

**Lesson 1**  
**King Saul and Disobedience**  
Teacher's Copy

Biblical Text: 1 Samuel 9:1-2,17; 15:10-11

**Introduction**

As witnesses for Christ we are called to spread the good news of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. God's entire plan for the continuation of Christianity rests with us. If we are obedient to that heavenly mandate, the Word of God will spread. If we are disobedient or lackadaisical in our responsibility to proselytize the world, God will have to 'raise up' new soldiers for His army. The success of the spread of the Gospel, therefore, hinges upon our obedience.

If you were to rate your obedience to the Lord on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest, what would your score be? Too many Christians today, if they were honest, would score a 5 or 6 at best. They miss opportunity after opportunity to share Christ...with co-workers, with friends, and even with family members. They fail to adhere to their commitment to worship and fellowship regularly, to study the Word together, and to pray as one body. Some Christians have become completely sidetracked by their own agendas, and have left little time at all for God and His program. They expect God to be "there" for them even when they are not 'there' for God.

As born-again believers, we choose whether we grow stronger or weaker in our faith, depending upon the paths we choose. If we choose to focus on the carnal things of life, our selfish nature will draw us away from a close relationship with the Father. And separation from God is dangerous territory.

King Saul started out on the right foot. The Lord found him to be a mighty man of power, and a good person. In Hebrew, the word *good* (as an adjective) in the widest sense, meant beautiful, best, better, bountiful, cheerful, at ease, fair, gracious, joyful, kindly, loving, merry, most pleasant, precious, prosperous, ready, sweet, wealthy, and well favored. There was no good, better, best in Hebrew. If you were good, you WERE the best.

So we see from this Hebrew root word that God carefully chose Saul to lead His people. But something happened to Saul during his reign as king, something that is still happening to many Christians today.

### **The Anointing of a King**

Saul was the first king of the Jewish nation. The name Saul means “asked for”, or ‘child of prayer’. Saul was born of the Tribe of Benjamin. In his early adulthood, Saul and his servants went to the district of Zuph, near Samuel's home at Ramah (1 Samuel 9:5-10) in search of his father’s flock, which had wandered away. Failing to find them, he sought help from the local “seer” that he might give an offering unto the Lord. Samuel, who had been divinely prepared for Saul’s coming (1 Samuel 9:15-17), met Saul and received him as his guest. He took Saul with him to the sacrifice, and then after the feast “communed with Saul upon the top of the house” of all that was in his heart. The next day, Samuel “took a vial of oil and poured it on his head,” and anointed Saul as king over Israel (1 Samuel 9:25-10:8), giving him three signs in confirmation of his call to be king. When Saul reached his home in Gibeah the last of these signs was fulfilled, and the Spirit of God came upon him, and “he was turned into another man.” This simple countryman was transformed into the king of Israel. There was a remarkable change in his whole demeanor...so much so that the people said in their astonishment, as they looked on the stalwart son of Kish, “Is Saul also among the prophets?,” even though they as yet knew nothing of his anointing.

Question: What can we site as evidence of a person's authentic conversion?

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(Answer: There should ALWAYS be an outward manifestation of the inward change that takes place when a person accepts Christ and allows the Holy Spirit to 'break' him and remake him. That outward expression is, at the very least, a verbal testimony of repentance. It should also manifests itself in the demonstration of a changed lifestyle.)

Samuel accordingly summoned the people to a solemn assembly "before the Lord" at Mizpeh. Here the lot was drawn to choose a king (1 Samuel 10:17-27), and it fell upon Saul, and when he was presented before them, the stateliest man in all Israel, the air was rent for the first time in Israel by the loud cry, "God save the king!"

At the invitation of Samuel "all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal." Samuel now officially anointed him as king (1 Samuel 11:15), thus terminating his own need to be Judge over Israel (though scripture records that he was never officially removed from office).

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Saul was faced with many challenges as the first king of Israel. He first had to free the land from its hereditary enemies...the Philistines. With a fierce army, Saul celebrated two great victories over the Philistines. But Saul's reign continued to be one of almost constant war, despite his repeated victories (1 Samuel 14:47-48). In the lengthy record of Saul's war against the Amalekites, we begin to understand that God was testing Saul's moral qualification for being king. God charged Saul to take no prisoners, nor bounty, but to slaughter all the Amalekites and their possessions. Saul proceeded to execute the divine command; and gathering the people together, marched from Telaim (1 Samuel 15:4) against the Amalekites, whom he smote "from Havilah until thou comest to Shur," utterly destroying "all the people with the edge of the sword".

But Saul committed a grave error when he disobeyed God's instructions, sparing Agag the Amalekites' king, and allowing his soldiers to keep the best of the enemy's sheep and cattle.

Question: Why is absolute obedience such an essential part of God's criteria for leadership?

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(Answer: Obedience is proof of a leader's total submission to divine guidance. A person who cannot completely obey God is merely playing with God's plan, often for the sake of self-gain.)

Victories have a way of working on a man's psyche. When we get a few victories 'under our belt' we begin to feel a sense of power and even supremacy. Saul allowed his many victories to weaken his focus on God and let his own arrogant pride take over. He began to suffer from that old "Look what I have done," syndrome. Saul's ill-conceived sense of power and control over his own destiny caused him to disregard God's instructions - instructions that were meant to specifically demonstrate his obedience. Neither the Philistines nor the Amalekites became Saul's worst enemy; it was his ego.

Question: In what way does egotism hinder the execution of God's sovereign plan for mankind?

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(Answer: Egotism is a preoccupation with ones self. Egotism and disobedience are partners in opposition to obedience and humility. Together, egotism and disobedience work to take the focus off God and put it on SELF, thereby establishing a new precedent or standard that is counter to God's plan.)

Samuel followed Saul to Gilgal, in the Jordan valley, and said unto him, "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He also hath rejected thee from being king" (1 Samuel 15:23). The kingdom was rent from Saul and was given to another, even to David, whom the Lord chose to be Saul's successor, and whom Samuel anointed (1 Samuel 16:1-13). From that day "the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him."

Man can become possessed by his own thoughts of greatness. If we separate ourselves from God, and cease to give Him glory for our accomplishments, we will become puffed-up, arrogant, self-righteous, and even cocky about our achievements. This is the sin that beset Saul and caused God to trouble his spirit.

Question: How do egotism and self-centeredness impact the local church today?

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(Answer: Ministries are often hindered or even stifled by leaders whose sole purpose is to gain personal recognition. This type of leader seldom moves a ministry forward because the rest of the team recognizes the sin of SELF and refuses to obey. God holds us accountable for our 'leadership' tactics. Have you ever been led astray by poor leadership?)

Saul allowed his many battle victories to play upon his mental image of himself. He became puffed up and arrogant about his leadership ability, and decided that he could best "call the shots".

We put our lives at peril when we disobey or reject God's purpose for our lives. God has a divine plan and a specific direction for each of our lives to take. When we reject His plan in favor of our own selfish motives, we enter into a dangerous path that could separate us from God. It was not so much Saul's disobedience as it was the motivation for his disobedience that cause Saul to fall from favor in God's eyes.

God cannot use us for His mighty work when we alter his plans in favor of our own and play god.

## **The Harp Player**

God already had a plan laid out to test the next king. God arranged for David, a “cunning player on an harp” (1 Samuel 16:16, 18), to play before Saul when the evil spirit troubled him. This was how David was introduced to the court of Saul. He became a great favorite with the king. At length David returned to his father's house and to his vocation as a shepherd for about three years. During that time, the Philistines once more invaded the land, and gathered their army between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim, on the southern slope of the valley of Elah. Saul and the men of Israel went forth to meet them, and encamped on the northern slope of the same valley, which lay between the two armies. It was here that David slew Goliath of Gath, the champion of the Philistines (1 Samuel 17:4-54), an exploit, which led to the flight and utter defeat of the Philistine army.

Following the battle, Saul took David permanently into his service (1 Samuel 18:2); but he became jealous of him (1 Samuel 18:9), and on many occasions showed his enmity toward him (1 Samuel 18:10-11), which ripened into a murderous plot that he tried in vain to carry out.

Question: In his jealousy of David, King Saul led his followers down a path of hatred and vengeance. Jealousy is a very effective weapon of Satan. How can jealousy destroy a church congregation?

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(Answer: Church members come from all walks of life, and represent many financial, cultural and education backgrounds. There is danger in the church giving favorable recognition to any one group over another. Division always instigates jealousy.

The scriptures admonish us to remember that we are all equal in the sight of God.)

Question: How can we guard against letting our ego “push God out”!

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(Answer: Everyone, and especially those in leadership, should constantly assess their goals in light of the scriptures, to be sure they are aligned with God’s will.

During all of Saul’s pursuit, David not only refused to take up a sword against Saul, but he befriended Jonathan, Saul’s son, and found favor with the multitude of the Jewish nation. In all of his victorious days that would follow, David would keep his heart for God.

### **The Stress of Disobedience**

From a practical viewpoint, disobedience compounds our daily stress. Some of our stress is the direct result of sin...sometimes ours, sometimes others, but most of the time both. Tension permeates the air when one or both parties refuse to align themselves with God’s will.

- When children disobey their parents, there’s stress.
- When husbands don’t love their wives as Christ loved the church, there’s stress.
- When a person breaks the law when filing his income tax return, there’s stress.

Question: Evaluate the stress factors in your life. Determine their real origin. Are they the result of disobedience to God?

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(Answer: Students will self-evaluate. Encourage someone to share an experience of disobedience.)

## **Conclusion**

Disobedience originates from our desire to become or to appear to become something we are not...or to exalt ourselves. When we exalt 'self', we separate ourselves from God and His will.

If we promise to submit to God's plan for our lives, He alone can maximize our potential to it's fullest. Never try to do things alone and 'your way'. God's plan and timing is the best path for our lives.

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Student

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**Lesson 2**  
**King David and Leadership**  
Teacher's Copy

Biblical Text: 2 Samuel 2:1-4; 5:1-4

**Introduction**

The path of a great leader is always strewn with difficulty. Those who find themselves envying the man in charge, tend to see only the robe of the office, the covering that signifies greatness and power. But underneath the position's uniform, there is more than meets the eye.

A leader is chosen to endure great suffering. The weight that rests upon his shoulders is so great that few men can bear it. Only God can call an effective leader. He carefully chooses only the best for the task. God reads the heart carefully; for it is in the heart that great leaders are born.

In our study of David, we will see how God carefully unveils His purpose for His chosen leaders.

**Anointing A King**

The Biblical record of the life of David, the greatest king in the history of the nation of Israel, begins with his anointing by the prophet Samuel to be the king of Israel. This was the first of three anointings for David as king of Israel. Our scripture lesson records the second anointing when he became king at Hebron over Judah, part of Israel (2 Samuel 2:4). The third anointing took place when he became king over all of Israel (2 Samuel 5:3) seven years later.

From the time of the first anointing, when David was a young person, God carefully

chose Saul's successor. As a shepherd boy for his father's flock, he was somewhere in his teens—probably between sixteen and eighteen. This first anointing of David by Samuel came when the conditions in Israel were quite bleak, and as such they underscored the great need for a new king in Israel. Conditions would even get worse before David would actually be seated on the throne of Israel. But God often waits till a situation reaches its apex before He brings deliverance, in order to show the glory of His great power. Bad times never indicate that God is weak and has lost control of things, but rather, bad times indicate that **man** is weak and has lost control of things. Man's weakness is God's opportunity.

The first anointing of David as king was ordered by a Divine command given to the prophet Samuel. David was a great contrast to the wickedness of King Saul, whom David would replace as king. God's chosen leaders always stand in great contrast to the evil men of the world.

Question: How can we be sure that we are following a leader who has been chosen by God?

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(Answer: The most obvious answer is that the leader is living a Christian life. But if they are not careful to follow God's guidance, Christians can end up in positions of leadership that are not suited to their talents and abilities. It's therefore important, not only to follow leaders who are faithful to God, but also to follow leaders who demonstrate the talent for the task. Whom God appoints, He also equips!)

## The Criteria for God's Choice

God looks for faithfulness in a person before He assigns important duties. Faithfulness is vital if you are going to properly and successfully carry out God's commands. God chose David as a man fashioned after his own heart. Scripture records that "The spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward". This great endowment from God certainly made David an excellent person to be the next king of Israel. The presence of this Divine endowment would be manifested many times in David's life. It would be seen in his slaying Goliath, in his gallant efforts in fighting the Philistines, and in his wise administration of the nation of Israel.

Listening to God and thus choosing on the basis of the heart, Samuel made an excellent choice in David as king of Israel. Excellent choices do not come by accident. They come by listening to God's instructions, and then following His commands. Though David had been anointed as king, he had to wait until the death of Saul to ascend to the throne. David spent many fugitive years patiently awaiting his opportunity to ascend to the throne of Israel.

Question: What should God's chosen leaders do while awaiting their opportunity to serve in a leadership capacity?

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(Answer: Preparation is the key to success. A leader's formative years are just as important than his actual years of service, because they prepare him for the task. Rushing into service unequipped will bring certain failure. We cannot run ahead of God and skip our training sessions with Him.)

Much had happened in David's life since that day a dozen or more years earlier when he was summoned from his lowly shepherd duties to be privately anointed by the prophet Samuel as Israel's next king. David had gone through a number of very painful

experiences which etched upon his body and soul deep lines of learning that prepared him well for the duties of the king of Israel.

Whenever God calls us to honorable, privileged, and important posts of duty, you can be sure that He will give us the necessary training for the task. That training may take years and often prove rough at times, but God does not put anyone into a position of great responsibility without ample preparation. God puts leaders through His rigorous school of preparation—a school that replaces inability with ability, folly with wisdom, immaturity with maturity, and carnality with spirituality.

### **The Coronation and the Commendation**

The time came for David to ascend the throne of Judah. “And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” Saul was now dead, and the people had properly lamented the fallen king. David turned his attention to his ascension to the throne by seeking God in prayer. David began his royal administration with his first action, which was to pray. This was certainly a commendable way for David to begin his move to the throne. It gave promise that David’s reign would be a good one.

David’s prayer to God had to do with where David should move. He was then in Ziklag, but he realized this was obviously not the place for the new king to dwell. So he sought God’s will about where to move. In David’s prayer and God’s answer, we have a very helpful threefold lesson on the will of God – that of seeking, learning, and doing of the will of God.

Question: How does prayer prepare a leader for service?

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(Answer: Prayer is your communication with your 'Boss'. A fluid prayer life allows your heart and mind to remain open to what God desires to deposit within you. If there is no deposit, there can be no withdrawal. Prayer establishes the relationship bond between God and His chosen leaders. A leader is therefore one who is comfortable praying both privately and publicly, because it is a demonstration of his connection with God.)

