him against the Philistines and against the Arabs who lived in Gur Baal and against the Meunites.

<sup>8</sup> The Ammonites brought tribute to Uzziah, and his fame spread as far as the border of Egypt, because he had become very powerful.

<sup>9</sup> Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate and at the angle of the wall, and he fortified them. <sup>10</sup> He also built towers in the wilderness and dug many cisterns, because he had much livestock in the foothills and in the plain. He had people working his fields and vineyards in the hills and in the fertile lands, for he loved the soil.

<sup>11</sup> Uzziah had a well-trained army, ready to go out by divisions according to their numbers as mustered by Jeiel the secretary and Maaseiah the officer under the direction of Hananiah, one of the royal officials. <sup>12</sup> The total number of family leaders over the fighting men was 2,600.

<sup>13</sup> Under their command was an army of 307,500 men trained for war, a powerful force to support the king against his enemies. <sup>14</sup> Uzziah provided shields, spears, helmets, coats of armor, bows and slingstones for the entire army. <sup>15</sup> In Jerusalem he made devices invented for use on the towers and on the corner defenses so that soldiers could shoot arrows and hurl large stones from the walls. His fame spread far and wide, for he was greatly helped until he became powerful.

<sup>16</sup> But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the LORD his God, and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. <sup>17</sup> Azariah the priest with eighty other courageous priests of the LORD followed him in. <sup>18</sup> They confronted King Uzziah and said, "It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD. That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who have been consecrated to burn incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful; and you will not be honored by the LORD God."

<sup>19</sup> Uzziah, who had a censer in his hand ready to burn incense, became angry. While he was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in the LORD's temple, leprosy broke out on his forehead. <sup>20</sup> When Azariah the chief priest and all the other priests looked at him, they saw that he had leprosy on his forehead, so they hurried him out. Indeed, he himself was eager to leave, because the LORD had afflicted him.

<sup>21</sup> King Uzziah had leprosy until the day he died. He lived in a separate house—leprous, and banned from the temple of the LORD. Jotham his son had charge of the palace and governed the people of the land.

<sup>22</sup> The other events of Uzziah's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz.

<sup>23</sup> Uzziah rested with his ancestors and was buried near them in a cemetery that belonged to the kings, for people said, "He had leprosy." And Jotham his son succeeded him as king.

## Day 7 2 Kings 17:1-34 The end of the northern kingdom of Israel (722–721 B.C.)

<sup>1</sup> In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea son of Elah became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned nine years. <sup>2</sup> He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, but not like the kings of Israel who preceded him.

<sup>3</sup> Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up to attack Hoshea, who had been Shalmaneser's vassal and had paid him tribute. <sup>4</sup> But the king of Assyria discovered that Hoshea was a traitor, for he had sent envoys to So king of Egypt, and he no longer paid tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. Therefore Shalmaneser seized him and put him in prison. <sup>5</sup> The king of Assyria invaded the entire land, marched against Samaria and laid siege to it for three years. <sup>6</sup> In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria. He settled them in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor River and in the towns of the Medes.

<sup>7</sup> All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods <sup>8</sup> and followed the practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the kings of Israel had introduced. <sup>9</sup> The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that were not right. From watchtower to fortified city they built themselves high places in all their towns. <sup>10</sup> They set up sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. <sup>11</sup> At every high place they burned incense, as the nations whom the LORD had driven out before them had done. They did wicked things that aroused the LORD's anger. <sup>12</sup> They worshiped idols, though the LORD had said, "You shall not do this." <sup>13</sup> The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: "Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your ancestors to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets."

<sup>14</sup> But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their ancestors, who did not trust in the LORD their God.

<sup>15</sup> They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their ancestors and the statutes he had warned them to keep. They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless. They imitated the nations around them although the LORD had ordered them, "Do not do as they do."

<sup>16</sup> They forsook all the commands of the LORD their God and made for themselves two idols cast in the shape of calves, and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the starry hosts, and they worshiped Baal. <sup>17</sup> They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practiced divination and sought omens and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, arousing his anger.