### **Seeking the Will of God**

“David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” (v.1). Note the wisdom in David’s request to God about moving. David is content to wait on the Lord, and to seek His will.

David asked, “Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” To the natural eye, Ziklag did not seem like the place where David should reign as king over Israel. But David was determined not to run ahead of God by leaving Ziklag without God’s clear orders. He would not move until God said to move. For this, David was to be commended; for at that moment Ziklag was a desolate city. It had just been burned to the ground. Even though Ziklag was in ruins, David would not vacate it without clear instruction from God.

It’s hard to stay in one place, when that place is undesirable. And when we are comfortable, it is equally difficult to leave to do God’s will. No matter the situation, David was ready to be obedient. He would be neither anxious nor comfortable; but he would wait for God’s orders before leaving Ziklag.

Question: Many Christians become comfortable in their positions of leadership. How can comfortableness lead to a stale ministry?

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(Answer: Though we serve a God who never changes, we must also admit that we cannot know the entire mind of God. God imparts His knowledge daily to those who are

open to receive it, and with that impartation comes a fresh anointing. “Freshness” in ministry is the visible evidence of a leader’s open line of communication with his Master. When we become comfortable with the status quo, we have tuned God out.)

### **Learning the Will of God.**

It was God whom David sought for guidance. Such wisdom is not usually evident in common men. Men are prone to seek counsel from just about any other source than God (which helps explain many of man’s troubles). But the Apostle Paul said, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17). You may boast of your wisdom; but if you do not know the will of God, the Bible says you are “unwise.”

“And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron” (v. 1). Here we discover two important truths about the matter of learning the will of God. They involve progress and persistency.

The will of God was revealed to David a step at a time. David was first informed that he should leave Ziklag (“Go up”). Then in the second message from God, he was informed where to go (“Hebron”). Our progress with God does not come all at once. We learn His Will in stages. It keeps our eyes fixed upon God and helps to promote our faith.

David had to ask God twice about where to move before he learned the answer. He was persistent. After the first request, he learned he should leave Ziklag and go to the territory of Judah. But he had to ask a second time before God informed him that the specific city he was to dwell in was Hebron. Had David not persisted in learning the will of God, he would have come up short in his knowledge of the will of God. The will of God is choice knowledge, and God does not give it to those who do not value it. Those who do not value it will not persist in learning the will of God.

The scripture says, “So David went up thither”. Learning the will of God is more than just adding to your intellectual knowledge.

We learn the will of God so that we can LIVE the Will of God in our lives daily. Once we discover God's will we must execute it. Practical application is the primary reason for Divine revelation. David practiced this truth; he applied what he learned to his life. He did what God told him to do. He obeyed God's orders.

Question: In every facet of life, rules and instructions pay the way to success. Without a rulebook, we fail for lack of knowledge. Should leaders be *required* to routinely study God's rulebook, the Bible?

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(Answer: We have already established that a good leader must remain open to receive God's Will and His unfolding plan. Leaders become detached from God when they refuse continuing spiritual education. How can we be sure of our direction, if we refuse to look at the map?)

### **The People and the Place for the Coronation**

"And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah" (v. 4). David's coronation at Hebron was limited to just the tribe of Judah. The other tribes followed another king. This means that David's first public anointing and coronation was not over all Israel but over only one tribe. However, "Judah was the premier tribe, and though this was not all that God had promised to David, it was a significant beginning. The rule over the other tribes would come seven and a half years later.

David was anointed "there" (v. 4) which is "Hebron" (v. 1). The city of Hebron is approximately twenty miles south of Jerusalem and was located on the top of the mountain range that extended along the western side of Jordan. It was a good city for David to establish his rule as king both from its historical background and from its geographical situation.

Question: Our willingness to rule over *little* prepares us for the eventually of ruling over *much*. How?

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(Answer: Our life experiences with God on a smaller scale become the foundation for dealing with God's greater plan on a larger scale. Leaders should view positions of 'least' responsibility as a type of apprenticeship that permits them to polish their leadership skills in preparation for greater work.)

### **Conclusion**

God's principle is to promote is leaders gradually. Seldom does He promote one quickly. He certainly did not promote David quickly. David's rise to power took many years. After his private anointing by Samuel, David was not immediately elevated to king. He had to wait some dozen years or more and go through many trials and tribulations before he ascended the throne. And then when he first ascended the throne, it was only over the tribe of Judah. David still had to wait another seven and a half years before he became king over the entire nation of Israel.

Gradual promotion is a good principle. Too quick an elevation puffs up the pride of the promoted one and often ruins his leadership ability. With gradual promotion, God lets you prove you can rule over 'Judah' before He lets you rule over the larger area of 'Israel'. If you cannot do a good job in a small task, then you will not do a good job in a big task. Whatever your task, do it well. It is your recommendation for a higher calling.

## **Lesson 2**

### **King David and Leadership**

Student

Biblical Text: 2 Samuel 2:1-4; 5:1-4

#### **Introduction**

The path of a great leader is always strewn with difficulty. Those who find themselves envying the man in charge, tend to see only the robe of the office, the covering that signifies greatness and power. But underneath the position's uniform, there is more than meets the eye.

A leader is chosen to endure great suffering. The weight that rests upon his shoulders is so great that few men can bear it. Only God can call an effective leader. He carefully chooses only the best for the task. God reads the heart carefully; for it is in the heart that great leaders are born.

In our study of David, we will see how God carefully unveils His purpose for His chosen leaders.

#### **Anointing A King**

The Biblical record of the life of David, the greatest king in the history of the nation of Israel, begins with his anointing by the prophet Samuel to be the king of Israel. This was the first of three anointings for David as king of Israel. Our scripture lesson records the second anointing when he became king at Hebron over Judah, part of Israel (2 Samuel 2:4). The third anointing took place when he became king over all of Israel (2 Samuel 5:3) seven years later.

From the time of the first anointing, when David was a young person, God carefully

chose Saul's successor. This first anointing of David by Samuel came when the conditions in Israel were quite bleak, and as such they underscored the great need for a new king in Israel. Conditions would even get worse before David would actually be seated on the throne of Israel. But God often waits till a situation reaches its apex before He brings deliverance, in order to show the glory of His great power. Man's weakness is God's opportunity.

The first anointing of David as king was ordered by a Divine command given to the prophet Samuel. David was a great contrast to the wickedness of King Saul, whom David would replace as king. God's chosen leaders always stand in great contrast to the evil men of the world.

Question: How can we be sure that we are following a leader who has been chosen by God?

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### **The Criteria for God's Choice**

God looks for faithfulness in a person before He assigns important duties. Faithfulness is vital if you are going to properly and successfully carry out God's commands. God chose David as a man fashioned after his own heart. Scripture records that "The spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward". This great endowment from God certainly made David an excellent person to be the next king of Israel. The presence of this Divine endowment would be manifested many times in David's life. It would be seen in his slaying Goliath, in his gallant efforts in fighting the Philistines, and in his wise administration of the nation of Israel.

Listening to God and thus choosing on the basis of the heart, Samuel made an

excellent choice in David as king of Israel. Excellent choices do not come by accident. They come by listening to God's instructions, and then following His commands. Though David had been anointed as king, he had to wait until the death of Saul to ascend to the throne. David spent many fugitive years patiently awaiting his opportunity to ascend to the throne of Israel.

Question: What should God's chosen leaders do while awaiting their opportunity to serve in a leadership capacity?

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Whenever God calls us to honorable, privileged, and important posts of duty, you can be sure that He will give us the necessary training for the task. That training may take years and often prove rough at times, but God does not put anyone into a position of great responsibility without ample preparation. God puts leaders through His rigorous school of preparation—a school that replaces inability with ability, folly with wisdom, immaturity with maturity, and carnality with spirituality.

### **The Coronation and the Commendation**

The time came for David to ascend the throne of Judah. "And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" Saul was now dead, and the people had properly lamented the fallen king. David turned his attention to his ascension to the throne by seeking God in prayer. David began his royal administration with his first action, which was to pray. This was certainly a commendable way for David to begin his move to the throne. It gave promise that David's reign would be a good one.

David's prayer to God had to do with where David should move. He was then in Ziklag, but he realized this was obviously not the place for the new king to dwell. So he sought God's will about where to move. In David's prayer and God's answer, we have a very

helpful threefold lesson on the will of God – that of seeking, learning, and doing of the will of God.

Question: How does prayer prepare a leader for service?

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### **Seeking the Will of God**

“David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” (v.1). Note the wisdom in David’s request to God about moving. David is content to wait on the Lord, and to seek His will.

David asked, “Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” To the natural eye, Ziklag did not seem like the place where David should reign as king over Israel. But David was determined not to run ahead of God by leaving Ziklag without God’s clear orders. He would not move until God said to move. For this, David was to be commended; for at that moment Ziklag was a desolate city. It had just been burned to the ground. Even though Ziklag was in ruins, David would not vacate it without clear instruction from God.

It’s hard to stay in one place, when that place is undesirable. And when we are comfortable, it is equally difficult to leave to do God’s will. No matter the situation, David was ready to be obedient. He would be neither anxious nor comfortable; but he would wait for God’s orders before leaving Ziklag.

Question: Many Christians become comfortable in their positions of leadership. How can comfortableness lead to a stale ministry?

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## **Learning the Will of God.**

It was God whom David sought for guidance. Such wisdom is not usually evident in common men. Men are prone to seek counsel from just about any other source than God (which helps explain many of man's troubles). But the Apostle Paul said, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17). You may boast of your wisdom; but if you do not know the will of God, the Bible says you are "unwise."

"And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron" (v. 1). Here we discover two important truths about the matter of learning the will of God. They involve progress and persistency.

The will of God was revealed to David a step at a time. David was first informed that he should leave Ziklag ("Go up"). Then in the second message from God, he was informed where to go ("Hebron"). Our progress with God does not come all at once. We learn His Will in stages. It keeps our eyes fixed upon God and helps to promote our faith.

David had to ask God twice about where to move before he learned the answer. He was persistent. After the first request, he learned he should leave Ziklag and go to the territory of Judah. But he had to ask a second time before God informed him that the specific city he was to dwell in was Hebron. Had David not persisted in learning the will of God, he would have come up short in his knowledge of the will of God. The will of God is choice knowledge, and God does not give it to those who do not value it. Those who do not value it will not persist in learning the will of God.

The scripture says, "So David went up thither". Learning the will of God is more than just adding to your intellectual knowledge. We learn the will of God so that we can LIVE the Will of God in our lives daily. Once we discover God's will we must execute it. Practical application is the primary reason for Divine revelation. David practiced this truth; he applied what he learned to his life. He did what God told him to do.

He obeyed God's orders.

Question: In every facet of life, rules and instructions pay the way to success. Without a rulebook, we fail for lack of knowledge. Should leaders be *required* to routinely study God's rulebook, the Bible?

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## **Conclusion**

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## **Lesson 3**

### **King Solomon and Inheritance**

Teacher's Copy

Biblical Text: 1 Kings 1:32-39; 2:10-12

#### **Introduction**

The word 'inheritance' immediately registers dollar signs in our conscious mind. "How much did I get? How soon before I can collect?" An inheritance can be of great or of little value, depending on the size of the gift, but when it's free, it's always welcome.

Nonetheless, being the recipient of an inheritance has its problems. The contesting of wills is a common practice today. Discontent family members who were overlooked, or who felt that they deserved more have challenged many estates of millionaires. It's not uncommon for disputes to develop into feuds that ultimately tear families apart.

The king in our lesson today was the recipient of a great inheritance – his father's. Not only did he inherit the monetary assets of his father's estate, he also inherited control of the nation of Israel. As his father David's successor, his inheritance included the anointing from God. But as in many cases today, his right to inherit the throne was challenged by one of his siblings. Whenever money and power are at stake, carnal men will fight for the lion's share.

#### **Questionable Character**

Men habitually dispute God's will. This was certainly the case concerning who was to be the successor of David as king of Israel. God had made it plain that Solomon was to be the successor to David, but that did not stop some men from disputing this fact and trying to change the choice of a successor.

This problem concerning who was to be David's successor was the last major problem to confront David before his death, and the problem was not unrelated to his chastisement for his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. God had told David, through the prophet Nathan, that because of David's adulterous and murderous sins, "I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house" (2 Samuel 12:11).

With David being old and sick, the need for authorizing a successor was very urgent. When he was near death, evil raised itself up within David's house. His son Adonijah tried to gain the throne, which was not his to have. He tried to advance himself as the next king. His attempt to place himself on the throne of Israel was in direct contradiction with the will of God.

Adonijah was an evil opportunist. He used the infirmities of others to advance his own cause. We see his low character as he tries to take wicked advantage of his own father's infirmity. This practice is not unique to Adonijah. Multitudes have stooped to this type of sin. Many people make their fortunes by exploiting the disadvantaged. When sin grips the heart, man will trample over anyone in order to get gain.

This defiance of Adonijah to God's will forced David to take strong and immediate steps against Adonijah's action by publicly authorizing his son Solomon, son of Bathsheba, as the next king of Israel. David experienced the bitter fruits of his great sin with Bathsheba and Uriah right up to the last days of his reign as king. Sin has its moments of pleasure, but they are very short in comparison to the long and often eternal punishment that follows.

Question: How do the sins of our past impact our current life situations?

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(Examples: Recovering addicts find that it is difficult to reestablish trust. An unfaithful spouse also struggles to regain trust. A person with a felony on his record discovers that it is difficult to get hired. Our past not only colors someone's perception of us, but it also impacts our own character. A person who can't be trusted is not likely to trust others.)

### **What's Wrong With Adonijah?**

In the case of most inheritances, the owner of the assets gets to pick the successor to his estate. But in the case of David, God himself ordained that Solomon should be the successor. Why not Adonijah? Let's take a look at Adonijah's character for some insight.

"Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle by the stone of Zohelath, which is by Enrogel" (1 Kings 1:9). Adonijah, like his brother Absalom before him, used the guise of religion to promote his exaltation as king. He would carefully stage his temple offerings to be 'seen of men'. Showing piety in one's political ambitions may give the appearance of nobility and character, but ultimately it deceives no one – least of all God! Pretentious piety is a great insult that dishonors God.

Enrogel was the place where Adonijah did his sacrificing and feasting to celebrate his self-appointment to the throne. Enrogel is a name referring to a well or spring, which is located in the valley of Kidron on the southeast side of Jerusalem. Enrogel only "a few hundred feet" from Gihon – where Solomon's coronation took place. They may have been geographically close, but they were in fact, worlds apart.

These two locations, though very close geographically, were distant from each other in terms of character. One place represented rebellion, the other obedience. One place spoke of truth, the other of falsehood. At Gihon, a humble man would bow to accept God's call to the throne. In Enrogel, an evil man attempted to steal the throne. One

represented the word of man, the other the Word of God. One refused to honor God's choice for a king, while the other knelt in humble submission to His Will.

Adonijah's character is seen in the company he kept. The scripture says Adonijah "called all his brethren the king's sons, and all the men of Judah the king's servants. But Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not" (1 Kings 1:9,10). Adonijah's crowd could be divided into three groups: the unwholesome, the unwary, and the unwanted.

The *unwholesome* were deficient in character and did not hesitate to rebel against God. The *unwary* were "the men of Judah, the king's servants" (1 Kings 1:9) whom Adonijah "called" to the feast. They were simply flattered by the invitation. And then there were the *unwanted*. Our text states plainly whom Adonijah did not want in his crowd. They were Nathan, Benaiah, and Solomon. These were the men of character—truth, gallantry for right causes, loyalty, and God's anointed. Adonijah wanted to be far removed from these men.

Adonijah couldn't even claim that he didn't know Solomon was to be the one in line to inherit the throne. He had even admitted to Bathsheba that he knew Solomon was ordained by God to be king, when he later sought her help to intercede with Solomon for Abishag as Adonijah's wife. He said then, "It [the throne] was his [Solomon] from the Lord" (1 Kings 2:15). Adonijah had absolutely no excuse for his rebellion against God's choice for king of Israel...other than jealousy and greed.

Question: Compare the world's traits for leadership with God's traits for leadership. How are they similar? How do they contrast?

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(Answer: The political arena is a good place to assess how we choose secular leaders. Though we claim to desire someone with strength and wisdom, we are more often enamored by a leader's ability to cut down his opponent. We claim to desire a humble leader, but we mock the leader who does not fight back. The world seldom recognizes a leader who is full of faith, willing to compromise, and ready to forgive.)

### **The Successor and His Crowning**

Nathan was able to arouse David from his stupor of inactivity and indifference to take immediate action to authorize the next king, despite his failing health. The choice for David's successor was Solomon. David revealed this choice in two different ways. He revealed it first by confirming a promise to Bathsheba and second by commanding his officials to crown Solomon king.

There was prophecy in the confirmation of Solomon as king. Though our text does not specifically mention the Divine prophecy, which stated that Solomon was to be the next king, this prophecy was the basis for David promising Bathsheba that Solomon would reign after David. David did not promise that Solomon would be king just to make Bathsheba happy. David made the promise to Bathsheba because of what God's Word said (1 Chronicles 22:8). David's choice of a successor was not his own choice—it was God's choice. No dispute over an inheritance would change God's choice for a king.

The crowning of Solomon as David's successor took place immediately after David had given orders to Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah to have it done. The shouts of "Amen" voice the approval of David's choice of Solomon to be king. And the "Amen" is an enthusiastic approval, too. It is not just an acquiescing to David's choice but an ardent support for David's choice.

Benaiah declares, "Make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David,..." Benaiah wants Solomon to be an even greater king than David. Every letter of David's instruction for the coronation was complied with.

- The *animal* command ordering Solomon to "ride upon mine own mule" (1 Kings 1:33) was complied to when they "caused Solomon to ride upon king David's mule" (1 Kings 1:38).
- The *attendants* commanded to be present at the crowning were David's "servants" (1 Kings 1:33), and this command was complied to when his servants, "the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, went down" (1 Kings 1:38) with Solomon to Gihon for the crowning.
- The *amphitheater* command to crown Solomon at "Gihon" (1 Kings 1:33) was complied with when the men "brought him [Solomon] to Gihon" (1 Kings 1:38).
- The *anointing* command, which said, "anoint him" (1 Kings 1:34) was complied with when "Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon" (1 Kings 1:39).
- The *announcement* command said the crowning was to be announced by the "trumpet" (1 Kings 1:34), and it was complied to when, after the anointing, "they blew the trumpet" (1 Kings 1:39).
- The *adulation* commanded was "God save king Solomon" (1 Kings 1:34), and it was complied with when "the people said, God save king Solomon" (1 Kings 1:39).

Solomon was the to be the next king. No man...not even a jealous brother...could altar the will of God. "God save King Solomon!"

Question: Part of the reason God rejected Adonijah as a successor to David was his choice of friends. How do our relationships both in and out of the church affect our relationship with God?

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(Answer: We are often judged by the company we keep. Though Jesus was often seen with prostitutes and tax collectors, He was never seen sharing their lifestyle or making similar choices. If a Christian feels compelled to go into a bar to share the gospel with a

friend whose life is being destroyed by alcohol, he cannot have a drink with him while he is there! “Keeping company” means sharing life choices. We cannot ‘keep company’ with the world.)

## **Conclusion**

We are heirs of an inheritance that is far greater than even Solomon’s throne. It comes to us free, without any encumbrances. It is our inheritance as sons of the Living God, through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. There is no need for us to fight for our fair share, because each of us is given an equal portion of God’s grace and mercy. Oh, that men would press to inherit this gift that is more precious than money or power!

Solomon, with all of his wealth and power, learned that the most precious gift was his relationship with his Heavenly Father. In summarization of his material wealth and possessions, we hear him say, “Vanity of vanities...all is vanity!” (Eccl. 12:8) “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” (12:13)

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Question: Part of the reason God rejected Adonijah as a successor to David was his choice of friends. How do our relationships both in and out of the church affect our relationship with God?

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## **Conclusion**

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## **Lesson 4**

### **King Rehoboam and Consequences**

Teacher's Copy

Biblical Text: 1 Kings 11:43 -12:16

#### **Introduction**

Every Christian has felt the sting of sin and the consequences of poor decisions. We often recite the scripture verse from Paul to remind us of the importance of careful decision-making: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Galatians 6:7)

Every decision we make affects our daily lives. But as familiar as we are with God's principles and the cause-and-effect relationship of disobedience, we still make bad choices on occasion. That's because our flesh often gets in the way of sound decision-making.

But the spirit of the man who is focused on the principles of God will quickly bring him back to a right relationship with his Father. Thus, to avoid catastrophic consequences, the fervent Christian will daily renew his vow and seek spiritual guidance.

In our study today of the life and rule of King Rehoboam, we will see the consequences of a 'broken' relationship with God.

#### **Solomon's Negative Influence**

Bad morals and bad doctrine do not promote good conditions in any land. They eventually bring oppression, tyranny, and slavery. And sooner or later the oppressed will revolt. With all of Solomon's greatness as the king of Israel, his death in the flower of his age seems to appear un-regretted. His style of government was no blessing to Israel. At first it is supposed that Solomon employed no Israelite in drudgery. But as the

years went by, he forsook the God of compassion, and appeared to have used his own people as slaves. His expensive buildings forced him to enforce an oppressive system of taxation. He began his reign by an inauspicious act, the death of his brother Adonijah, which was a sin against God. He had an inordinate love of women, which motivated him to form matrimonial alliances with all kingdoms and neighboring states. He introduced idolatry into the kingdom of Israel; and ultimately, his wives turned away his heart from God. In every thing great, he was glorious, wise, and holy; yet in every thing little, he was mean, foolish and impious. He forsook the God of his mercies and left Israel unhappy and feeling victimized. This was the throne to which Rehoboam ascended.

Question: How does a parent's sin negatively influence his or her children?

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(Answer: The bible says that the sins of men are carried to the fourth generation [Exodus 20:5 and 34:7]. We see evidence of this in the impact of our own sins on our children. Children mimic their parents. They will consciously use the sins of their parents as an excuse for committing sin. But they will also subconsciously develop sinful habits through observation. These habits, which are often devastating, can impact their own offspring to the fourth generation.)

### **The People's King**

Rehoboam was probably the only son of Solomon; for although Solomon had a thousand wives, he did not have the blessing of numerous offspring; and although he was the wisest of men himself, his son was a poor, unprincipled fool. When Rehoboam came to the throne in place of his father Solomon, the elders of the land besought Rehoboam to ease up on the people, to have a more compassionate government, and to remove the heavy yoke from off its citizens. It's clear from their request that they viewed the king as a servant of the people.

Every regal act of a just king was an act of service to the state. The king was not only the fountain of law and justice; but as he had the appointment of all officers and judges, consequently he was the executor of the laws; and all justice was administered in his name. Properly speaking, a good and constitutional king was the servant of his people; and in being such he was their father and their king. The people were looking to Solomon's son to rectify the sins of his father.

Rehoboam spent three days considering their petition. Then Rehoboam, strongly influenced by his evil peers (1 Kings 12:8–10), did not listen to their entreaties for a more compassionate government. Instead, he said he would be harder on the people than Solomon was. Hear his taskmaster tone as he says, "*My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.*" The 'scorpion' was not a lethal bug, but a military formation designed by the Romans for shooting arrows, which, when poisoned, were likened to the scorpion's sting, and the wound it inflicted. This threat then, from Rehoboam, was a threat of war against his own people. It was not the decision of a servant of the people!

Question: What does it mean to 'crucify the flesh' and how is it accomplished?

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(Answer: In Galatians 2:20, the Apostle Paul says that when we are crucified with Christ, we renounce the flesh and begin to live a life of faith, that is pleasing to God. The flesh represents sin. When we accept Christ, we lay aside our sin nature and take up the mantle of Christ...and allow the Holy Spirit to guide our footsteps and help us make sin-free choices.)

The king is made for the people, not the people for the king. A king lives for his people, and not for himself. They would have obeyed, loved and defended Rehoboam, had he followed that simple rule. A Ruler maintains his rule through mutual acts of service and benevolence. A good king has no self-interest; and such a king will always have obedient and loving subjects. But a haughty, proud tyrant will have a suspicious and jealous people, who ripen by the hour for revolt.

And revolt they did! Rehoboam's total rejection of the pleas of the people for a less repressive government was met by a great revolt. Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, and assembled all the fighting men of Judah and Benjamin, a number totaling one hundred and eighty thousand; and with these men he intended to reduce the men of Israel to his allegiance. But Rehoboam was forbidden by Shemaiah to war against the revolting tribes.

Question: In every church there is a problem with the "generation gap" to one degree or another. By not accepting the wise counsel of the elders, Rehoboam caused a major rift in the 12 tribes of Israel. What steps can we take to bridge the "generation gap" and include both the older as well as the younger people of our church in a shared fellowship?

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(Answer: It is the duty of the more seasoned, older Christians to impart God's wisdom to the younger generation, not through orders and threats, but through teaching and training. Every ministry should mentor the youth department in preparation for future leadership roles. The youth should be encouraged and guided into a more knowledgeable understanding of the ways of God.)

## The Most Significant Split in History

Ten of the twelve tribes renounced the family of David, stoned to death Adoram, who came to receive their tribute, and made Jeroboam their king. Their new nation, which was the northern kingdom, is generally referred to as Israel. Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to Rehoboam, and formed the southern kingdom called Judah.

The division of David and Solomon's United Kingdom into two, often hostile, nations was truly one of history's major turning points. In studying the text, which describes this painful division, we sense the spiritual apostasy, which was part and parcel of the founding of the Northern realm, Israel.

In the entire history of the North, there is no godly king. And in the history of the South, the kingdom known as Judah, there were only a few. Yet the kings in the Southern line were all descendants of David, for God's covenant-promise to Israel's greatest king was faithfully kept.

This era marks the development of God's powerful prophetic ministry. From this point forward, prophets played an increasingly significant role in speaking out about the sins of the nation, and in calling God's people back to the Lord. Both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah knew the ministry of these "men of God".

Question: This split of the twelve tribes is perhaps the first record of a 'church split'. Twelve tribes under ONE GOD chose to sever their relationship. Is it ever acceptable for a church to split?

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(Answer: A church can split for valid reasons. 1) The church may become too large, and decide that effective ministry is better accomplished in a smaller setting. 2) The pastor may see the need to plant a new church in a different location, and will send an associate and some members to accomplish the task.

3) A pastor may train an associate whose talents and abilities are ripe for God's utilization, and he will help that associate get started in a new ministry location.

Incompatibility, disagreements, anger, frustration and impatience are never valid reasons for a church split. God would never split a church under such circumstances. He would require the congregation to pray it's way through the tribulation and accept His solution rather than their own.)

## **Conclusion**

No modern-day philosopher can rebut the fact that we pay a high price for our actions. "He who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption." (Gal. 6:8) It is not a debatable issue. It is a principle that has served as a reminder throughout history to those who trust God's Word.

But we often see the negative aspect of this truth, and overlook the positive. Those who choose a path of righteousness and crucify the flesh with the blood of Jesus Christ, will "suffer", or experience the GOOD consequences of a life lived in Christ. It's our choice!

## **Lesson 4**

### **King Rehoboam and Consequences**

Student

Biblical Text: 1 Kings 11:43 -12:16

#### **Introduction**

Every Christian has felt the sting of sin and the consequences of poor decisions. We often recite the scripture verse from Paul to remind us of the importance of careful decision-making: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Galatians 6:7)

Every decision we make affects our daily lives. But as familiar as we are with God's principles and the cause-and-effect relationship of disobedience, we still make bad choices on occasion. That's because our flesh often gets in the way of sound decision-making.

But the spirit of the man who is focused on the principles of God will quickly bring him back to a right relationship with his Father. Thus, to avoid catastrophic consequences, the fervent Christian will daily renew his vow and seek spiritual guidance.

In our study today of the life and rule of King Rehoboam, we will see the consequences of a 'broken' relationship with God.

#### **Solomon's Negative Influence**

Bad morals and bad doctrine do not promote good conditions in any land. They eventually bring oppression, tyranny, and slavery. And sooner or later the oppressed will revolt. With all of Solomon's greatness as the king of Israel, his death in the flower of his age seems to appear un-regretted. His style of government was no blessing to Israel. At first it is supposed that Solomon employed no Israelite in drudgery.

But as the years went by, he forsook the God of compassion, and appeared to have used his own people as slaves. His expensive buildings forced him to enforce an oppressive system of taxation. He began his reign by an inauspicious act, the death of his brother Adonijah, which was a sin against God. He had an inordinate love of women, which motivated him to form matrimonial alliances with all kingdoms and neighboring states. He introduced idolatry into the kingdom of Israel; and ultimately, his wives turned away his heart from God. In every thing great, he was glorious, wise, and holy; yet in every thing little, he was mean, foolish and impious. He forsook the God of his mercies and left Israel unhappy and feeling victimized. This was the throne to which Rehoboam ascended.