<sup>18</sup> So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left, <sup>19</sup> and even Judah did not keep the commands of the LORD their God. They followed the practices Israel had introduced. <sup>20</sup> Therefore the LORD rejected all the people of Israel; he afflicted them and gave them into the hands of plunderers, until he thrust them from his presence. <sup>21</sup> When he tore Israel away from the house of David, they made Jeroboam son of Nebat their king. Jeroboam enticed Israel away from following the LORD and caused them to commit a great sin. <sup>22</sup> The Israelites persisted in all the sins of Jeroboam and did not turn away from them <sup>23</sup> until the LORD removed them from his presence, as he had warned through all his servants the prophets. So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria, and they are still there. <sup>24</sup> The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Kuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites. They took over Samaria and lived in its towns. <sup>25</sup> When they first lived there, they did not worship the LORD; so he sent lions among them and they killed some of the people. <sup>26</sup> It was reported to the king of Assyria: “The people you deported and resettled in the towns of Samaria do not know what the god of that country requires. He has sent lions among them, which are killing them off, because the people do not know what he requires.” <sup>27</sup> Then the king of Assyria gave this order: “Have one of the priests you took captive from Samaria go back to live there and teach the people what the god of the land requires.” <sup>28</sup> So one of the priests who had been exiled from Samaria came to live in Bethel and taught them how to worship the LORD. <sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, each national group made its own gods in the several towns where they settled, and set them up in the shrines the people of Samaria had made at the high places. <sup>30</sup> The people from Babylon made Sukkoth Benoth, those from Kuthah made Nergal, and those from Hamath made Ashima; <sup>31</sup> the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire as sacrifices to Adrammelek and Anammelek, the gods of Sepharvaim. <sup>32</sup> They worshiped the LORD, but they also appointed all sorts of their own people to officiate for them as priests in the shrines at the high places. <sup>33</sup> They worshiped the LORD, but they also served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought. <sup>34</sup> To this day they persist in their former practices. They neither worship the LORD nor adhere to the decrees and regulations, the laws and commands that the LORD gave the descendants of Jacob, whom he named Israel.

## Day 8 <sup>BS</sup> 2 Chronicles 33:1-20 King Manasseh (685–641 B.C.): a bad beginning, but a good end

<sup>1</sup> Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. <sup>2</sup> He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. <sup>3</sup> He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had demolished; he also erected altars to the Baals and made Asherah poles. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them. <sup>4</sup> He built altars in the temple of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “My Name will remain in Jerusalem forever.” <sup>5</sup> In both courts of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to all the starry hosts. <sup>6</sup> He sacrificed his children in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced divination and witchcraft, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, arousing his anger. <sup>7</sup> He took the image he had made and put it in God’s temple, of which God had said to David and to his son Solomon, “In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever. <sup>8</sup> I will not again make the feet of the Israelites leave the land I assigned to your ancestors, if only they will be careful to do everything I commanded them concerning all the laws, decrees and regulations given through Moses.” <sup>9</sup> But Manasseh led Judah and the people of Jerusalem astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites. <sup>10</sup> The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. <sup>11</sup> So the LORD brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. <sup>12</sup> In his distress he sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. <sup>13</sup> And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God. <sup>14</sup> Afterward he rebuilt the outer wall of the City of David, west of the Gihon spring in the valley, as far as the entrance of the Fish Gate and encircling the hill of Ophel; he also made it much higher. He stationed military commanders in all the fortified cities in Judah. <sup>15</sup> He got rid of the foreign gods and removed the image from the temple of the LORD, as well as all the altars he had built on the temple hill and in Jerusalem; and he threw them out of the city. <sup>16</sup> Then he restored the altar of the LORD and sacrificed fellowship offerings and thank offerings on it, and told Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel. <sup>17</sup> The people, however, continued to sacrifice at the high places, but only to the LORD their God.

<sup>18</sup>The other events of Manasseh's reign, including his prayer to his God and the words the seers spoke to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, are written in the annals of the kings of Israel. <sup>19</sup>His prayer and how God was moved by his entreaty, as well as all his sins and unfaithfulness, and the sites where he built high places and set up Asherah poles and idols before he humbled himself—all these are written in the records of the seers.

<sup>20</sup>Manasseh rested with his ancestors and was buried in his palace. And Amon his son succeeded him as king.

**Day 9 2 Kings 23:1-25**  
**King Josiah (638–608 B.C.):**  
**takes measures against idol worship**

<sup>1</sup>Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>He went up to the temple of the LORD with the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets—all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the LORD. <sup>3</sup>The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the LORD—to follow the LORD and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant.