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tribes.

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The division of David and Solomon’s United Kingdom into two, often hostile, nations was truly one of history’s major turning points. In studying the text, which describes this painful division, we sense the spiritual apostasy, which was part and parcel of the founding of the Northern realm, Israel.

This era marks the development of God’s powerful prophetic ministry. From this point forward, prophets played an increasingly significant role in speaking out about the sins of the nation, and in calling God’s people back to the Lord. Both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah knew the ministry of these “men of God”.

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## **Conclusion**

No modern-day philosopher can rebut the fact that we pay a high price for our actions. “He who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption.” (Gal. 6:8) It is not a debatable issue. It is a principle that has served as a reminder throughout history to those who trust God’s Word.

But we often see the negative aspect of this truth, and overlook the positive. Those who choose a path of righteousness and crucify the flesh with the blood of Jesus Christ, will “suffer”, or experience the GOOD consequences of a life lived in Christ. It’s our choice!

## **Lesson 5**

### **King Jeroboam and False Gods**

Teacher's Copy

Biblical Text: 1 Kings 12:20, 25-33

#### **Introduction**

Idol worship is a serious matter. Christians tend to believe that they are free of the sin of 'idol worship' by virtue of their professed faith in Jesus Christ. But it doesn't take much to turn a man away from sound spiritual influence. Paul said, "...When I would do good, evil is present with me." (Romans 7:21)

Just like us, the people of the Northern Kingdom were confident in their faith too. But the influence of a self-centered and evil king took its toll on the nation's religious practices, steering them into idol worship and weakening their strength as a nation.

With the division of the kingdom of Solomon, the Hebrew people were launched on a three and a half century decline, culminating in their final exile from the Promised Land. What happened during this extended period carried God's chosen people toward the edge of Divine judgment.

#### **The Split**

The reigns of kings David and Solomon were glory days for Israel. The united Jewish nation, blessed with power and prosperity, was a politically dominant force in the Middle East. But all was not well within Israel. In Solomon's later years, as the weight of his bureaucracy increased and his building projects multiplied, even his great income was not enough to sustain the financial load. So Solomon increased the taxes on his people and drafted more and more men into labor levies. Consequently, the discontent among the people grew.

When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam went to Shechem to meet with the dissidents and hear their complaints. These people actually came to see Rehoboam with the intention of making him king. Though they chose a spokesman who had been Solomon's enemy (Jeroboam), the people promised to accept Rehoboam as king if he would lighten the tax burden on the people. Foolishly, Rehoboam refused, promising instead to increase the burden. This forced a revolt unlike any other in Israel's history. The ten northern tribes openly rebelled against Rehoboam, rejecting Davidic rule (2 Chron. 10). In place of Rehoboam, they recognized Jeroboam as their new king of Israel. Rehoboam attempted to war against the tribes in an effort to bring them into submission, but when the Prophet Shemaiah turned back the loyalist army, explaining that it was God's battle, not theirs, a permanent division was wedged between the Southern and Northern tribes. There were now two nations, and two kings. The nation of Jeroboam would be known as the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Question: What is at the root of unfavorable 'division' among Christians?

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(Answer: Sowing division among Christians is one of the seven deadly sins outlined in Proverbs 6:16. The motivation for such behavior can often be traced to one of the remaining deadly sins - pride, lying, hatred, evil, eagerness to do wrong, false witnessing. Division happens when one group steers away from the Will of God, determined to have its own way. Churches sometimes split amicably for good reason, but splits are too often the result of disobedience to God. 'Division' among members can stifle church growth and destroy Christ's image in the community it serves.)

### **The New King**

From the beginning, Jeroboam started the northern kingdom down a sinful path from

which it never departed. 1 Kings 14:9 records that he committed more wicked deeds than “all that were before” him. The list of kings BEFORE him included Saul, David, and Solomon. The Divine epitaph on Jeroboam’s life is found in 1 Kings 14:16, which reads: “Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin”. The epitaph is recorded approximately twenty-five times in scripture: Jeroboam “made Israel to sin...”.

Question: Why is your personal Christian legacy so important to future generations?

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(Answer: Though the Bible has been the best selling book for generations, and copies reside in many homes around the world, the application of its instruction is what draws men to Christ. We are the ‘arms and legs’ of the Word. If our lives do not reflect the teachings of the One whom we serve, then all the Bibles in the world will not convert men to Christ. Psalm 48 says that we should mark our faith well, “that ye may tell it to the generation following”.)

### **Jeroboam’s Sin**

Jeroboam corrupted the people by corrupting their religion. As king of Israel, Jeroboam faced a difficult political situation that would weigh heavily on his ability to lead his people. The center of worship for the Hebrews was at Jerusalem, and Jerusalem was the capital of the Southern Kingdom. Jeroboam feared that the people would return to the Davidic dynasty if they made the required annual pilgrimages to the temple. So Jeroboam set up his own “iron curtain” between the two nations. And he went about setting up a rival religious system.

Question: How can you be certain that the church to which you belong is in a 'right relationship' with God?

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(Answer: Christ commands that we follow Him. If a church is correctly teaching the role of Christ as Savior and Intercessor, then she is a 'right' church. The church must also follow all the basic tenants of Christianity, as a visible by-product of her faith in the Savior whom she serves. The church is the Bride of Christ, loyal and faithful to the Lamb – Rev. 21:2.)

### **The New Religion**

Jeroboam's false system counterfeited the pattern established by God in the Old Testament Law. He established worship centers at Dan and Bethel, but rather than erect temples, he put up idols—golden calves on whose backs the invisible God was imagined to ride. Jeroboam extradited the Levitical priests who would not go along with his renegade plans, and he ordained volunteers from among the people. This was a breach of the Mosaic Law, which required all priests to be of the tribe of Levi.

On the day that Jeroboam instituted his false religion, he was confronted by "a man of God...from Judah" (1 Kings 13:1). This prophet pronounced judgment upon the altar that Jeroboam was consecrating. He foretold of the birth of Josiah, a king of Judah, who would one day burn the bones of the false priests upon Jeroboam's altar. The prophet gave a sign to prove that he was speaking by God's command: the altar would crack, and the ashes would spill out. Angered by his prediction, Jeroboam stretched out his hand and commanded that the young prophet be seized. But the hand he stretched out was gripped by paralysis and he could not lower it! And at that moment, the altar split.

Frightened, Jeroboam begged the prophet to ask God to release his paralysis, and his hand was restored. God's spokesman then made his announcements with unquestioned divine authority, though Jeroboam would never learn to submit to Almighty God.

Jeroboam also set up his own priestly class and sacrificial system. He copied the great feasts of the Law in which all Hebrews were commanded to participate. He established his own festivals, set at different times from the true celebrations ordained by God. This made a mockery of the Jewish faith.

This false religious system had a dual impact on the Northern Kingdom, Israel. First, a significant number of his citizens slipped over into Judah and settled there, so they could worship the Lord as He had commanded. We know the numbers were significant because at the time of the division or split, Judah was able to mobilize only 180,000 men (2 Chron. 11:1); but just 18 years later, Judah's army entered the field with 400,000 fighting men (2 Chron. 13:2).

Question: Churches today have many celebrations that have no direct biblical roots. What danger can they pose to the preservation of our faith?

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(Answer: We have celebration such as Everybody's birthdays, Senior Day or Golden Harvest, Carnivals, Banquets, Bowling and basketball competitions, etc. If these events are purely for fellowship and fun, we must be certain that our behavior during these events is becoming of Christians. No church event or celebration should EVER compromise the tenants of scripture or our faith in Jesus Christ. If they do, they become a great distraction from our core message of salvation, and they send a wrong signal out to our community that will desecrate our reputation as bible-believing Christians.)

## Jeroboam Sets a Pattern

Second, Jeroboam had an impact on the character of the Northern Kingdom. This first king made a conscious and overtly rebellious decision to break with God and His Law, and each succeeding king continued in the pattern Jeroboam set! Israel, with only nineteen kings during its brief existence, had nine different dynasties. Only eight of its kings died a natural death. Seven were assassinated, one committed suicide, one was killed in battle, one died of injuries suffered in a fall, and the last king, Hoshea, simply disappeared into captivity. The Bible says that every one of them “did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.”

With this kind of leadership, it was no surprise that the people who remained in the apostate kingdom quickly fell into Baal worship. The evil reign of Jeroboam over the northern kingdom lasted for 22 years, until his son Nadab succeeded him.

Question: Jeroboam compromised his faith for the sake of his political career. In what ways do we see the spirit of Jeroboam in men today?

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(Answer: We see men and women in leadership today, whose political platform is founded upon whatever ‘sticks’ in the poles. They change with ‘the wind’ and adjust their words to meet the demands of the people.)

Question: What types of ‘Baal’ worship do we see in our 21<sup>st</sup> century?

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(Answer: Anything that we consider more important than God. **Materialism**, greed, horoscopes, superstitions, Sunday sports, etc. Your BAAL is whatever separates you from fellowship with God.)

### **The Prophet Lifeline**

God continued to send prophets to speak to Israel, but kings and people continued to resent the prophets' ministries and to reject their messages. After a stormy history—during which Israel did know material prosperity under some strong rulers such as Jeroboam II and Omri —Israel finally fell to the Assyrians in 722 B.C. The city of Samaria was totally destroyed and the people of Israel were deported. It was at this point that the northern kingdom disappeared from history; only the families who emigrated from the northern kingdom back to Judah kept the identity of the ten tribes alive. And Jeroboam had set all this in motion!

Question: Consider the long-term ramifications of our faith neglect. What can we do to strengthen the faith legacy we pass on to our children?

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(Answer: We can begin with daily devotions in the home; attend Sunday School, Worship, and other church classes and events regularly. Emphasize the importance of putting God FIRST in our lives, and demonstrate that commitment by your own actions.)

### **Conclusion**

The rejection of prophetic warnings from God led to the downfall of the northern kingdom. But the problem did not lay with the Prophets or their Word from the Lord – the problem lay with the hearers. These spokesmen for God did deliver His message.

But the people did not respond with faith. They recognized that the message and the messenger were from God, but their awareness did not lead them to commitment. They were sidetracked by their king's false religion.

Unwilling to submit to God's way, the people stubbornly held to the path established by Jeroboam and the evil kings who followed him. It is not, as Jesus reminds us, the one who hears the Word of God who is blessed. It is the person who **hears and does** who receives God's blessing (Matthew 7:24).

The men and women of the two kingdoms who took pride in their religious activities, their prophets, their temple, and holy places, were all too like men and women of today who confuse churchgoing with discipleship, and "Bible-believing" with obedience. We can still hear God's invitation to us in the prophetic call of the Old Testament prophets. It is an invitation designed not to burden us, but to lead us safely away from the false religions that would sever us from Our Father.

## **Lesson 5**

### **King Jeroboam and False Gods**

Student

Biblical Text: 1 Kings 12:20, 25-33

#### **Introduction**

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The Northern Kingdom were confident in their faith. But the influence of a self-centered and evil king took its toll on the nation's religious practices, steering them into idol worship and weakening their strength as a nation. A 3 ½ year decline culminated in their final exile from the Promised Land. What happened during this extended period carried God's chosen people toward the edge of Divine judgment.

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Solomon's enemy (Jeroboam), the people promised to accept Rehoboam as king if he would lighten the tax burden on the people. Foolishly, Rehoboam refused, promising instead to increase the burden. This forced a revolt unlike any other in Israel's history. The ten northern tribes openly rebelled against Rehoboam, rejecting Davidic rule (2 Chron. 10). In place of Rehoboam, they recognized Jeroboam as their new king of Israel. Rehoboam attempted to war against the tribes in an effort to bring them into submission, but when the Prophet Shemaiah turned back the loyalist army, explaining that it was God's battle, not theirs, a permanent division was wedged between the Southern and Northern tribes. There were now two nations, and two kings. The nation of Jeroboam would be known as the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

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### **Conclusion**

The rejection of prophetic warnings from God led to the downfall of the northern kingdom. But the problem did not lay with the Prophets or their Word from the Lord – the problem lay with the hearers. These spokesmen for God did deliver His message. But the people did not respond with faith. They recognized that the message and the messenger were from God, but their awareness did not lead them to commitment. They were sidetracked by their king's false religion.

The men and women of the two kingdoms who took pride in their religious activities, their prophets, their temple, and holy places, were all too like men and women of today who confuse churchgoing with discipleship, and “Bible-believing” with obedience. We can still hear God’s invitation to us in the prophetic call of the Old Testament prophets. It is an invitation designed not to burden us, but to lead us safely away from the false religions that would sever us from Our Father.

**Lesson 6**  
**The Prophet Elijah and Confrontation**  
Teacher's Copy

Biblical Text: 1 Kings 17:1; 18:17-38

**Introduction**

It is human nature to shy away from confrontation. No one wants to be the one to 'start' a conflict, whether it is with our neighbors, our government or even our own brothers and sisters in Christ. Christians know that there are many issues we should actively address, but we often look the other way for the sake of peace. When Dr. Martin Luther King sought the support of his constituents in the fight against segregation, many refused to join his efforts, even those of the same Baptist faith. Instead, they opted to tolerate injustice and avoid confrontation.

But when the principles of God are at stake, no Christian should shy away from his duty to take a stand for the Lord, no matter how uncomfortable or even dangerous the conflict. We are God's emissaries; if we fail to establish His principles within our communities, what will happen to our Christian way of life?

In our study of Elijah, we will see that confrontation is a challenging, albeit unavoidable component of evangelism.

**The Role of the Prophet**

During the period of the divided kingdom of Israel and Judah, two groups of people are most significant. The first group is made up of rulers, whose deeds and misdeeds are chronicled in the scriptures. The second group is made up of prophets, whose voices were raised at critical times in each nation's experience. Who were these prophets, and what was their mission?

A prophet is a spokesman for God. Prophets served as “God’s mouth” during the time of the split kingdom. The prophetic ministry did not blot out the spokesman’s personality and peculiarities. Each spoke within his historical and cultural context, yet each was God’s spokesman and communicated God’s own message.

Some prophets received their message through an external voice (cf. 1 Samuel 3:3-9). But often the voice was internal (Isaiah 7:3-4; Habakkuk 2:2). The prophets were also permitted to see spiritual realities that were invisible to others (Numbers 22:31; 2 Kings 6:15-17). At still other times, the prophets saw visions (Ezekiel 37; Ezekiel 40-48). Though the message was received in many ways, the true prophet recognized its source and confidently declared his announcement to be “the word of the Lord.”

Question: While the Bible is the complete Word of God, God still gives us Pastors - a type of ‘prophet’ - to direct us in Ways of God. How are today’s ‘prophets’ hindered?

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(Answer: Pastors today are hindered in much the same way as the early major and minor prophets of biblical times. When congregations do not heed their pastors advice, warnings, direction, and fail to obey the Pastor as he obeys Christ, our disobedience slows down the spread of the Gospel.)

### **A Prophet for Evil King Ahab**

The prophet Elijah’s arrival in our biblical history is abrupt and dramatic. He appears on the scene suddenly, during the reign of Ahab. Elijah is charged by God to talk to King Ahab, this wicked king. Ahab’s country, the northern kingdom of Israel, never had a godly leader. They had a total of nineteen kings during their history, but all of them were evil men. The first six kings that preceded Ahab reveal the great moral and spiritual decline that took place as soon as the northern kingdom came into existence. But like

those before him, the spiritual decline worsened when Ahab became king.

Ahab was so bad that Scripture said he was worse than all the kings before him, and that included his father who had been worse than any of the previous kings. Twice the Bible records this fact of Ahab being more wicked than any of the kings who went before him: “Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him” (1 Kings 16:30); and “Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him” (1 Kings 16:33). We noted earlier some of the great wickedness of the rulers who preceded Ahab to the throne. For him to be worse than all of them, the extent of Ahab’s wickedness was extremely great. When the Lord was ready to send a messenger to confront King Ahab and his wickedness, He would summon a powerful and fearless prophet.

Question: What strategies should we employ in our witnessing efforts, to confront those who are hostile to the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

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(Answer: Our most important weapon is love. We must continue to love the lost souls Christ commissioned us to save. The second most important weapon is consistency. We cannot allow ourselves to be deterred or discouraged by the hostility of those who reject the offer of Salvation through Jesus Christ.)

### **The Confrontation**

Elijah answers the call of God to confront king Ahab with warning of God’s intervention. God will cause no rain, no dew, no moisture, nothing to water the fields that produce food for the nation of the northern kingdom of Israel. Just the burning, searing, wilting sun would scorch the earth, day after day, until Elijah would call for a halt to the torment of the drought. It was a weather forecast unlike any we have ever experienced.

The name Elijah means 'Jehovah is God'. It was a most significant and appropriate name for Elijah's time and ministry. The great conflict of that day was whether Jehovah was God or Baal was God. Elijah's name, as well as his ministry, emphatically said Jehovah was God! But most of the people in Israel worshipped Baal instead of Jehovah. This wicked Baal worship provoked God's judgment in the form of a drought, which Elijah predicted before king Ahab. When God determined that it was time to confront the worshippers of Baal and put an end to their apostasy, He summoned Elijah to the task.

Elijah's name attests to the fact that his parents were courageous in their desire to continue in the worship of the One True and Living God – Jehovah. Here, in the land of Baal worship, Elijah's parents emphatically declared their allegiance. There would be no correct testimony for Elijah's parents unless the testimony said that Jehovah is God.

Discussion: How do we avoid putting too much of ourselves, and not enough God, into the message of salvation?

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(Answer: Our strategies must reflect God's goals and not our own. We must be careful not to take personal credit for the results of our successful leadership efforts, or allow others to puff us up.)

### **Elijah's Backbone**

Confrontation requires certain qualities in a man. We can conclude from Elijah's dramatic appearance before king Ahab and the worshippers of Baal that Elijah was bold and zealous in his desire to rid the Northern Kingdom of this idol worship. Elijah was not a passive, timid, mild mannered soul. He was a master of confrontation. It was his very

nature to get to the point in a hurry. His nature fit his calling. God always prepares the man for the calling. If a man does not possess the qualities needed for the call, God will give them to him. If a man never possesses the qualities for a particular call, God has simply not called him to that task.

The people wanted to escape the spiritual and moral decline and its consequences, but they would not cease to commit the sinful act of idol worship. They cried for freedom while they pursued the sins, which took away their freedom. Someone had to confront the spiritual frailty of the nation of Israel. Until people condemn and forsake the evil around them, they will not begin to escape the consequences of evil.

Question: Why should a pastor be equipped to handle confrontation?

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(Answer: There will always be those who desire to challenge God's Will and the pastors who are charged to carry out His Will. A called leader must be bold enough to handle such challenges with aplomb, yet compassionate enough to embrace the repentant challenger. A pastor is called to protect and preserve the faith, and any act of treason against that faith must be dealt with.)

## **The Showdown**

Elijah's showdown with Ahab and the prophets of Baal brought the entire matter to a head. This was done on Mt. Carmel, where according to the scriptures, Jehovah proved Himself to be the One True and Living God. It was there that God turned water into kindling wood, and lightning into a match. The result was that the people fell on their faces, crying, "The Lord, He is the God."

Thus was accomplished the great work of Elijah's ministry. The prophets of Baal were put to death by the order of Elijah. Not one of them escaped. Then immediately followed the rain, in accordance with Elijah's prophecy, and in answer to his prayer (James 5:18).

Question: The penalty for rejecting God, and Christ, His Son, is still death... eternal death. Why are so many willing to face eternal death rather than accept Christ as their Savior?

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(Answer: The human finite mind cannot conceptualize the idea of anything being eternal, therefore humanity is hesitant to believe that eternal death and eternal life are real choices. Our understanding of the scriptures will always be limited, unless we allow FAITH to be our interpreter. To accept that Christ has the power to grant us eternal life, we must first accept that we are sinners in need of forgiveness, and that Christ alone can redeem us from those sins. This too is a stumbling block to those who do not believe that man is born in sin, and that sin has a penalty.)

## **Conclusion**

We need not look far to see the parallel between Christians and the Israelites of the northern kingdom. Before we envision ourselves as a 'delivered' people, consider the fact that even some Christians willingly compromise God's Law in matters of divorce, abortion, sexual habits, etc., accepting and adapting to man-made laws even though they conflict with God's Divine plan for humanity. And we usually do it for the sake of convenience. Like the Israelites who bowed to the worship of Baal, they 'fit in' for the sake of convenience and expediency.

Christians must demonstrate a greater strength of resistance to influence of the world. Like the Israelites who half-worshipped two masters, there will be no correct testimony on the part of Christianity today until we unanimously proclaim the complete rule of Christ in our innermost spirit.

## **Lesson 6**

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on the part of Christianity today until we unanimously proclaim the complete rule of Christ in our innermost spirit.

**Lesson 7**  
**The Prophet Elisha and the Mantle**  
Teacher's Copy

Biblical Text: 2 Kings 2:9-15

**Introduction**

When your Christian journey this side of heaven is over, who will pick up where you leave off? Will it be your children?...your neighbors?...your friends?

We cannot take our responsibility to spread the gospel lightly. Jesus' final charge to His followers was, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:19,20) We have been given ALL POWER to teach ALL NATIONS, ALL THINGS, ALWAYS. This is an open-ended charge of great magnitude with no completion date until the rapture. God has appointed us ambassadors to carry His Word forward through every generation until the second coming of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Who are you training to pick up your mantle for Christ? In our text, we will study the successor of the prophet Elijah, as we come to understand the importance of passing on the mantle.

**The Successor**

Elisha was first called to partner with Elijah on Mount Horeb, where the chief prophet was told that Elisha would be his successor. Every great work needs a successor. What good would it have been to gain the ground Elijah gained in his battle against King Ahab, if there was no successor to see it through to the end?

God would never leave his Divine work unfinished.

ELISHA, meaning 'God, his salvation', was the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah. Elijah was commanded to anoint Elisha as his successor (1 Kings 19:16). On his way from Sinai to Damascus he found Elisha at his native place engaged in the labors of farming, plowing with twelve yoke of oxen. He went over to him, threw over his shoulders his mantle, and at once adopted him as a son, and invested him with the prophetic office (comp. Luke 9:61-62).

Question: Should a pastor prepare his own pastoral replacement?

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(Answer: Most churches are autonomous, meaning that they choose their own leadership without external interference. But wisdom warrants that a pastor will receive and groom other preachers as potential candidates to replace him. No ministry lasts forever; a pastor knows when his 'season' is over. If he loves his congregation, his heartfelt desire is to leave them in good hands with sound leadership in place, even if it is for an interim period.)

## **The Training**

Elisha met the summons from Elijah, four years before the death of king Ahab, with fervor and enthusiasm. He was a farmer one day, plowing a field with twelve oxen, and a prophet-in-training the next, plowing the hearts of the twelve tribes of Israel, without a hint of hesitation on his part. Whom God calls, He prepares.

Together, these two worked side-by-side for seven or eight years. Elijah knew that his task was to impart God's wisdom to this young man who would follow in his footsteps. During all these training years we hear nothing of Elisha except in connection with the closing scenes of Elijah's life. When Elijah's work was completed, the scriptures record

that he was taken up into heaven in a whirlwind, accompanied by a flaming chariot and horses of fire. It was an exit that deserved attention, and it certainly got the attention of Elijah's protégé...Elisha.

Question: How important is seminary training for those who are called to the gospel ministry?

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(Answer: Those who claim "the call" should also be filled with a desire to excel in their calling. One cannot successfully pursue any endeavor without adequate preparation, and ministry too requires education. Perhaps, ministry requires even more, since a pastor will be a counselor (psychology), a teacher (extensive biblical knowledge), a legal advisor (knowledge of the law), financial administrator (accounting), supervisor (human resources), and a motivator (oratorical skills. Paul, who told Timothy to 'study to show thyself approved unto God', spoke several languages fluently, was a master teacher of Roman law and culture, and was also intensely educated in the Jewish faith. That education was of great value on his mission journeys.)

#### **The Mantle**

Following Elijah's rapture (for there was no body left behind to signify a common death), the mantle of Elijah fell on Elisha. This mantle was the garment of the priesthood. It is referred to in Exodus and Leviticus as the "robe of the ephod" (Exodus 28:4, 31; Leviticus 8:7), which was a splendid under tunic wholly of blue, reaching to below the knees. It was woven without seam, and was put on by being drawn over the head. This seamless garment was worn not only by priests, but also by kings (1 Samuel 24:4), prophets (1 Samuel 15:27), and rich men (Job 1:20; Job 2:12). It is the same "little coat" which Samuel's mother brought to him from year to year at Shiloh (1 Samuel 2:19), a miniature of the official priestly robe. The priestly robe was a sign of nobility, wealth and a special calling.

But the actual story of Elijah's mantle falling on Elisha is allegorical; the significance of the 'mantle' is not in its value as a priestly garb, but in its value as a spiritual coat of armor. This was the true mantle of value that Elisha requested of Elijah when he said, "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."

Elisha was accepted as the leader of the sons of the prophets, and became a noted prophet in Israel. For the long period of about sixty years (B.C. 892-832), he held the office of "prophet in Israel" (2 Kings 5:8). After Elijah's departure, Elisha returned to Jericho to begin his prophetic ministry.

Question: What can hinder a congregation from accepting God's chosen leader for a vacant pulpit?

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(Answer: We look on the outward man, and often miss the inner qualities necessary to move God's kingdom forward. We see evidence of this in the story of Samuel's anointing of David. God rejected the first seven sons offered by Jesse to Samuel. It was the youngest and least likely candidate that God chose as Israel's leader (1 Samuel 16).

### **The Ministry**

The ministry of Elisha took on many forms. In Jericho, he healed the spring of water by casting salt into it (2 Kings 2:21). We next find him at Bethel (2 Kings 2:23), where, with the sternness of his master, he cursed the youths who came out and scoffed at him as a prophet of God. Then we read of his predicting a fall of rain when the army of Jehoram was faint from thirst (2 Kings 3:9-20); of the multiplying of the poor widow's cruse of oil (2 Kings 4:1-7); the miracle of restoring to life the son of the woman of Shunem (2 Kings 4:18-37); the multiplication of the twenty loaves of new barley into a sufficient supply for an hundred men (2 Kings 4:42-44); of the cure of Naaman the Syrian of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-27); of the punishment of Gehazi for his falsehood and his covetousness; of the recovery of the axe lost in the waters of the Jordan (2 Kings 6:1-7); of the miracle at Dothan, half-way on the road between Samaria and Jezreel; of the siege of Samaria by the king of Syria, and of the terrible sufferings of the people in connection with it, and Elisha's prophecy of the relief that would come (2 Kings 6:24-7:2).

But his ministry doesn't end there. We then find Elisha at Damascus, to carry out the command given to his master to anoint Hazael king over Syria (2 Kings 8:7-15); thereafter he directs one of the sons of the prophets to anoint Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Israel, instead of Ahab. Thus the three commands given to Elijah

(2 Kings 9:1-10) were finally carried out. In his finest hour as a prophet of God, Elisha instigates a revolt by Jehu that leads to the complete annihilation of the house of Ahab and the death of the kings of both Judah and Israel. That is what the scriptures mean when they charge us to ‘run the race’ and ‘finish the course’!

We do not again read of Elisha again until we find him on his deathbed in his own house (2 Kings 13:14-19). Joash, the grandson of Jehu, comes to mourn over his approaching departure, and utters the same words as those of Elisha when Elijah was taken away: “My father, my father! The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.”

The body of a prophet dies, but his spirit lives. One year after the death and burial of Elisha, a man is buried in the same grave; no sooner did it touch the hallowed remains of Elisha than the man “revived, and stood up on his feet” (2 Kings 13:20-21). This was the powerful double-portion of God’s spirit resting on Elisha that the prophets of Israel attested to many years prior!

Contemplation: What impact will your faith legacy have on those you leave behind? Will memories of you draw the next generation to accept and follow Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior? What will you change right now to ensure that your faith legacy is one with which God will be pleased?

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### **Dealing with the Drought**

Elijah and Elisha dealt with a severe drought of water, and the lack of rain caused a great famine in the land. The famine caused many to doubt the power of the One True and Living God, and to turn to idol worship as a balm for their pain and suffering. The people did not want to admit that their very disobedience had brought the famine upon them.

Today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, messengers of God are still dealing with a great drought...not of water, but of workers. There is a great drought of men and women who are willing to trust God at His Word and proclaim the gospel TO ALL NATIONS. The resulting famine is that mankind is suffering from starvation. Mankind is on a quest to find the perfect appeasement...money, materialism, possessions, toys, expensive vacations...anything that will bring temporary pleasure. But real joy is not ephemeral or short-lived; it is everlasting. That's because real joy is found only in Jesus Christ.

Question: Discuss the responsibilities of a foreign missionary. How can the church encourage more Christians to become missionaries in foreign lands?