<sup>4</sup>The king ordered Hilkiah the high priest, the priests next in rank and the doorkeepers to remove from the temple of the LORD all the articles made for Baal and Asherah and all the starry hosts. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron Valley and took the ashes to Bethel. <sup>5</sup>He did away with the idolatrous priests appointed by the kings of Judah to burn incense on the high places of the towns of Judah and on those around Jerusalem—those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and moon, to the constellations and to all the starry hosts. <sup>6</sup>He took the Asherah pole from the temple of the LORD to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem and burned it there. He ground it to powder and scattered the dust over the graves of the common people. <sup>7</sup>He also tore down the quarters of the male shrine prostitutes that were in the temple of the LORD, the quarters where women did weaving for Asherah.

<sup>8</sup>Josiah brought all the priests from the towns of Judah and desecrated the high places, from Geba to Beersheba, where the priests had burned incense. He broke down the gateway at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua, the city governor, which was on the left of the city gate.

<sup>9</sup>Although the priests of the high places did not serve at the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, they ate unleavened bread with their fellow priests.

<sup>10</sup>He desecrated Topheth, which was in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, so no one could use it to sacrifice their son or daughter in the fire to Molek. <sup>11</sup>He removed from the entrance to the temple of the LORD the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun. They were in the

court near the room of an official named Nathan-Melek. Josiah then burned the chariots dedicated to the sun.

<sup>12</sup>He pulled down the altars the kings of Judah had erected on the roof near the upper room of Ahaz, and the altars Manasseh had built in the two courts of the temple of the LORD. He removed them from there, smashed them to pieces and threw the rubble into the Kidron Valley. <sup>13</sup>The king also desecrated the high places that were east of Jerusalem on the south of the Hill of Corruption—the ones Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the vile goddess of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the vile god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the people of Ammon. <sup>14</sup>Josiah smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles and covered the sites with human bones.

<sup>15</sup>Even the altar at Bethel, the high place made by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had caused Israel to sin—even that altar and high place he demolished. He burned the high place and ground it to powder, and burned the Asherah pole also. <sup>16</sup>Then Josiah looked around, and when he saw the tombs that were there on the hillside, he had the bones removed from them and burned on the altar to defile it, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by the man of God who foretold these things.

<sup>17</sup>The king asked, "What is that tombstone I see?" The people of the city said, "It marks the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and pronounced against the altar of Bethel the very things you have done to it."

<sup>18</sup>"Leave it alone," he said. "Don't let anyone disturb his bones." So they spared his bones and those of the prophet who had come from Samaria.

<sup>19</sup>Just as he had done at Bethel, Josiah removed all the shrines at the high places that the kings of Israel had built in the towns of Samaria and that had aroused the LORD's anger. <sup>20</sup>Josiah slaughtered all the priests of those high places on the altars and burned human bones on them. Then he went back to Jerusalem.

<sup>21</sup>The king gave this order to all the people: "Celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant." <sup>22</sup>Neither in the days of the judges who led Israel nor in the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah had any such Passover been observed. <sup>23</sup>But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, this Passover was celebrated to the LORD in Jerusalem.

<sup>24</sup>Furthermore, Josiah got rid of the mediums and spiritists, the household gods, the idols and all the other detestable things seen in Judah and Jerusalem. This he did to fulfill the requirements of the law written in the book that Hilkiah the priest had discovered in the temple of the LORD. <sup>25</sup>Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.

**Day 10 2 Kings 24:1–25:26**  
**The end of the southern kingdom of Judah**  
**(605–586 B.C.)**

<sup>1</sup> During Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded the land, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. But then he turned against Nebuchadnezzar and rebelled. <sup>2</sup> The LORD sent Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite and Ammonite raiders against him to destroy Judah, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by his servants the prophets.

<sup>3</sup> Surely these things happened to Judah according to the LORD's command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, <sup>4</sup> including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to forgive.

<sup>5</sup> As for the other events of Jehoiakim's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? <sup>6</sup> Jehoiakim rested with his ancestors. And Jehoiachin his son succeeded him as king.

<sup>7</sup> The king of Egypt did not march out from his own country again, because the king of Babylon had taken all his territory, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Euphrates River.