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(Answer: The mission field is lacking in two areas – missionaries and money. Those on the mission field depend upon us to support their work. Without funds, Christians are hesitant to enter into mission work. As the church makes more funds available for mission work, more new missionaries will accept the opportunity and the challenge to spread the gospel abroad.)

## **Conclusion**

We too have the responsibility of carrying the mantle of our Christian predecessors. The great call on every Christian's life is to be a witness for the Lord. Our sanctuaries are training schools, where we pray for a double-portion of the Lord's spirit to fall on us and prepare us for the work of spreading the Gospel message. We have replaced the prophets of old. No longer is the Word shrouded in mystery, for all has been revealed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We are His messengers, and we have been given ALL POWER to teach ALL THINGS to ALL NATIONS...ALWAYS.

Unlike Elijah and Elisha, we have the benefit of a written script...the Holy Scriptures...the Lord's Divinely inspired Word.

And when Elijah dropped the old mantle of his earthly tabernacle, Elisha was prepared to take up where he left off. As believers, we must be ready to train those who follow us to become heirs and joint heirs in this work of kingdom building. Who will take up the mantle when our journey on earth is through?

If Elijah were here right now, he would remind us that the size of organized Christianity in America is diminishing. Someone's mantle has been dropped!

When our ancestors are called home to be with the Lord, many drop the mantle! And we hear the voice of the Lord still calling, "Who shall I send, and who will go for us?"

Mantle or cross, if we call ourselves Christian, it is OURS to carry! And it is OURS to pass on! Will the next generation know Christ in the pardon of their sins, or will we drop the mantle at their feet, only to see it trampled into obscurity?

Elijah cast his mantle to the ground, at the feet of Elisha. Elisha immediately picked it up. Who will follow you?

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The body of a prophet dies, but his spirit lives. One year after the death and burial of Elisha, a man is buried in the same grave; no sooner did it touch the hallowed remains of Elisha than the man "revived, and stood up on his feet" (2 Kings 13:20-21).

This was the powerful double-portion of God's spirit resting on Elisha that the prophets of Israel attested to many years prior!

Contemplation: What impact will your faith legacy have on those you leave behind? Will memories of you drawn the next generation to accept and follow Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior? What will you change right now to ensure that your faith legacy is one with which God will be pleased?

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### **Dealing with the Drought**

Elijah and Elisha dealt with a severe drought of water, and the lack of rain caused a great famine in the land. The famine caused many to doubt the power of the One True and Living God, and to turn to idol worship as a balm for their pain and suffering. The people did not want to admit that their very disobedience had brought the famine upon them.

Today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, messengers of God are still dealing with a great drought...not of water, but of workers. There is a great drought of men and women who are willing to trust God at His Word and proclaim the gospel TO ALL NATIONS. The resulting famine is that mankind is suffering from starvation. Mankind is on a quest to find the perfect appeasement...money, materialism, possessions, toys, expensive vacations...anything that will bring temporary pleasure. But real joy is not ephemeral or short-lived; it is everlasting. That's because real joy is found only in Jesus Christ.

Question: Discuss the responsibilities of a foreign missionary. How can the church encourage more Christians to become missionaries in foreign lands?

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## **Conclusion**

We too have the responsibility of carrying the mantle of our Christian predecessors. The great call on every Christian's life is to be a witness for the Lord. Our sanctuaries are training schools, where we pray for a double-portion of the Lord's spirit to fall on us and prepare us for the work of spreading the Gospel message. We are now His messengers, and we have been given ALL POWER to teach ALL THINGS to ALL NATIONS...ALWAYS. Unlike Elijah and Elisha, we have the benefit of a written script...the Holy Scriptures...the Lord's Divinely inspired Word.

And when Elijah dropped the old mantle of his earthly tabernacle, Elisha was prepared to take up where he left off. As believers, we must be ready to train those who follow us to become heirs and joint heirs in this work of kingdom building. Who will take up the mantle when our journey on earth is through?

Elijah cast his mantle to the ground, at the feet of Elisha. Elisha immediately picked it up. Who will follow you?

**Lesson 8**  
**The Prophet Isaiah and Repentance**  
Teacher's Copy

Biblical Text: Isaiah 6:1-8

**Introduction**

We live in the glorious age of the church, where all men are offered salvation through Jesus Christ. But though salvation is free, many never accept it. That's because salvation hinges on repentance.

Repentance is the act of being remorseful or penitent for our sinful nature, and seeking atonement for our soul. Many men never accept the free gift of salvation because they do not view themselves as sinners in need of repentance. The door to salvation for our soul remains locked until we open it with a repentant heart.

Many good men have died without making preparation for their soul. Goodness, kindness, and decency, do not unlock the door to salvation. Confession is the only key that fits the lock – the full confession that we are sinners in need of salvation.

Isaiah was a good man. But God needed a man who was more than good. He needed a man who had the capacity to understand the great prophecies that would be foretold to the nation of Israel. This man would have to comprehend the depth of man's sin, so that he could effectively preach to a dying humanity. God created in Isaiah such a man.

**The Setting**

Israel was now living within the shadow of the decline of the Assyrian Empire. The people had become "deaf and blind" (6:10) to God's plan for His chosen people. They would not listen to the warnings of impending disaster from the prophets. So God sent Isaiah.

Isaiah, the son of Amoz (Isaiah 1:1) was apparently a man of humble rank. His wife was called “the prophetess” (Isaiah 8:3), either because she was endowed with the prophetic gift, like Deborah (Judges 4:4) and Huldah (2 Kings 22:14-20), or simply because she was the wife of “the prophet” (Isaiah 38:1). Isaiah had two sons who bore symbolical names.

The Prophet Isaiah prophesied about 760–700 B.C., A PERIOD OF ABOUT 60 YEARS. It is not clear whether his ministry was launched sometime within a year of the death of King Uzziah, or several years prior, but Isaiah’s powerful message gained a new perspective “in the year that king Uzziah died”.

Isaiah warned the nation of Judah that the sins of the people would bring God’s judgment upon them. He was the deliverer of our most cherished prophecies, who spoke of a “servant, a man of sorrows, one who would be wounded for our transgressions, and a servant who would faithfully accomplish God’s purpose of salvation” (52:13–53:12). But in order for Isaiah to understand the power in that prophecy, God had to bring him to the place of absolute spiritual awareness.

Question: How does God communicate with us?

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(Answer: God uses three methods of communication. The first is the Word, which contains the foundation for our entire faith journey. The second is prayer, our open line of communication with God, who uses the third method, the Holy Spirit, to respond to our prayers and speak to our heart.)

## The Sinner

Isaiah, seeing the sinful condition of the nation (chaps. 1-5), set himself apart from the nation of Judah. Being a man of faith, he would not participate in the people's practices of idolatry. He knew that God was displeased with Judah, and Isaiah did not want to suffer through God's punishment with them. But "in the year that king Uzziah died", Isaiah experienced a change of heart. It was such a radical change of heart that it altered his way of thinking toward his people.

Isaiah had a temple experience unlike any other. Unlike Uzziah, who was forbidden to enter the temple because he had been struck with leprosy and was ceremonially unclean, Isaiah was able to commune with the Lord in the holy temple. On this particular temple visit recorded in scripture, Isaiah "saw the Lord".

During this wake-up call, there were three things that struck Isaiah about God:

- God was **seated on a throne**
- He was **high and exalted**
- The **train of His robe filled the temple**

In the most holy place of the temple in Jerusalem, God's glory had been evident between the cherubim on the atonement cover over the Ark of the Covenant. Some Israelites may have erroneously drawn the conclusion that God was fairly small; even though Solomon, in his dedicatory prayer for the new temple, had stated that no temple could contain God and that in fact even the heavens could not contain Him (1 Kings 8:27).

But Isaiah saw no small God this day. Isaiah did not see God on the Ark of the Covenant, but on a throne. It was the same vision that Ezekiel would have almost 150 years later. Ezekiel envisioned God being borne along on a great chariot throne by living creatures called cherubim (Ezek. 1). To Isaiah, the throne emphasized that **the Lord** is indeed the true King of Israel.

God's being "high and exalted" symbolized His position before the nation. The people desired God to work on their behalf (Isa. 5:19) but Isaiah realized that God was already doing so, as evidenced by His lofty position among them. Isaiah viewed the Lord's long robe as a sign of His royalty and majesty. And the fact that God was IN the temple meant that He still wanted the nation to be involved in the temple worship. The temple and the temple sacrifices portrayed the righteous dealings of a sovereign God with His covenant people.

**There is strong symbolism in the "Seraphs"** who flew over God's presence. These angels were ardent in their zeal for the Lord. One of the seraphs burned Isaiah's lips with a hot coal from the eternal fire that burned on the altar of God. The seraphs had **six wings; with two they covered their faces** indicating their humility. With two they covered **their feet**, which denoted service to God. And with two they flew, which testified of their ongoing desire to proclaim God's holiness and glory.

As the seraphs cried out, Isaiah saw **the temple** shake and then it **was filled with smoke** (Isa. 6:4). The shaking of the thresholds suggested the awesome presence and power of God. The smoke was the same cloud of glory that Isaiah's ancestors had seen in the wilderness (Ex. 13:21; 16:10) and which the priests in Solomon's day had viewed in the dedicated temple (1 Kings 8:10-13).

Isaiah is awestruck by the very presence of God; but when the angels purge his sin with hot coals, Isaiah is immediately struck speechless. This prophet who thought of himself as righteous and faithful, faces the truth that he is a man of polluted lips, who dwells among a people of polluted lips, and that HE TOO is unworthy, either to join the seraphim in singing praises to God, or to be the messenger of God to his people. God brought Isaiah to the realization that he too was part of the sin problem.

Question: Isaiah's perspective and vision of God changed in the year that king Uzziah died. What was it that changed the perspective and vision of God in your life?

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(Answer: Students will give varied accounts of life-changing experiences and conversion testimonies. Encourage them to share those same testimonies with their family and friends.)

### **The Repentant Prophet**

Isaiah's prophecy took on new meaning for this humble prophet. The message of repentance and deliverance that he carried to his people became a message for Isaiah as well. For the first time, he could identify with the agony of their separation from God. From this day forward, Isaiah conceals nothing and holds nothing back in his prophetic witness, for his reverence for "the holy One of Israel" has taken on new meaning.

Question: Isaiah had hot coals applied to his lips, to burn a God consciousness in his heart. What has God applied to your life in order for you to see Him better?

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(Answer: Though God does not orchestrate trials and tribulations, He seizes the opportunity to use those troubles to get our attention and mold us into vessels fit for His service. Testimonies abound of men and women who, through adversity and misfortune, drew closer to God. That closeness is what God needs to effect His kingdom-building work.)

## **Conclusion**

The true repentant sinner does not petition God because he 'got caught'; nor does he petition God for forgiveness out of embarrassment. He must feel a heartfelt remorse over the fact that God has been grieved by his sin.

David said, "Against YOU, YOU only, have I sinned." We all need to recognize that our sins are committed against God. Others may be hurt by our actions, but when we hold our sin up to the unconditional love and grace of God, as expressed through the sacrifice of His Son, we see just how dark our sin really is.

Repentance begins with our confession to God, but it does not stop there. We must take full responsibility for our sins. We must not rationalize it by trying to blame others as well. Our sin must be exposed without cover-up or explanation. Repentance requires total honesty.

God brought Isaiah to that very point of understanding, that Isaiah might prophecy with a heart for his people. And like Isaiah, those of us who have experienced true confession and repentance will possess a powerful testimony of God's love and mercy.

## **Lesson 8**

### **The Prophet Isaiah and Repentance**

Student

Biblical Text: Isaiah 6:1-8

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### **Conclusion**

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We all need to recognize that our sins are committed against God. Others may be hurt by our actions, but when we hold our sin up to the unconditional love and grace of God, as expressed through the sacrifice of His Son, we see just how dark our sin really is.

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**Lesson 9**  
**The Prophet Jeremiah and Protection**  
**Teacher's Copy**

Biblical Text: Jeremiah 1:4-12

**Introduction**

Safety is a major topic of our 21<sup>st</sup> century world. The advent of terrorism within our nation's borders has prompted the formation of a new division of government entitled - Homeland Security. More is being spent on border-control than in any other time in our history. And the CIA has made great strides, righting the wrongs of 9/11, bringing justice to those who would harm Americans, and keeping an ear to the ground for indications of future attacks. This is the kind of world we now live in.

And such was the world of Jeremiah, the Prophet. Though he had no CIA, no Office of Homeland Security, and no army on which to rely, Jeremiah lived at a time when godless men sought to kill him and silence his message.

## The Man

Jeremiah, often called the “weeping prophet” because of his persistent message of God’s judgment, prophesied to the nation of Judah from the reign of King Josiah in 627 B.C. to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586. He dictated his prophecies to a scribe named Baruch (36:4, 32). Jeremiah’s task as a prophet was to declare the coming judgment of God. But his message was always tempered with God’s concern for repentance and righteousness. This dual focus was evident in God’s instructions to Jeremiah: He was “to pluck up and to break down” but also “to build and to plant” (1:10). Jeremiah was allowed to see God’s plan for a future day when His law’s would be written on the human heart, not on tablets of stone. The Lord told Jeremiah, “They shall all know me,” and “I will remember their sin no more” (31:33-34).

God’s call of Jeremiah as a prophet contained a message designed to motivate him for his task. God revealed that His selection of Jeremiah as a prophet had occurred before he had even been formed... in the womb. The word ‘knew’ means far more than intellectual knowledge. It was used of the intimate relations experienced by a husband and wife (Genesis 4:1) and conveyed the sense of a close personal relationship (Amos 3:2) and protection (Psalm 1:6). Before Jeremiah was conceived God had singled him out to be His spokesman to Israel.

Jeremiah had been set... apart for this ministry. The verb translated “set apart” means setting something or someone apart for a specific use. Individuals or objects “set apart” (or sanctified or made holy) for use by God included the Sabbath Day (Ex. 16:23; 20:8), the tabernacle and its furnishings (Ex. 29:44; 40:9), and the priests (Ex. 29:1; 30:30). God had marked Jeremiah from conception and reserved him for a special task. He was appointed to be a prophet to the nations. Though Jeremiah proclaimed God’s Word to Judah (chaps. 2-45), his ministry as God’s spokesman extended beyond Judah to Gentile nations (chaps. 46-51).

Discussion: Jeremiah’s task as a prophet was to declare the coming judgment of God.

What do you feel God has called you to do?

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(Answer: Students may wish to share their 'calling'. Some may ask how to determine the ministry to which they are called. It's important for them to understand that every Christian has a ministry. You may wish to teach a few lessons on recognizing your spiritual gifts and discovering how God uses them.)

### **The Call**

We see in our scripture lesson that Jeremiah responded to God's call with a measure of self-doubt. He first objected that he did not know how to speak. Jeremiah was not claiming that he was physically unable to talk. He was claiming a lack of eloquence and speaking ability required for such a public ministry. You will remember that Moses, too, claimed his inadequacy as a spokesman.

Jeremiah also objected that he was only a child. This word was used of infants (Ex. 2:6; 1 Sam. 4:21) and of young men (Gen. 14:24). Jeremiah's age is not given, but rather than citing his age, he was probably emphasizing his lack of experience. He felt ill prepared to be God's ambassador to the nations.

Question: We know that God has a history of using the unusable. What have you achieved for the Lord that you never thought you were capable of?

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(Answer: Your students may surprise you, and share that they never felt capable of the leadership positions they were given. Remind them that humility is one of the most important characteristics of a good servant of the Lord.)

God responded to Jeremiah's objections with three answers. **First, He stressed the authority under which Jeremiah was to act.** Jeremiah should not use inexperience as an excuse for evading his task. He would have no choice in the selection of his audience or his message. Rather, he was to go to everyone to whom God sent him and say whatever God commanded. Jeremiah did not have to be an eloquent elder statesman—he was simply to be a faithful messenger.

**Second, God stressed that He would protect the future prophet.** Evidently Jeremiah was afraid for his personal safety. Certainly his fears were based on his awareness of the times because the people did repeatedly try to get rid of him (cf. 11:18-23; 12:6; 20:1-2; 26:11; 37:15-16; 38:4-6). Yet God told Jeremiah not to be afraid of them, because He would be on his side. The people would try to kill Jeremiah, but God promised to rescue him.

**And third, God showed Jeremiah the source of his message.** The LORD reached out His hand to touch Jeremiah's mouth. This visible manifestation was God's object lesson to show Jeremiah that the Lord Himself would put His words in Jeremiah's mouth. Jeremiah need not worry what to say; God would provide the very words he would speak.

Question: Has there ever been a time in your Christian walk when God challenged you to act courageously, and to trust HIM for the outcome?

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(Answer: Again, students will share personal experiences. Emphasize that **trust in God** is one of the basic tenets on which the Kingdom of God is built. Christians who act first, and trust God for the outcome, turn out to be the greatest of servants.)

### **The Heavenly Meaning**

God then summarized the content of Jeremiah's message (Jer. 1:10). It would be a message of both judgment and blessing to nations and kingdoms. God used two metaphors to describe Jeremiah's mission. Comparing Jeremiah to a farmer, God said he would uproot (announce judgment) and... plant (announce blessing). Comparing Jeremiah to an architect, God said he would tear down... destroy, and overthrow (pronounce judgment) and build (pronounce blessing).

When God asked Jeremiah what he did see, Jeremiah responded, "I see a rod of an almond tree." The almond tree is the first to flower and bring forth fruit. The almond tree blossoms in January when other trees are locked up in their winter's repose; it bears fruit in March, just at the commencement of spring, when other trees only begin to bud. God used the almond tree as a symbol of the promptness with which God was about to fulfill his promises and threatening. The "rod" of an almond tree signifies an instrument of punishment, the punishment, which the prophet was about to announce.

Question: The Bible often uses words with hidden meanings (the foolish and weak things of the world) to "confound the wise" (1 Cor. 1:27). Why was it important for Jeremiah to understand the symbolism in God's vision?

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(Answer: It was imperative that Jeremiah understood the seriousness of the situation. God was about to fulfill His promise to punish Judah for its disobedience. Jeremiah's prophetic warning had to be a convincing and credible one...one motivated by a 'fear' (respect) for God. To be fearless in the fulfillment of God's command, Jeremiah had to FEAR the One for whom he would speak. He also had to trust the outcome to God.)

### **The Safety Net**

Jeremiah would have been fearful to carry this powerful message to the people of Judah, had God not promised to protect him. In verse 8, it is recorded that God told Jeremiah, "Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord." In the volatile climate that Jeremiah lived, those words were a great source of comfort.

God offers us the same protection that was afforded Jeremiah. When we carry the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ into the world, we need not be afraid of rejection or even persecution, for the Lord will 'cover' us.

Question: Sight those things that make men fearful of their evangelistic responsibility.

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(Answer: 1) Fear of rejection, 2) lack of confidence, 3) unfamiliarity with the Scriptures. Students may share other reasons.)

### **Conclusion**

The story is told of a family of freed black slaves threatened by the approaching Confederate army. They huddled in their small cabin just north of the Mason-Dixon line on this cool spring evening and prayed, "God, be a wall of fire around us!" When the father had finished committing his family to God's heavenly care, they all lay down to

sleep, comforted by the knowledge that they would sleep in safety.

When the morning came, a faint glow of light filtered into the cabin. The family quietly stole to the windows, but could barely see the farm outside; for while they slept, the Hand whose protection they petitioned had draped their world in a wintry white blanket of snow, rendering them undetectable to their foes who had passed by.

God will protect His own! As He protected His prophets, He will surely protect those bold witnesses today who commit their lives into His keeping.

## **Lesson 9**

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### **The Safety Net**

Jeremiah would have been fearful to carry this powerful message to the people of Judah, had God not promised to protect him. In verse 8, it is recorded that God told Jeremiah, “Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.” In the volatile climate that Jeremiah lived, those words were a great source of comfort.

God offers us the same protection that was afforded Jeremiah. When we carry the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ into the world, we need not be afraid of rejection or even persecution, for the Lord will ‘cover’ us.

Question: Sight those things that make men fearful of their evangelistic responsibility.

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### **Conclusion**

The story is told of a family of freed black slaves threatened by the approaching Confederate army. They huddled in their small cabin just north of the Mason-Dixon line on this cool spring evening and prayed, "God, be a wall of fire around us!" When the father had finished committing his family to God's heavenly care, they all lay down to sleep, comforted by the knowledge that they would sleep in safety.

When the morning came, a faint glow of light filtered into the cabin. The family quietly stole to the windows, but could barely see the farm outside; for while they slept, the Hand whose protection they petitioned had draped their world in a wintry white blanket of snow, rendering them undetectable to their foes who had passed by.

God will protect His own! As He protected His prophets, He will surely protect those bold witnesses today who commit their lives into His keeping.

**Lesson 10**  
**The Prophet Ezekiel and the Guarantee**  
**Teacher's Copy**

Biblical Text: Ezekiel 1:1-3; 2:1-6

**Introduction**

The word 'guarantee' wields power. In the retail world, a guarantee can make all the difference in a sale. The guarantee reinforces the manufacturers pledge to provide a quality product. It takes away the risk involved in your investment, at least for a time. Unfortunately, man's guarantees are flawed. They have stipulations and clauses that can render us helpless, right at the time when we need our guarantee the most. And worse, man's guarantees expire.

A guarantee is a promise. When we analyze God's guarantee within the framework of His plan for our salvation, we come face to face with the permanent assurance that He will "neither leave us nor forsake us". There is no expiration date on His promise. It's a 'guarantee' unlike any other...and it will last for eternity.

God gave Ezekiel a sneak preview of His permanent guarantee by filling Ezekiel with the same Spirit that would later come at Pentecost. It was all the guarantee Ezekiel needed to be obedient to the charge to carry a difficult message to a rebellious nation.

**The Setting**

The years between July 593 B.C. and April 571 B.C. were tragic years for the Jewish people known as Israel. Twenty-three years before Nebuchadnezzar became ruler of Babylon, Jeremiah had warned Judah that the Babylonians would crush their country. And it happened! Yet God's captive people rejected Ezekiel's message. Ezekiel had been taken captive with others during the first Babylonian invasion. While Jeremiah

continued in Palestine to prophesy Judah's doom, Ezekiel preached the same message to those Jews already in exile.

Question: Why are people still rejecting God's message today?

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(Answer: Repentance requires an admission of guilt. The flesh never wants to admit guilt. Unless the message of repentance touches the heart of a man, he will never confess.)

### **The Call**

The book of Ezekiel begins with the prophet's call. Our text contains the extraordinary vision of God's Divine glory on this favored prophet, and his commission and instructions for the discharge of his office.

Ezekiel's record begins with a reference to the thirtieth year and the fourth month. We do not know what the thirtieth year refers to (there are many interpretations, too numerous to cover here). Some think it was the age of the prophet; but the fourth month is similar to our July. It was at that time, during their captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, that Ezekiel "saw visions of God".

Ezekiel recognized and acknowledged that the Lord had taken up residence in his spirit and filled him with prophecy. Ezekiel, who at first was overwhelmed with the glorious vision from God, is now strengthened, comforted, and commissioned to declare to the rebellious house of Israel the terrible judgments that would soon come upon the whole land, if they refused to repent.

Ezekiel would have been filled with fear and hesitation, had God not graciously assured him of His constant and abiding care throughout the difficult years that lay ahead. God commands Ezekiel to be fearless, resolute, and faithful in his duty as a prophet of unpleasant news. God knew that the ramifications of such news would bring great persecution upon Ezekiel; thus His Divine protection would be essential for the fearless prophet.

Question: God promises Christians the same protection afforded Ezekiel. Explain why Christians are still hesitant to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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(Answer: The flesh prefers acceptance from man to acceptance by God. Men are eager to remain part of the 'good ole boy' network, to be included and accepted as one of THEM. The flesh is more threatened by man's rejection than by God's rejection. Christians must work to overcome that fleshly response, and keep their eyes on God.)

### **The Indwelling Spirit**

Ezekiel was so full of awe at God's commission, that the scripture says, "he fell upon his face;" a posture of complete adoration. The indwelling spirit that God placed in Ezekiel was not merely to enable him to foresee and foretell future events, but to purify and refine the heart of this chosen preacher, and thus qualify him to be a successful prophet of the Word of Life. All men called by God to convert sinners must suffer the influence of the Holy Ghost; otherwise we can neither be saved ourselves, nor become the instrument of salvation to others.

But Ezekiel did not remain in a prone position. When the shock of his calling had passed, he stood to receive his orders from the Lord. It was then that Ezekiel heard the Lord address him, "Son of Man...". These words are used often in the book of Ezekiel, perhaps to remind the prophet of his frailty, and that he should not be exalted in his own mind by the extraordinary revelations granted to him.

Question: How does a 'puffed up' attitude hinder the work of kingdom building?

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(Answer: The bible warns in Proverbs 16:18 warns that "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Pride takes the focus off Christ and puts it on SELF, rendering the Christian's testimony ineffective.)

### **The Precise Commission**

God continued, "I send thee to the children of Israel..." Ezekiel was being charged to carry his message to the Jews in captivity, particularly in Chaldea; and to all Jews in general, both far and near. But the message must not be construed as words from the mouth of Ezekiel. There is always the great temptation for the preacher to take credit for God's delivered message. God made it clear that the message was from Deity. "Thou shalt say unto them, 'Thus saith the Lord'..." Ezekiel was to let Israel know that it was God who was declaring his prophetic message, that the Jews might receive it reverently.

God always warned the Israelites before He imposed judgment. Ezekiel would be a channel for God's Sovereign proclamations. Ezekiel learned his lesson well. Nowhere do the scriptures even hint that he cowered in fear or hesitated to proclaim God's clear and concise message. God in His mercy would give the rebellious house of Israel fair warning, and no one would be excused for not heeding the admonition.

Fear plays a big role in our inability to share the gospel message. As with Jeremiah, Ezekiel was comforted by the assurance of God's protection and mercy. "Be not afraid of them" were the words of comfort God gave to Ezekiel. Even if the Israelites rebelled and turned away from Ezekiel's warning, God would faithfully shelter him from harm. Ezekiel's task was to declare God's Word. Whether they responded was the Israelites own responsibility. In the end, one thing was sure; they would know that a prophet had been in their midst.

Discussion: Ask your students to share their fears as believers.

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(Answer: Most students will be hesitant to admit that they have ANY fears. Here are some you may want to raise:

- Fear of rejection (with both believers AND non-believers) – These are Christians who are afraid to be bold witnesses because they don't want their spirit crushed by rejection.
- Fear of being WRONG (sign of very weak faith) – These are Christians who worry about whether they have made the right decision in accepting Christ. This usually occurs when a person accepts Christ, joins the church, but does not attend bible study, Sunday School or classes designed to strengthen a new believer's faith. What they need is biblical teaching, and fellowship with seasoned believers.
- Fear of being ridiculed (still too connected to the world) – These Christians have not yet learned to let go of the flesh, and its worldly enticements
- Fear of failure – These Christians are concerned with 'numbers' – how many non-believers can I save. They are using worldly standards to judge their performance.)

## **Conclusion**

Just like Ezekiel, we are commissioned to preach the gospel to a rebellious world. It is not for us to determine who or how the word is received. We are simply called to 'go' and to 'do'. For those who hesitate, remember that we have the glorious 'guarantee' or assurance from the Lord that Jesus will be our strength and shield. In the words of a familiar hymn - "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine; Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!

## **Lesson 10**

### **The Prophet Ezekiel and the Guarantee**

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## The Precise Commission

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Discussion: Ask your students to share their fears as believers.

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## **Conclusion**

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**Lesson 11**  
**The Prophet Hosea and Reconciliation**  
**Teacher's Copy**

Biblical Text: Hosea: Chapters 1- 2

**Introduction**

Have you ever thought about what it was like to be a prophet? The message of the prophet, though positive and promising, was laden with woes to those who would choose to ignore God's warnings. Picture yourself standing in the middle of OUR 'marketplace', the Mall, proclaiming God's warning of judgment for those who do not repent. Most of our Christian evangelistic organizations have determined that street-corner evangelism is the most challenging and often least effective approach to witnessing. They prefer the more quiet and serene setting of one-to-one evangelism. Whatever way we choose to get the Gospel message across to the unsaved, it is certain that as a result of our efforts, many will label us eccentric, religious freaks, or even crazy.

But the ministry of the prophet was far more challenging than mere witnessing. We have the 2000-year-old written Word of God to support our claim of Christ's Messianic purpose. The prophet had only his own bold proclamation that God had spoken to him. And in the case of our prophet in today's lesson, the life he lived and the message he carried were painful, not just to the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom, but to the prophet as well.

During the time of Hosea the prophet, the Israelites continued their estrangement from their Heavenly Father. They had lost their identity as God's children. God, in His infinite desire to reconcile the children of Israel to Himself, sent Hosea with a powerful message and an invitation.