<sup>8</sup> Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan; she was from Jerusalem. <sup>9</sup> He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father had done.

<sup>10</sup> At that time the officers of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem and laid siege to it, <sup>11</sup> and Nebuchadnezzar himself came up to the city while his officers were besieging it. <sup>12</sup> Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his attendants, his nobles and his officials all surrendered to him.

In the eighth year of the reign of the king of Babylon, he took Jehoiachin prisoner. <sup>13</sup> As the LORD had declared, Nebuchadnezzar removed the treasures from the temple of the LORD and from the royal palace, and cut up the gold articles that Solomon king of Israel had made for the temple of the LORD. <sup>14</sup> He carried all Jerusalem into exile: all the officers and fighting men, and all the skilled workers and artisans—a total of ten thousand. Only the poorest people of the land were left.

<sup>15</sup> Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. He also took from Jerusalem to Babylon the king's mother, his wives, his officials and the prominent people of the land. <sup>16</sup> The king of Babylon also deported to Babylon the entire force of seven thousand fighting men, strong and fit for war, and a thousand skilled workers and artisans. <sup>17</sup> He made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah.

<sup>18</sup> Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah. <sup>19</sup> He did evil in the eyes of the LORD,

just as Jehoiakim had done. <sup>20</sup> It was because of the LORD's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence. Now Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

<sup>1</sup> So in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. He encamped outside the city and built siege works all around it. <sup>2</sup> The city was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.

<sup>3</sup> By the ninth day of the fourth month the famine in the city had become so severe that there was no food for the people to eat. <sup>4</sup> Then the city wall was broken through, and the whole army fled at night through the gate between the two walls near the king's garden, though the Babylonians were surrounding the city. They fled toward the Arabah, <sup>5</sup> but the Babylonian army pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho. All his soldiers were separated from him and scattered, <sup>6</sup> and he was captured.

He was taken to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was pronounced on him. <sup>7</sup> They killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. Then they put out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon.

<sup>8</sup> On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard, an official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. <sup>9</sup> He set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down.

<sup>10</sup> The whole Babylonian army under the commander of the imperial guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem. <sup>11</sup> Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard carried into exile the people who remained in the city, along with the rest of the populace and those who had deserted to the king of Babylon. <sup>12</sup> But the commander left behind some of the poorest people of the land to work the vineyards and fields.

<sup>13</sup> The Babylonians broke up the bronze pillars, the movable stands and the bronze Sea that were at the temple of the LORD and they carried the bronze to Babylon.

<sup>14</sup> They also took away the pots, shovels, wick trimmers, dishes and all the bronze articles used in the temple service. <sup>15</sup> The commander of the imperial guard took away the censers and sprinkling bowls—all that were made of pure gold or silver.

<sup>16</sup> The bronze from the two pillars, the Sea and the movable stands, which Solomon had made for the temple of the LORD, was more than could be weighed. <sup>17</sup> Each pillar was eighteen cubits high. The bronze capital on top of one pillar was three cubits high and was decorated with a network and pomegranates of bronze all around. The other pillar, with its network, was similar.

<sup>18</sup> The commander of the guard took as prisoners Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the priest next in rank and the

three doorkeepers. <sup>19</sup> Of those still in the city, he took the officer in charge of the fighting men, and five royal advisers. He also took the secretary who was chief officer in charge of conscripting the people of the land and sixty of the conscripts who were found in the city.

<sup>20</sup> Nebuzaradan the commander took them all and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. <sup>21</sup> There at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, the king had them executed.

So Judah went into captivity, away from her land.

<sup>22</sup> Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, to be over the people he had left behind in Judah. <sup>23</sup> When all the army officers and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they came to Gedaliah at

Mizpah—Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, Jaazaniah the son of the Maakathite, and their men.

<sup>24</sup> Gedaliah took an oath to reassure them and their men. “Do not be afraid of the Babylonian officials,” he said. “Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you.”

<sup>25</sup> In the seventh month, however, Ishmael son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, who was of royal blood, came with ten men and assassinated Gedaliah and also the men of Judah and the Babylonians who were with him at Mizpah. <sup>26</sup> At this, all the people from the least to the greatest, together with the army officers, fled to Egypt for fear of the Babylonians.