## **The Setting**

In Hebrew the name Hosea means “salvation”. Nothing is known of Hosea’s family background except that he was the son of Beerī. Hosea’s ministry extended for a number of decades in the second half of the eighth century B.C. Four kings of Judah (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah) reigned during the time of Hosea’s prophetic ministry. Only one king of the north (Jeroboam II) is mentioned in the book, though Hosea’s message was directed primarily to the Northern Kingdom. Six kings of Israel followed Jeroboam II during the reigns of the four Judean kings mentioned. Perhaps Hosea omitted those six to point out the legitimacy of the Davidic dynasty in Judah.

Question: How important is timing when sharing the Gospel with a non-believer?

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(Answer: Timing is everything! You can’t witness to an alcoholic during his drunken stupor, or to a homeless person who hasn’t eaten in two days. An effective witness will first address the physical and emotional state of the non-believer, to prepare his spirit to receive the Word of God. But even with our diligence to address those hindrances that may stand in the way of a non-believer receiving the Word, God also, through His Holy Spirit, prepares that same soul.)

## **Death-Bed Prophet**

Hosea has been called the “death-bed prophet of Israel” because he was the last to prophesy before the northern kingdom fell to Assyria in about 722 B.C. Hosea’s ministry followed a golden age in the northern kingdom that experienced a peace and prosperity they had not seen since the days of King Solomon. Unfortunately, their prosperity led to their own moral decay, and Israel again forsook God to worship idols, as they had so

many times before.

When God has a message for His people, He chooses the most profound way possible to convey His truth. In the case of the prophet Hosea, God told the prophet to marry a prostitute whose unfaithfulness to her husband would serve as an example of Israel's unfaithfulness to God.

Hosea loved his wife deeply. In fact, he loved her so much that no matter how many times she committed the sin of adultery, he refused to stop loving her. Hosea's love for his wife paralleled the love God had for the Israelites who had committed whoredom through the worship of idols. Hosea's message to the Israelites was that God continued to love them in spite of their betrayal, and He desired that they should be reconciled to him.

Hosea's message explained God's complaint against Israel and warned of the punishment that would come unless the people returned to the Lord and remained faithful to him. The book of Hosea shows the depth of God's love for his people, a love that tolerates no rivals.

Question: How would you use the infidelity of Gomer, to explain the necessity of forgiveness in marriages today?

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(Answer: With divorce rates at 41% for first marriages, 60% for second marriages, and 73% for third marriages, it's clear that what we need is more diligence when choosing a lifetime partner. But there is something else we need to solidify a marriage – forgiveness. Perfect relationships are those that are founded on the biblical principle of forgiveness, which is the result of Agape or unconditional love. Marriages that are based on this Agape love, rather than Eros love, are likely to last forever.)

## A Broken Marriage

Under the guise of a wife named Gomer, who forsook her marriage vows and bore children that would follow her example, the relationship Hosea had with his wife represents the shameful idolatry of the ten tribes, which provoked God to cast them off. Even the names of the children are all symbolic of the broken marriage between God and His people. Hosea's wife was chosen from among the Israelites who were noted for their spiritual fornication or practice of idolatry. As Hosea was the husband of this Israelite prostitute, so God calls Himself the husband of Israel. Through Hosea, God was sending the clear message that His chosen nation owed him the fidelity 'of a wife'.

Hosea's message from the Lord was a strong comment on the Israelites practice of idolatry and fornication. Israel forsook God in favor of the habits of a prosperous, worldly nation. God's response to their disobedience was. "For I will no more have mercy...". The prophets that preceded Hosea had brought warnings of a similar nature, but Hosea's had an air of finality in it. This time God warned that there would be a total destruction of their kingdom if they did not repent.

Question: Prosperity was part of Israel's downfall. Today, there is a movement among preaching ministries that is referred to as 'the prosperity gospel'. Discuss how we balance prosperity from God, without losing our love and devotion to God.

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(Answer: Christians must always be careful to put God first. A good place to begin this habit is with the TITHE. If we give God what belongs to Him, we are reminded every week that God must be first, and we are less likely succumb to selfishness and materialism.)

## The Covenant with David

In spite of their rebellion, God would maintain the covenant He made with David and the house of Judah. "But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah". God would spare them as a kingdom, after Israel was carried away into captivity by the Assyrians. God had promised that the children of Israel should be as the sand of the sea. And though, for their sins, God had thinned and scattered them, yet the spirit and intention of His promise and covenant would be fulfilled.

After their return from Babylon, the distinction between Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah was entirely destroyed; and those of them that did return were all included under one denomination, Jews. This melding of the Israelites parallels the joining of the Jew and Gentile under the Head of Jesus Christ, under whom we were all finally gathered together. God desires one flock, and one Shepherd over that flock.

## The Promise

*Hosea's message promises the people of God, the true Israel, security from every evil, with the possession of every blessing, under a new covenant that God would make with His people. Heaven and earth, and all nature, would unite in sweet harmony to transmit it to the ear of the Almighty. "I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.*

*Question: Hosea's message was an urgent one for the nation of Israel. What urgency do we see in the Gospel message for our world today?*

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*(Answer: Isaiah warned, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found." (55:6)*

*That warning is still pertinent today. Though God, through Hosea, demonstrated His abiding love for His covenanted people, there will come a time when Jesus said there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth", and those who do not belong to the Lord will be cast into outer darkness.)*

## **Conclusion**

Hosea brings a message of yet another captivity; the old wilderness story will be repeated once again. In that wilderness, God speaks again to the heart of Israel, promising that its barrenness shall be changed into fruitfulness, and its sorrows shall become sources of refreshment.

*Man was created to fellowship with God. Separation from God should and must be a painful experience. God desires that every soul be spiritually reconciled to Him. Any trial that brings us back from destruction and knits us closer to God gives us new hope. All separation and sorrow must be transformed into an occasion for learning. Though we turn away from God, He will never turn away from us.*

## **Lesson 11**

### **The Prophet Hosea and Reconciliation**

Student

Biblical Text: Hosea: Chapters 1- 2

#### **Introduction**

Have you ever thought about what it was like to be a prophet? The message of the prophet, though positive and promising, was laden with woes to those who would choose to ignore God's warnings. Picture yourself standing in the middle of OUR 'marketplace', the Mall, proclaiming God's warning of judgment for those who do not repent. Most of our Christian evangelistic organizations have determined that street-corner evangelism is the most challenging and often least effective approach to witnessing. They prefer the more quiet and serene setting of one-to-one evangelism. Whatever way we choose to get the Gospel message across to the unsaved, it is certain that as a result of our efforts, many will label us eccentric, religious freaks, or even crazy.

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Question: How important is timing when sharing the Gospel with a non-believer?

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## **Death-Bed Prophet**

Hosea’s ministry followed a golden age in the northern kingdom that experienced a peace and prosperity they had not seen since the days of King Solomon. Unfortunately, their prosperity led to their own moral decay, and Israel again forsook God to worship idols, as they had so many times before.

When God has a message for His people, He chooses the most profound way possible to convey His truth. In the case of the prophet Hosea, God told the prophet to marry a prostitute whose unfaithfulness to her husband would serve as an example of Israel’s unfaithfulness to God.

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through the worship of idols. Hosea's message to the Israelites was that God continued to love them in spite of their betrayal, and He desired that they should be reconciled to him.

Hosea's message explained God's complaint against Israel and warned of the punishment that would come unless the people returned to the Lord and remained faithful to him. The book of Hosea shows the depth of God's love for his people, a love that tolerates no rivals.

Question: How would you use the infidelity of Gomer, to explain the necessity of forgiveness in marriages today?

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### **A Broken Marriage**

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**Lesson 12**  
***The Prophet Amos and Moral Decay***  
***Teacher's Copy***

Biblical Text: Amos 7:14-15

**Introduction**

We are by nature a worldly people, affected by the purpose, perspective and priorities of the world around us. The potential to sin lies in every one of us. The sin nature of man has neither the desire nor the ability to live a life impervious to the breakdown in morality around us. Satan revels in watching us become unstable and distracted by his weapon of moral decay.

The story of Israel and Judah is an example of what happens to good people who are exposed to bad influences.

**The Setting**

The reign of Jeroboam II was one of brilliant military success and of profound moral degradation. Into this era entered the prophet Amos, a simple, hardy shepherd from the southern wilds of Judah, bearing wholesome indignation and contempt for the silken-robed vice of Israel, the Northern Kingdom.

There is no book that more clearly describes the rotten social state of the ruling class, their decadence and oppressiveness. Amos is charged to preach to the self-willed idolatry of the people, their moral filth, their obstinate resistance to God's merciful correction, and the heavier impending judgment that will surely come.

Question: What are some of the moral vices at work in our world today?

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(Answer: Fornication and adultery will top your students' list. They will be less likely to recognize the vices in themselves, such as greed, pride, lying, or troublemaking. Have them read Proverbs 6:16-19. Then ask the same question again.)

## **The Herdsman**

There is no personality among the Minor Prophets who is so familiar as that of Amos. Amos was from Tekoa in Judah, five miles to the south of Bethlehem. The original title of his book was "The Words of Amos of Tekoa". Later it was added, "who was among the herdsmen", simply to emphasize that *Amos* had been a herdsman before he became a prophet.

Attempts have been made to discover the exact location of Tekoa, but all we really need to know is that Amos was from Judah. Amos is emphatic about his inadequacy as a chosen vessel of the Lord. He saw himself as a simple herdsman and caretaker of sycamore-figs, with nothing special to offer in the way of talent or expertise for the work of ministry.

In our opening verse of this lesson, Amos is answering Amaziah, the chief priest of Bethel, who is startled by the ominous utterances of vicarious warning coming from this prophet in chapters 1 through 6. After denouncing Amos to King Jeroboam II, Amaziah advises Amos to make his escape to Judah and live his life as a paid-for-hire prophet, far from King Jeroboam's kingdom. Amaziah assumes that Amos has changed his profession because he is looking for monetary gain, as were the false prophets of the Northern Kingdom.

Amos strongly rebukes Amaziah, admonishing him that he does not need to take fees for his prophecies, because he is well to do, and he is no prophet either by profession or

extraction, but was called by God from his flock by special summons. Amos' attitude marks a turning point in the development of Old Testament prophecy. Unlike Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and almost all of the prophets who first give the story of their special calling, Amos is quick to downplay the story of his calling as a much less significant part of his prophetic ministry. Amos also marks an era in Old Testament prophecy in another respect. He is the first of the prophets to write down the messages he has received. It is easy to understand the reason for this innovation. He was called to preach to Beth-El in the Northern Kingdom, and there is no reason to doubt that Amos was actually forced to leave the northern kingdom and to return to his native country. Being thus prevented from preaching his message to those to whom he was sent, Amos resorted to writing. If they could not hear his messages, they could read them, and if his contemporaries refused to do so, the generations that followed might still profit by his prophetic words.

Question: Can personality, profession or financial status affect the success of a ministry? How?

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(Answer: God equips whom He calls. Personalities vary in ministry and are used for varying purposes. The same is true of a person's educational training and financial status. Every aspect of a person's life can either benefit or hinder the ministry, depending upon how it is used, or not used.)

### **Repentance and Forgiveness**

As one of the first of the writing-prophets, Amos is undoubtedly one of the grandest personalities among the Old Testament prophets. His lofty conception of Deity, his uncompromisingly moral conception of the order of the universe, and his superiority to all religious narrowness, are most admirable.

Amos makes it clear that Yahweh is the Lord of all other nations as well as of Israel. The standard by which He measures all people is morality, and morality only. It is by His impenetrable will that Israel was chosen among all peoples, but because they are the Chosen, God is doubly strict in His demands upon this nation, and twice as severe in His punishment of its transgressions. Ritualistic zeal and the richest burnt offerings have no effect on the judgment God has ordained for this wayward nation.

Question: If you had the power to change ONE law in America, which one would it be and why?

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(Answer: You may be surprised at how few will name ABORTION as a law that needs changing. Christians have become very complacent about the need to protect the unborn child. Most will mention CAPITOL PUNISHMENT as an unjust and unbiblical law. Some students struggling with addiction in their families may want to go back to the days of prohibition; some may site the need for laws to preserve Sunday as a day of rest that is 'holy unto God'.)

### **Destruction Is Eminent**

While to some, Amos may seem like an uncompromising prophet of doom, we must remember that Israel's destruction is brought about by its sinfulness, and it is only because experience appears to show an unwillingness to repent, that the hope of forgiveness is cut off. It is certain, however, that Amos did not shrink from facing the possibility of the utter destruction of Israel for their sinfulness.

Amos has always been admired for the clarity of his language, the beauty of his diction, and his poetic art. We should not be astonished by this herdsman's ability, because it lends confirmation to the truth that God called Amos.

Question: Why do we resent it when someone confronts us about our sins?

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(Answer: Our sins are a side of us we are not proud of or anxious to expose.)

### **Conclusion**

Plant a flower in a weedy garden, and the weeds will soon choke the blossom and it dies. Likewise, as man lives in a world controlled by Satan, with all his good intentions he is unable to withstand the onslaught of sin upon his ethical and moral principles. Man's motivations for purity and goodness have been infected with sin's disease, rendering him incapable of fighting off the enemy.

But because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin, sin no longer has dominion in the lives of those who surrender to God's Will. God knew that Israel and Judah would fail in their attempt to stay connected to their True Source of Power. So God, in His infinite wisdom, made provision "from the foundation of the world", that judgment would be tempered with mercy for Israel and for all mankind.

**Lesson 12**  
***The Prophet Amos and Moral Decay***  
Student

Biblical Text: Amos 7:14-15

**Introduction**

We are by nature a worldly people, affected by the purpose, perspective and priorities of the world around us. The potential to sin lies in every one of us. The sin nature of man has neither the desire nor the ability to live a life impervious to the breakdown in morality around us. Satan revels in watching us become unstable and distracted by his weapon of moral decay.

The story of Israel and Judah is an example of what happens to good people who are exposed to bad influences.

**The Setting**

The reign of Jeroboam II was one of brilliant military success and of profound moral degradation. Into this era entered the prophet Amos, a simple, hardy shepherd from the southern wilds of Judah, bearing wholesome indignation and contempt for the silken-robed vice of Israel, the Northern Kingdom.

There is no book that more clearly describes the rotten social state of the ruling class, their decadence and oppressiveness. Amos is charged to preach to the self-willed idolatry of the people, their moral filth, their obstinate resistance to God's merciful correction, and the heavier impending judgment that will surely come.

Question: What are some of the moral vices at work in our world today?

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### **The Herdsman**

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## **Conclusion**

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AMEN

